

THE PURPLE BOOK

F O U R T H E D I T I O N



New Voices and New Approaches
for Accelerating an Inclusive Society

3RD - 4TH SEPTEMBER 2025

P O L I C Y I N N O V A T I O N C E N T R E







THE PURPLE BOOK 4TH EDITION

Gender and Inclusion Summit 2025

New Voices and New Approaches for Accelerating an Inclusive Society

The Gender and Inclusion Summit took place on the 3rd & 4th of September, 2025, at the Abuja Continental Hotel, Abuja. #GS25 was organized by the Policy Innovation Centre (PIC)

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Foreword

It is with great pride and a profound sense of responsibility that I present the fourth edition of the Purple Book, a testament to our shared commitment to advancing gender and social inclusion in Nigeria. This edition captures the rich deliberations and forward-looking commitments that emerged from the Gender and Inclusion Summit 2025 (GS-25), held in Abuja, Nigeria, under the theme: “New Voices and New Approaches for Accelerating an Inclusive Society.”

At the Policy Innovation Centre (PIC), we stand at the intersection of policy, innovation, and societal transformation. Our mission is driven by the pursuit of meaningful dialogue, actionable change, and lasting impact.

Over the past four years, the Gender and Inclusion Summit has grown beyond a convening. It has become a movement, one that connects evidence to policy, research to reform, and lived experiences to national dialogue. What began in 2022 with the foundational theme “Connecting the Dots for a Gender-Inclusive Society” evolved in 2023 into “Building Bridges: Advancing Gender and Inclusion through the Intersection of Trade and Health,” and in 2024 into “Reimagining Gender-Inclusive Pathways and Partnerships for Poverty Reduction.” Each year, the conversations have deepened, the urgency has become clearer, and we have ensured that our discussions do not end with applause but translate into action. The Purple Book is the embodiment of that commitment.

This fourth edition stands as a testament to our collective resolve to accelerate inclusion in Nigeria and across Africa. It reflects the insights of policymakers, legislators, development partners, private sector leaders, civil society actors, academia, youth advocates, and grassroots voices who recognize that inclusion is not peripheral to national development; it is central to it.

The theme of GS-25 highlights a simple but transformative truth: achieving an inclusive society requires us to move beyond established routines. It advocates for the deliberate inclusion of historically marginalized voices in decision-making processes, ensuring their perspectives are meaningfully heard, respected, and systematically integrated into policy design and implementation. Rural women sustaining Agricultural value chains, young innovators navigating economic uncertainty, persons with disabilities confronting structural barriers, and communities living on the margins of opportunity must not merely be subjects of policy; they must be co-creators of it. Equally, it demands new approaches; innovation

must serve inclusion, technology must bridge, not divide, social protection systems must be data-driven and responsive, financing models must dismantle structural barriers facing women and marginalized entrepreneurs, and collaboration must transcend silos, recognizing that sustainable inclusion requires coordinated action across government, private sector, and civil society. The global context reinforces this urgency. Around the world, nations that prioritize inclusive growth are building more resilient economies, stronger institutions, and more cohesive societies. In Nigeria, the stakes are especially high. Gender inequality, multidimensional poverty, limited access to healthcare and education, and exclusion from financial and digital systems are not abstract concepts; they shape daily realities for millions.

The Purple Book responds to these realities. It consolidates the recommendations, innovations, and commitments articulated during GS-25 into a coherent roadmap for advocacy and reform. It is not merely a report; it is a strategic instrument designed to influence policy conversations, guide institutional action, and hold stakeholders accountable for measurable progress. We envision this publication as a living document, one that will inform legislative debates, shape development programming, inspire private sector investment, and strengthen civic engagement. Its value lies not only in what it records, but in what it catalyzes.

As you engage with this edition, I invite you to view it as both a reflection and a challenge. Reflection on how far we have come in advancing gender and social inclusion. Challenge to move faster, think differently, and act more boldly. Inclusion is not an optional agenda. It is a moral imperative and a strategic necessity for national prosperity. A Nigeria that listens to all its voices and leverages all its talents will be a Nigeria that thrives.

On behalf of the Policy Innovation Centre and our partners, I extend sincere appreciation to everyone whose contributions made GS-25 and this publication possible. May the Purple Book continue to serve as a beacon for evidence-based action and a compass guiding us toward a society that is not only prosperous but truly inclusive.

Mr Udemé Ufot MFR

Chairman, Policy Innovation Centre

Acknowledgement

With heartfelt gratitude, we wish to acknowledge the efforts of several individuals, organisations, agencies, and institutions that contributed to the success of the Gender and Inclusion Summit 2025 (GS-25).

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Veteran Services Defence Health Maintenances Limited; Mr. Ekenem Isichei, Deputy Director of Programme Advocacy & Communications, Gates Foundation; Amb. 'Dapo Oyewole, Secretary General of the Conference of Speakers & Presidents of African Union Legislatures (CoSPAL); Prof Noel Tagoe PHD, FCMA, CGMA, Founding Dean of the Nile University Business School; Thelma Ekiyor-Solanke, Chairperson, The Nigeria Philanthropy Office/SME.NG; Jelilat Ismaila-Ayinde, Divisional Head SME Lending, Bank of Industry; amongst others who delivered speeches and shaped the discussions about Gender and Inclusion.

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Finally, we express great appreciation to individuals and organisations that participated and made presentations at the GS-25.

Acronyms



Acronyms	Descriptions
AFHS	Adolescent-Friendly Health Services
ANC	Antenatal Care
CGE	Centre for Girls' Education
CHAI	Clinton Health Access Initiative
CSOs	Civil Society Organization
DHIS2	District Health Information System 2
EML	Essential Medicines List
EmOC	Emergency Obstetric Care
FP	Family Planning
FP2030	Family Planning 2023
FMCG	Fast-Moving Consumer Goods
FMYSD	Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development
GASHE	Gender, Adolescent, School Health & Elderly Care
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GMO	Gender Mainstreaming Office
HPV	Human Papillomavirus
ICPC	Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LMICs	Low- and Middle-Income Countries
MAMI	Maternal and Newborn Mortality Reduction Innovation
MCH	Maternal and Child Health
MMR	Maternal Mortality Ratio
MPDSR	Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response
NESG	Nigerian Economic Summit Group
NPHCDA	National Primary Health Care Development Agency
PIC	Policy Innovation Centre
RMC	Respectful Maternity Care
SBC	Social and Behaviour Change
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
VYAs	Very Young Adolescents
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WEE	Women Economic Empowerment
WHO	World Health Organization
WHO	World Health Organization

Glossary

Adolescent-Friendly Health Services (AFHS): Health services designed to be accessible, acceptable, equitable, appropriate, and effective for adolescents, ensuring confidentiality and non-judgmental care.¹

Adolescent Health Budget Line: A dedicated allocation within government health budgets specifically earmarked for adolescent health programming.

Child Marriage: A formal or informal union where one or both parties are under 18 years of age.²

Digital Exclusion: Group of people who are deprived full access to digital tools, internet connectivity, and digital literacy skills, which hinders their participation in the society.³

Domestic Resource Mobilization: Government-led efforts to generate and allocate domestic funding for public services, reducing reliance on donor funding.⁴

Emergency Obstetric Care (EmOC): Medical interventions required to treat life-threatening complications during pregnancy, childbirth, or postpartum.⁵

Gender-Based Violence (GBV): Violence against women as, 'any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.'⁶

Gender Mainstreaming: It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.⁷

Gender norms: They describe how we are expected to behave in a given social context due to our gender.⁸

Gender roles: Gender roles is a set of socially accepted behaviors and attitudes deemed appropriate or desirable for individuals based on their sex. Gender roles are usually centered on conceptions of masculinity and femininity, although there are exceptions and variations.⁹

Gender-Transformative Approaches: Programs and interventions that challenge and change harmful gender norms and power imbalances to promote gender equality.¹⁰

HPV (Human Papillomavirus): A sexually transmitted infection that can cause cervical cancer and other cancers.¹¹

Intersectionality: Intersectionality is a theoretical framework that describes how various social identities, such as race, gender, sexuality, class, and disability, intersect and interact to create unique experiences of oppression and privilege.¹²

Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR): The number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.¹³

Normative Factors: Normative factors/action have been defined as a group act that is intended to affect public policy and conforms to the norms of the dominant social system, which could include laws and regulations.¹⁴

Non-Normative Factors: Non-normative factors/influences are occurrences that do not affect all members of a given population set in the same way, nor at the same time. Some people may not even experience some of these non-normative influences.¹⁵

Patriarchy: Patriarchy is a system of relationships, beliefs, and values embedded in political, social, and economic systems that structure gender inequality between men and women.¹⁶

Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH): A state of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being related to sexuality and reproduction.¹⁷

Social norms: Social norms are perceived as informal, mostly unwritten rules that define acceptable and appropriate behaviour within a given group or community, thereby guiding human behavior.¹⁸

Very Young Adolescents (VYAs): Adolescents aged 10–14 years.¹⁹

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Executive Summary

The Policy Innovation Centre (PIC) convened the Gender and Inclusion Summit 2025 (GS 25) under the theme “New Voices & New Approaches for Accelerating an Inclusive Society” as a strategic platform to accelerate progress toward a gender-inclusive Africa by harnessing innovative approaches and amplifying new voices as a strategy to drive equitable economic and social development. The Summit convened participants from five continents and 29 countries, with 1,376 attendees on Day One and 1,612 on Day Two. An additional 3,848 participants joined virtually, and more than 159 speakers contributed across sessions. The convening brought together leaders from all levels of government, the private sector, academia, civil society, development partners, and traditional and religious institutions to interrogate the structural, normative, and institutional barriers that continue to shape gender and inclusion outcomes in Nigeria.

In deepening inclusion, GS 25 ensured that voices from marginalized and underrepresented groups, including persons with disabilities, adolescent girls, grassroots women leaders, young people, and community-level influencers, were not only present but were actively shaping conversations throughout the summit. These voices were integrated across panels, plenaries, and showcases, reflecting PIC’s commitment to meaningful participation.

The Summit took place against a backdrop of persistent and “sluggishly closing” gender and inclusion gaps. Women occupy less than 7% of national parliamentary seats and fewer than 20% of board positions in Nigeria’s formal sector, despite comprising nearly half of the labour force. In academia, women hold less than 35% of academic positions and remain significantly underrepresented in senior leadership. These inequities extend beyond representation into broader human development outcomes. In

health, 35.3% of children under five are stunted, reflecting deep structural disparities in nutrition, care, and the social determinants of health. In education, approximately one in three children do not complete primary school, and a similar proportion of children aged 6–11 are not attending school. These data points underscore the urgency of systemic reform.

GS 25 convened 27 sessions across thematic tracks that included women’s leadership, adolescent health, economic empowerment, food security, digital governance, transportation, care systems, disability inclusion, and gender responsive governance. Discussions were grounded in evidence, lived experiences of Nigerians, and practical models for reform.

Across sessions, several cross-cutting insights emerged:

1. Leadership requires systems, not symbolism: Sessions on political, corporate, academic, and peacebuilding leadership emphasized that appointing women into senior roles without structural backing results in tokenism. Participants highlighted the need for predictable appointment pathways, gender responsive governance, quotas, mentorship ecosystems, and care infrastructure to sustain women’s influence.
2. Norms remain a powerful determinant of gender outcomes: From adolescent health to GBV prevention, unpaid care work, and leadership pipelines, harmful norms continue to shape women’s and girls’ opportunities. Conversations at GS 25 showcased the transformative role of men as allies, traditional rulers, and religious leaders in shifting norms, ending child marriage, and promoting shared responsibility in households.



3. **Economic empowerment requires structural and fiscal reforms:** Sessions on WEE, public finance, and economic diplomacy indicate that women's economic participation is constrained by unequal access to finance, discriminatory labour practices, weak policy implementation, and exclusion from fiscal decision-making. Participants emphasized the need for gender responsive budgeting, inclusive public finance systems, and investment-driven approaches that shift from aid to sustainable socioeconomic development.
4. **Health equity is foundational to gender equity:** Discussions on maternal mortality, HPV vaccination, family planning, and adolescent wellbeing revealed persistent gaps driven by harmful norms, infrastructure deficits, and fragmented service delivery. Stakeholders called for preventive, integrated, and rights-based health systems that prioritize women's autonomy and adolescent girls' wellbeing.
5. **Food security and nutrition require multisectoral coordination:** The session on nutrition and food systems highlighted the triple burden of malnutrition, post harvest losses, and the gender determinants of nutrition outcomes. Participants emphasized the need for coordinated action across agriculture, health, education, WASH, and social protection, as well as the central role of women in building resilient food systems.
6. **Care systems are central to gender equality:** Unpaid care work remains a major barrier to women's economic and leadership advancement. Sessions emphasized the need for recognition, reduction, and redistribution of care responsibilities through policy reforms, workplace flexibility, childcare systems, and norm-shifting interventions that engage men as partners.
7. **Digital and physical infrastructure shape inclusion:** Sessions on AI governance, disability inclusion, and transportation highlighted how infrastructure (digital, physical, and institutional) can either reinforce or dismantle inequality. Participants called for inclusive workplace policies for persons with disabilities, gender responsive mobility systems, and ethical AI frameworks that ensure safety and accessibility.
8. **Data, accountability, and governance reforms are essential:** Across tracks, stakeholders emphasized the need for gender disaggregated data, transparent dashboards, gender audits, and accountability mechanisms to track progress and guide policy decisions.

Participants left GS 25 certain of this truth: Nigeria cannot achieve inclusive development without transforming the systems and structures that shape opportunity, power, and well-being. The Summit calls on government, private sector, civil society, development partners, and communities to:

- Institutionalize gender responsive governance across all sectors
- Invest in care systems, health equity, and inclusive infrastructure
- Strengthen accountability through data, dashboards, and gender audits
- Amplify and resource new voices, especially those historically excluded
- Scale community-led norm change models that shift harmful beliefs
- Adopt inclusive economic and fiscal policies that unlock women's full potential

The insights captured in the GS-25 Purple Book are intended to serve as a strategic roadmap and advocacy tool for policymakers, development partners, private-sector actors, and civil society organizations committed to building a more inclusive Nigeria. GS-25 concluded with a shared commitment to deepen collaboration, strengthen evidence-based policymaking, and accelerate the structural reforms required to shape a more equitable future for all.

Meet Our Speakers



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Founder & CEO, Gam Africa Institute for Leadership (GAIL), The Gambia



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Mr. Ekenem Isichei
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Ambassador Yusuf Tuggar
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Dr. Iziaq Adekunle Salako
The Honourable Minister of State
for Health and Social Welfare



H.E. Amb Prof. Olufolake Abdulrazaq
First Lady, Kwara State and Chairperson,
Nigeria Governors Spouses Forum



Apostle Iren Emmanuel
Lead Pastor and Founder, Celebration
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**His Royal Highness, Mai Kaltungo;
Engr. Sale Muhammadu Umar OON**
Deputy Chairman, Gombe State Council
of Emirs & Chiefs



Dr. Sumaye Fadimatu Hamza.
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FOMWAN President



**His Royal Majesty, Igwe Samuel
Ikechukwu Asadu Jr (Igwe
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Dr. Tayo Aduloju
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Dr. Osasuyi Dirisu
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About The Policy Innovation Centre

The Policy Innovation Centre (PIC) is the first national institutionalized behavioral initiative in Africa supporting government and stakeholders to make behaviorally informed decisions and generate evidence for impact driven interventions in critical thematic areas. The PIC is an initiative of the Nigeria Economic Summit Group (NESG), a leading think tank in Africa redefining evidence-based policy advocacy. In 2017, the Gates Foundation supported the establishment of the “interim Policy Innovation Unit (PIU)” as a proof of concept to assess whether a behavioural insights (BI) unit could work in the Nigerian context to improve public sector outcomes.

Based on the demonstrated success, the PIC was launched in October 2021 to deepen the impact of social interventions in Nigeria.

The complexity of issues faced by most countries is increasingly inter-related and dynamic. Policies and Interventions must be human centered, realistic and connect the often multi-faceted nature of the needs and challenges people face in their everyday lives. The PIC is positioned to support the delivery of better policies and innovative solutions for high impact interventions across Africa.



VISION

Delivering better policies and innovative solutions for social impact.



MISSION

We improve policies and programs using gender transformative and behavioural approaches to drive positive social change.

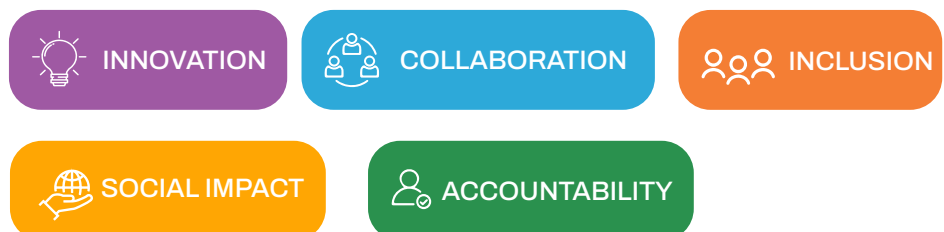
OUR CAPABILITIES



SECTORS WHERE WE WORK



OUR CORE VALUES



The PIC Gender & Inclusion Summit

Gender equality is a fundamental human right, backed by the United Nations (UN) Charter, which calls for international cooperation in promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion. Despite global progress, significant gender disparities remain across Africa and beyond. In Sub-Saharan Africa, women hold only 27.3% of parliamentary seats according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU, 2024), reflecting persistent gender gaps in political representation and decision-making. Similarly, women occupy only 5% of CEO positions in Africa's largest companies, highlighting systemic barriers to leadership and economic participation. The Africa Gender Index (2023) further reveals that the continent has achieved just 50.3% parity across economic, social, and public representation indicators, indicating that Africa remains only halfway toward full gender equality. These disparities illustrate that economic growth alone cannot define societal progress; true development must also be measured by the degree to which societies promote inclusion, representation, and equitable opportunities for all. Gender inequality continues to manifest across key sectors including education, digital access, healthcare, political participation, housing, transportation, law enforcement, and

economic empowerment. Addressing these gaps requires innovative and context-sensitive approaches that move beyond traditional gender programming.

One of the most transformative strategies for advancing gender equity is engaging men and boys as allies in reshaping harmful gender norms. While empowering women and girls remains essential, increasing evidence suggests that gender norm transformation through male engagement is equally critical in accelerating inclusive societies. By addressing social expectations, power dynamics, and deeply rooted beliefs that shape gender relations, male engagement initiatives can support more equitable household decision-making, improved community outcomes, and broader societal change.

Against this backdrop, the Gender and Inclusion Summit 2025 (GS-25) was convened under the theme “New Voices and New Approaches for Accelerating a Gender Inclusive Society.” The summit brought together policymakers, development practitioners, academics, private sector leaders, civil society actors, and grassroots innovators to explore transformative strategies for advancing gender inclusivity across sectors.









Summit Events





Inclusive Pathways to Poverty Reduction



New Approaches in Alleviating Poverty for a More Inclusive Society for Women and Children



Panelist

» H.E. Hon. Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim, fsi, Honourable Minister, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs

Moderator

Hansatu Adegbite, Private Sector Partnerships, UN Women, Nigeria.

Credit: Policy Innovation Centre & Federal Ministry of Women Affairs





Session Objectives

1. To explore sustainable strategies for enhancing the economic empowerment of Nigerian women through improved access to finance, entrepreneurship opportunities, and well-designed support programmes.
2. To strengthen coordination among government, the private sector, and civil society to address structural barriers to women's economic participation and expand access to finance and economic opportunities.
3. To ensure the meaningful inclusion of women's voices in the design and implementation of poverty alleviation policies and programmes.

Background

Nigeria continues to experience significant gender gaps in economic participation. Women's labour force participation is lower compared to men in the formal sector, with many women being concentrated in informal and lower-paying sectors with limited access to productive resources such as land, credit, and financial services.¹

These structural barriers constrain women's economic independence and limit their full contribution to Nigeria's national development. Furthermore, development challenges affecting children remain severe. Over 40 percent of Nigerian children under five are stunted², reflecting persistent nutrition and welfare concerns. Evidence shows that when women have greater control over financial resources, households tend to invest more in children's nutrition, education, and health, highlighting the broader developmental impact of women's economic empowerment.³

Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Persistent gender norms limiting women's economic participation:** Social expectations and cultural norms continue to restrict women's access to financial resources, leadership opportunities, and economic decision-making in Nigeria.⁴
02. **Societal perceptions around women's financial autonomy:** In some contexts, prevailing norms discourage women from exercising economic independence or leadership.⁵
02. **Limited access to finance for women entrepreneurs:** Structural barriers continues to restrict women's ability to access credit, capital, and financial services.⁶
03. **Fragmented Institutional Coordination Across Sectors:** Gender-focused initiatives are frequently implemented in silos, reducing the potential for collective impact.⁷
04. **High Prevalence of Child Malnutrition:** Child undernutrition remains a major national concern, with many Nigerian children experiencing multiple forms of undernutrition.⁸

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Funding gaps for women-focused initiatives:** Programs addressing women's empowerment often lack the scale of financing required to achieve meaningful impact.



Policy Recommendations



01. **Establish Women's Development Fund:** Develop a transparent and accountable financing mechanism dedicated to supporting women's economic empowerment and family wellbeing initiatives.
02. **Strengthening Collective Advocacy within the Women's Movement:** coordination and alignment among stakeholders engaged in gender equality initiatives.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Expand financial inclusion initiatives targeting women:** Increase women's access to credit, grants, and financial literacy programs.
02. **Strengthen multi-sector partnerships:** Facilitate collaboration between government institutions, civil society organizations, and private sector actors to scale women-focused programs.
03. **Invest in women's entrepreneurship and capacity development:** Support initiatives that enhance women's leadership skills, business capacity, and market access.
04. **Scale social support programs:** Expand programs addressing family welfare, menstrual hygiene management, and women's health.

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When women have money in their hands, most of our problems as a country will begin to disappear.

- H.E Hon Imoan Sulaiman-Ibrahim



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 3. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/2022-global-report-400000-evful-report-component-7.html>
 4. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/2022-global-report-400000-evful-report-component-7.html>
 5. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/02/24/women-s-economic-opportunity-bank-only-half-enforced-globally>
 6. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2022/10/women-entrepreneur-finance-banking>
 7. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/world-childrens-day-nigeria-and-unicef-unicef-report-state-nigeria-children-aging>
 8. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/world-childrens-day-nigeria-and-unicef-unicef-report-state-nigeria-children-aging>



Equitable Access to Healthcare: A Pathway to Thriving



National Dialogue on Transforming Gender Norms for Adolescent Health and Well-being



Panelists

- » Dr. Amina Dorayi, Country Director, Pathfinder International Nigeria
- » Dr. Habiba Mohammed, Director, Centre for Girls' Education (CGE)
- » Emmanuel Aja, Country Director, Marie Stopes International Organisation Nigeria (MSION)
- » Dr. Ovuoraye John, (Representing Dr. Binyerem Okare), Head, Gender, Adolescent, School Health & Elderly Care (GASHE), Federal Ministry of Health & Social Welfare

Chair

Dr Iziaq Adekunle Salako, Honorable Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare

Special Remarks

H.E. Barr. Chioma Uzodimma, First Lady of Imo State, President of First Lady Against Cancer (FLAC)

Moderator

Dr. Jennifer Anyanti, Deputy Managing Director (Strategy, Technical & Growth), Society for Family Health (SFH)

Credit: Policy Innovation Centre & Gates Foundation





Session Objectives

1. Identify the gender norms shaping adolescent health behaviours and access to services.
2. Examine how restrictive norms manifest in service delivery settings and influence provider attitudes.
3. Explore evidence-based approaches for transforming harmful norms among adolescents, families, and communities.
4. Highlight the role of education, safe spaces, and mentorship in delaying child marriage and improving SRH outcomes.
5. Assess government-led initiatives addressing adolescent health and gender equality.
6. Recommend actionable strategies for integrating gender-transformative approaches into national and subnational programming.

Background

Adolescence represents a critical developmental window, yet harmful gender norms continue to undermine the health, safety, and opportunities of millions of Nigerian adolescents, particularly girls.

Restrictive norms shape access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH), influence early marriage, limit HPV vaccination uptake, and reinforce silence around gender-based violence (GBV).

The National Dialogue convened policymakers, practitioners, and gender experts to examine findings from the Nigeria Survey on Gender Norms, Attitudes, Health and Wellbeing, the first national dataset focused on Very Young Adolescents (VYAs). The session explored how gender norms manifest in health-seeking behaviour, how service delivery systems reinforce or challenge these norms, and what multi-sectoral strategies are needed to transform them.

Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Restrictive Gender Norms:** Harmful norms restrict girls' mobility, decision making, and access to SRH information, reinforcing silence around sexuality and discouraging care seeking.^[1]
02. **Stigmatization:** Adolescent girls avoid health facilities due to fear of judgment, moral policing, or being labelled "promiscuous." This stigma is a major barrier to contraception, HPV vaccination, and GBV reporting.^[2]
03. **Gendered Roles:** Social expectations around family honour, female chastity, and economic survival continue to drive early marriage, especially in northern Nigeria.^[3]
04. **Cultural Norms:** Cultural taboos prevent girls from discussing menstruation^[4], pregnancy, or sexual health, limiting their ability to make informed decisions.

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Weak Adolescent-Friendly Health Infrastructure:** Health facilities lack adolescent-specific spaces, clinic days, or service models tailored to VYAs, making

services inaccessible or intimidating.

02. **Provider Bias:** Health workers often lack training to provide adolescent-friendly, non-judgmental care. Provider bias discourages adolescents from seeking SRH services and contributes to poor health outcomes.^[5]
03. **Limited Disaggregated Data for Adolescents 10–14:** National health data rarely separates VYAs from older adolescents, masking their unique needs and limiting targeted programming.
04. **Insufficient Trained Workforce for Adolescent Health:** Providers lack training in adolescent psychology, confidentiality, and gender responsive care, reducing service quality.
05. **Fragmented Multi-Sectoral Coordination:** Education, health, youth development, and gender sectors often work in silos, weakening the impact of adolescent health interventions.
06. **Inadequate Safe Spaces and Mentorship Structures:** Few community-based safe spaces exist for girls to learn life skills, build confidence, or access SRH information.
07. **Digital Exclusion and Limited Access to Reliable Information:** Many adolescents lack access to digital SRH resources, leaving them vulnerable to misinformation.

Progress and Success Stories

- » The Federal Ministry of Health has established a dedicated Adolescent Health Budget Line and strengthened the GASHE division to coordinate adolescent health interventions. Nigeria has vaccinated over 12 million girls against HPV since the national rollout.^[6]
- » Safe space models implemented by the Centre for Girls' Education have demonstrated strong results in delaying marriage and improving school retention. Additionally, Pathfinder International and MSI ON continue to expand adolescent-friendly SRH services and provider training across multiple states.
- » Community-based "Men in Maternity" initiatives in Lagos State have successfully engaged men in maternal and adolescent health, reducing stigma and improving care seeking.



Policy Recommendations



01. **Institutionalize Gender Transformative Approaches:** Policies should explicitly challenge harmful norms, promote adolescent autonomy, and integrate gender responsive strategies across health, education, and social protection systems.
02. **Strengthen Adolescent-Friendly Health Services:** The government should mandate adolescent-specific clinic days, confidential service models, and provider training on respectful, non-judgmental care.
03. **Expand Safe Spaces and Life Skills Education:** States should integrate safe space models into school and community systems to build girls' confidence, agency, and SRH knowledge.
04. **Improve Data Systems for VYAs:** National surveys and DHIS2 should disaggregate data for ages 10–14 to support targeted programming.
05. **Scale Up HPV Vaccination and SRH Education:** Schools and communities should be leveraged to increase HPV vaccine uptake and provide age-appropriate SRH information.
06. **Strengthen Multi-Sectoral Coordination:** Ministries of Health, Education, Women Affairs, and Youth Development should jointly implement adolescent health strategies with clear accountability mechanisms.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Establish Community-Based Safe Spaces for Girls:** Implement structured safe space programs offering life skills, literacy, mentorship, and SRH education.
02. **Train Health Workers on Adolescent Responsive Care:** Expand national training programs on adolescent psychology, confidentiality, and gender sensitive service delivery.
03. **Develop Digital SRH Platforms for Adolescents:** Create youth-friendly digital tools providing accurate SRH information, mental health support, and referral pathways.
04. **Engage Men and Boys in Norm Change Interventions:** Expand initiatives like "Men in Maternity" to promote supportive male involvement in adolescent health.
05. **Strengthen School-Based Interventions:** Integrate SRH education, HPV vaccination, and GBV prevention into school curricula and extracurricular programs.
06. **Support Community Gatekeepers to Champion Norm Change:** Train religious and traditional leaders to promote positive norms around girls' education, delayed marriage, and SRH rights.

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Adolescent health outcomes are shaped long before young people enter health facilities, by gender norms, family expectations, and social systems. If we do not address these upstream factors, our clinical interventions will always arrive too late.

– Dr Iziaq Adekunle Salako



“

True inclusion means ensuring that no girl, whether living with disability, poverty, or social exclusion, is left behind in policies designed to protect adolescent health and wellbeing.

– H E Barr Chioma Uzodimma



“

The fabric of our service delivery system is not designed for adolescents, yet we expect them to thrive within it.

– Dr Amina Dorayi



“

If every girl had access to life skills and safe spaces, we would not be here discussing child marriage

– Dr Habiba Mohammed



“

Stigma is the biggest barrier. Adolescents avoid facilities not because services don't exist, but because they fear judgment

– Emmanuel Ajah



“

Adolescent health must be intentional, funded, and integrated across sectors.

– Dr Ovuoraye John



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 [6] Nigeria has vaccinated over 14 million girls against HPV since the national rollout.

Reclaiming Safe Motherhood: Shifting from Counting Deaths to Preventing Them



Panelists

- » Mansura Yahaya, State Maternal & Child Health Coordinator, Kano State Ministry of Health
- » Dr. Veronica Iwayemi, Acting Director of Medical Services & Disease Control, Lagos State Primary Health Care Board
- » Dr. Mohammed Bello Garuba, Deputy Director & Head of Health Services Division; MPDSR/MAMI Lead, National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA)

Moderator

Dr. Kemisola Agbaoye, Director of Programs, Nigeria Health Watch

Credit: Policy Innovation Centre & Nigeria Health Watch





Session Objectives

1. Identify the systemic and community-level drivers of maternal and perinatal mortality in Nigeria.
2. Examine state-level MPDSR implementation models and their impact on maternal health outcomes.
3. Explore national strategies for integrating MPDSR into the MAMI initiative.
4. Understand the role of legislation, accountability, and data systems in reducing preventable maternal deaths.
5. Discuss social norms, gender dynamics, and respectful maternity care as determinants of service uptake.
6. Recommend actionable strategies for strengthening maternal health systems across Nigeria.

Background

Nigeria continues to face one of the highest maternal mortality ratios globally, contributing approximately 20% of global maternal deaths. Despite decades of interventions, preventable maternal and perinatal deaths persist due to systemic gaps, weak accountability structures, and socio-cultural barriers. The Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response (MPDSR) system was introduced to shift Nigeria from counting deaths to preventing them through structured review, learning, and action. Nigeria's MPDSR context reflects one of the highest maternal mortality burdens globally an estimated ~993 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, with roughly 33,000 women dying annually and at least seven newborn deaths per maternal death, underscoring persistent gaps in surveillance and response.^{[1],[2]}

This session examined how states such as Kano and Lagos have institutionalized MPDSR, how national reforms, such as the Maternal and Newborn Mortality Reduction Innovation (MAMI) initiative, are transforming accountability, and what legislative, operational, and social shifts are required to reclaim safe motherhood in Nigeria.

Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Household Power Dynamics:** Many women are unable to seek antenatal or delivery care without male approval, which significantly delays care seeking and increases mortality risk. ^{[3],[4]}
02. **Fear of Sanctions:** Health workers often fear punitive consequences when maternal deaths occur, which discourages transparent reporting. Research confirms that blame cultures undermine the effectiveness of MPDSR and reduce learning. ^[5]
03. **Low Male Involvement in Maternal Health:** Men often lack awareness of pregnancy risks and do not participate in birth preparedness, which contributes to delays in seeking care. Research shows that male engagement improves maternal health outcomes. ^[6]

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Weak MPDSR Coverage at Community Level:** Many states conduct MPDSR only in facilities, leaving out the majority of maternal deaths that occur in the community ^[7]

02. **Stigma and Underreporting of Community Deaths:** Families frequently conceal maternal deaths occurring at home or with traditional birth attendants due to stigma or mistrust of authorities. Underreporting is a major barrier to accurate maternal mortality surveillance. ^[8]
03. **Inadequate Health System Capacity:** Shortages of skilled birth attendants, poor infrastructure, and limited emergency obstetric care contribute to preventable deaths. Health system readiness is a key determinant of maternal survival. ^[9]
04. **Attitude of Service Providers:** Many women experience verbal abuse, neglect, or mistreatment during childbirth, which discourages facility use. ^[10]
05. **Poor Data Quality and Limited Use of Evidence:** Many states collect MPDSR data but do not translate findings into action. Data-to-action gaps undermine maternal mortality reduction efforts. ^[11]
06. **Fragmented Coordination Across Government Levels:** National, state, and facility actors often work in silos, which weakens accountability. Coordinated governance improves maternal health outcomes. ^[12]
07. **Limited Legislative Backing for MPDSR:** Without legal mandates, reporting remains inconsistent, and non-compliance goes unpunished. ^[13]

Progress and Success Stories

- » **Kano State's Long-Standing MPDSR Implementation:** Kano has institutionalized MPDSR since 2012, with quarterly reviews, annual audits, and integrated quality of care approaches that have strengthened accountability.
- » **Lagos State's Data Driven Model:** Lagos has moved from data collection to action, establishing MPDSR committees at all levels, conducting community verbal and social autopsies, and securing a dedicated MPDSR budget line.
- » **National MAMI Initiative:** NPHCDA's MAMI model shifts maternal health from number-based tracking to individualized follow-up, household enumeration, and proactive risk management.
- » **Male Engagement Innovations:** Lagos' "Men in Maternity" program uses empathy belly simulations to build male understanding of pregnancy risks and improve support for facility-based care.



Policy Recommendations



01. **Legislate Mandatory MPDSR Reporting:** Taking lessons from efforts during the 9th National Assembly, federal and state authorities should enact laws requiring all maternal and perinatal deaths (at facility and in the community) to be reported, reviewed, and acted upon.^[14]
02. **Strengthen Community Linked MPDSR:** Governments should institutionalize verbal and social autopsies to capture deaths occurring outside facilities.
03. **Invest in Health Worker Training:** States should scale respectful maternity care, emergency obstetric care, and MPDSR training for all cadres of health workers.
04. **Integrate MPDSR into MAMI Nationwide:** National and state governments should align MPDSR processes with MAMI's individualized follow-up model.
05. **Increase Budgetary Allocation for Maternal Health:** States should create dedicated MPDSR budget lines and fund emergency obstetric care, referral systems, and community surveillance.
06. **Promote Male Engagement:** Governments should scale evidence-based male involvement programs to address household decision-making barriers.
07. **Strengthen Data Systems:** States should improve MPDSR data quality, analysis, and use for planning, supervision, and resource allocation.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Establish Community MPDSR Committees:** Local governments should create community-level review structures to identify social contributors to maternal deaths.
02. **Deploy Community Health Workers for Follow Up:** MAMI-aligned home visits should track ANC attendance, birth preparedness, and danger signs.
03. **Implement Respectful Maternity Care Interventions:** Facilities should adopt client exit interviews, supportive supervision, and accountability mechanisms.
04. **Expand Emergency Transport Schemes:** States should strengthen referral pathways, including community-based transport systems.
05. **Conduct Social Norms Interventions:** Programs should engage religious leaders, traditional rulers, and male household heads to shift harmful norms.
06. **Scale Digital MPDSR Platforms:** States should adopt digital reporting tools to improve the timeliness and accuracy of maternal death reporting.

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Maternal and perinatal mortality is not just a statistic; it is a human tragedy that demands learning and action

– *Mansura Yahaya*



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We had to move from blaming to learning, because most maternal deaths are preventable.

– *Dr Veronica Iwayemi*



“

MAMI is a paradigm shift; we now know pregnant women by name, not by numbers.

– *Dr Mohammed Bello Garuba*



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From Barriers to Access: Addressing HPV Vaccination Disparities In Nigeria



Panelists

- » Dr. Chito Nwana, Obstetrician & Gynecologist; CEO/MD, Tabitha Medical Center
- » Abisola Akindolire, Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI) Nigeria
- » Professor Amos Bassi, Public Health Specialist; Deputy Provost, Nile University
- » Mercy, Cervical Cancer Survivor (special participant)

Moderator

Dr. Ishak Lawal, Consultant Obstetrician & Gynecologist; CEO, End Cervical Cancer Nigeria

Credit: Policy Innovation Centre & Gates Foundation





Session Objectives

1. Identify key barriers to HPV vaccination uptake across Nigeria.
2. Examine data quality challenges and their implications for planning and donor support.
3. Explore the role of private sector engagement in expanding access.
4. Understand community-level drivers of vaccine hesitancy and refusal.
5. Highlight survivor experiences to inform policy and advocacy.
6. Recommend strategies for improving equitable HPV vaccine delivery.

Background

Cervical cancer remains one of the leading causes of cancer-related deaths among women in Nigeria, despite being almost entirely preventable through HPV vaccination and early screening. Nigeria accounts for a significant proportion of the global cervical cancer burden, with an estimated 13,676 new cases and 7,093 deaths annually.^[1] Persistent disparities in HPV vaccination uptake, driven by social norms, misinformation, infrastructural gaps, and inequitable access, continue to undermine national elimination goals.

Since Nigeria launched its national HPV vaccination programme in October 2023, Nigeria has vaccinated over 12 million girls against HPV, reducing their chances of developing cervical cancer by up to 90%.^[2] However, disparities exist between in-school and out-of-school girls, urban and rural populations, and between public and private health sectors. This session examined the systemic, cultural, and operational barriers to HPV vaccination and explored strategies for improving equitable access across Nigeria.

Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Myths and Misconception:** Widespread misconceptions such as beliefs that HPV vaccines cause infertility or promote promiscuity remain major barriers. Studies confirm that misinformation and moral framing significantly reduce HPV vaccine acceptance in African contexts.^[3]
02. **Cultural and Religious Norms:** Community gatekeepers often influence parental consent. Research shows that religious leaders' endorsement strongly predicts HPV vaccine uptake in low and middle-income countries.^[4]
03. **Silence Around Sexual Health:** HPV is sexually transmitted, and discussions about adolescent sexuality are often taboo. This silence contributes to parental refusal and low awareness consistent with findings that sociocultural discomfort around sexual health reduces HPV vaccine uptake.^[5]
04. **Lack of Parental Consent:** Adolescents cannot self-consent, and parental refusal driven by fear, misinformation, or lack of awareness remains a major barrier. Evidence shows that parental knowledge is a key determinant of HPV vaccine acceptance.^[6]

out-of-school children, making equitable vaccine delivery difficult. Studies highlight that out-of-school adolescents face the greatest barriers to HPV vaccination.^[7]

02. **Distrust in Health Systems:** Historical skepticism toward vaccines, especially in northern Nigeria, continues to influence HPV vaccine acceptance. This aligns with research documenting vaccine hesitancy linked to distrust in government and global health institutions.^[8]
03. **Geographical and Security Barriers:** Conflict-prone regions, poor road networks, and hard-to-reach communities hinder vaccine delivery, consistent with evidence that insecurity reduces immunization coverage in LMICs.^[9]
04. **Data Quality and Reporting Gaps:** Nigeria's routine health information system captures only 60–65% accurate data, according to Prof. Bassi. Poor data quality undermines immunization planning and donor confidence.
05. **Limited Integration of Private Health Sector:** Private health facilities serve over 60% of Nigerians^[10], yet they are poorly integrated into HPV vaccination programs. Studies show that excluding private providers widens inequities in vaccine access.^[11]
06. **Cost Barriers for Older Adolescents:** While vaccines are free for 9 – 14 year-olds, older girls must pay, an unaffordable cost for many families.

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Out-of-School Girls Remain Underserved:** School-based delivery excludes millions of girls. Nigeria has one of the world's highest numbers of

07. **Health Worker Knowledge Gaps:** Some health workers lack adequate training on HPV vaccination, contributing to hesitancy and misinformation. Evidence shows that provider recommendation is one of the strongest predictors of vaccine uptake.^[12]

Progress and Success Stories

- » **Record-Breaking National Rollout:** Nigeria vaccinated over 12 million girls since the inception of the national HPV vaccination campaign, which is a milestone towards cervical cancer elimination.
- » **Strong Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration:** NPHCDA, GAVI, WHO, CHAI, JSI, and the civil society coordinated efforts to support vaccine introduction.

- » **Growing Survivor Advocacy:** Survivors like Mercy are increasingly included in policy dialogues, aligning with global best practices in cancer advocacy.
- » **Community Engagement Models:** Engagement with traditional and religious leaders has improved acceptance in several states.



Policy Recommendations



01. **Target Out-of-School Girls:** Use mobile clinics, community outreaches, and girl-centered mapping to reach underserved populations.
02. **Expand HPV Vaccine Eligibility and Coverage:** Increase the age range for free vaccination to include adolescents over the age of¹⁴.
03. **Strengthen Community Engagement:** Partner with religious leaders, traditional rulers, mothers-in-law, and community influencers to address myths and norms.
04. **Integrate Private Health Sector:** Include private clinics in vaccine distribution, reporting, and training.
05. **Improve Data Quality:** Strengthen DHIS2 reporting, supervision, and last-mile verification.
06. **Increase Domestic Financing:** Reduce reliance on donors by increasing federal and state budget allocations for HPV vaccines.
07. **Enhance Health Worker Training:** Provide continuous training on HPV, cervical cancer, and vaccine communication.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Deploy Mobile Vaccination Units:** Especially in conflict-prone and hard-to-reach areas.
02. **Develop HPV Social and Behavior Change (SBC) Toolkits:** Tailored for parents, teachers, religious leaders, and adolescents.
03. **Strengthen School Health Programs:** Integrate HPV vaccination into routine school health services.
04. **Establish Survivor Support and Advocacy Networks:** Empower survivors to lead awareness campaigns.
05. **Implement Community-Based Data Validation:** Engage local volunteers to verify vaccination records.
06. **Subsidize HPV Vaccines in Private Facilities:** Reduce cost barriers for older adolescents.

Beyond Health: Positioning Family Planning as a Cornerstone of Gender Equity and Socioeconomic Growth



Panelists

- » Dr. Fejiri Chinye-Nwoko, Managing Director/CEO, Nigerian Solidarity Support Fund
- » Jemima Osunde, Actress, Physiotherapist, Public Health Advocate
- » Rhoda Robinson, Founder & Executive Director, HACEY Health Initiative
- » Yusuf Nuhu, Senior Lead, Advocacy & Country Engagement, Family Planning 2030 (FP2030) – North, West & Central Africa

Chair

Dr. Salma Ibrahim Anas, Special Adviser to the President on Health, Nigeria

Moderator

Margaret Bolaji, Manager for Youth Partnerships at Family Planning 2030 (FP2030) - North, West and Central Africa

Credit: Family Planning 2030 (FP2030)





Session Objectives

1. Demonstrate how FP contributes to gender equity, poverty reduction, and socioeconomic mobility.
2. Identify barriers to FP uptake and explore cross sectoral strategies for improving access.
3. Highlight the role of community, religious, and political leaders in shifting norms and driving acceptance.
4. Examine financing models, including domestic resource mobilization and private sector engagement.
5. Explore how FP can advance youth empowerment, reproductive autonomy, and long term national development.

Background

Family planning (FP) is globally recognized as one of the most cost effective interventions for improving maternal health, advancing gender equity, and accelerating socioeconomic development. Evidence shows that access to modern contraception can reduce maternal mortality by up to 30% and significantly improve women's educational attainment, labor force participation, and long term earnings^{[1],[2]} Nigeria has made incremental progress, including the integration of FP commodities into the national essential medicines list and sustained federal funding; however, the modern contraceptive prevalence rate remains below 20%^[3], with uptake even lower in high-burden states. Persistent donor dependence, sociocultural resistance, and weak domestic financing continue to undermine progress.

The session emphasized that FP must be reframed not merely as a health intervention but as a cornerstone of national development, influencing poverty reduction, youth empowerment, gender equity, and human capital outcomes. Countries with higher contraceptive prevalence experience faster economic growth, reduced dependency ratios, and improved social mobility.^[4]

Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Sociocultural Misconceptions:** FP is often framed as a foreign or anti cultural agenda, despite longstanding indigenous birth spacing practices. This misconception fuels resistance and limits community ownership.^[5]
02. **Patriarchy:** Male dominance in household decision making restricts women's autonomy over reproductive choices. Women with limited decision making power have significantly lower contraceptive uptake.^[6]
03. **Culture of Silence:** FP remains a taboo topic in many communities, limiting open dialogue, youth education, and informed decision making.

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Donor Dependence:** Over 70% of FP financing in Nigeria is donor funded. As global assistance declines, sustainability is at risk.
02. **Leadership Inequities:** Although women constitute over 70% of Nigeria's health workforce, fewer than 30% occupy leadership roles, weakening gender responsive policy design.^[7]

03. **Weak Domestic Resource Mobilization:** Only a handful of states consistently allocate and release FP budgets.
04. **Commodity Access and Affordability:** FP commodities are often unavailable or unaffordable in pharmacies and private outlets, especially for low income women.
05. **Fragmented Service Delivery:** FP remains siloed within the health sector, limiting integration with education, information, and social development systems.
06. **Community Disempowerment:** Limited engagement of traditional and religious leaders undermines sustained behavior change and local accountability.
07. **Supply Chain and Local Manufacturing Gaps:** Nigeria lacks local production of FP commodities, increasing costs and supply instability.
08. **Youth Access Barriers:** Adolescents face stigma, misinformation, and provider bias, limiting their ability to access confidential FP services.^[8]

Progress and Success Stories

- » **Integration into Essential Drug List:** FP commodities are now recognized as essential medicines and introduced into the national Essential Medicines List (EML), improving legitimacy and procurement pathways.
- » **State-Level Budget Commitments:** Lagos, Sokoto, and other states have demonstrated strong FP financing through basket-funding mechanisms.
- » **Community-Driven Solutions:** High-burden states are adopting participatory approaches where community and religious leaders co-design FP strategies.
- » **Youth-Led Advocacy:** FP2030's youth platforms are equipping young people with knowledge, agency, and peer-education tools.
- » **Private-Sector Innovation:** Emerging models such as FMCG-style distribution and pharmacy-based access are expanding availability beyond public facilities.
- » **Media-Driven Awareness:** Nollywood actors and influencers are using storytelling to normalize FP and challenge stigma, increasing public engagement.



Policy Recommendations



01. **Institutionalize Domestic FP Financing:** Mandate annual FP budget lines at the national and sub-national levels, with transparent release and tracking mechanisms.
02. **Strengthen Gender Responsive Leadership:** Pass legislation and implement policies that increase women's representation in health leadership and governance structures.
03. **Integrate FP Across Sectors:** Embed FP education and messaging within information, education, youth development, and social welfare systems.
04. **Scale Community Led Accountability:** Establish community scorecards and participatory monitoring frameworks involving traditional, religious, and youth leaders.
05. **Advance Local Manufacturing:** Prioritize incentives and partnerships to produce FP commodities domestically, reducing costs and supply disruptions.
06. **Normalize FP Through Media and Culture:** Partner with legacy and new media platforms to deliver culturally resonant FP narratives.
07. **Strengthen Youth Friendly Policies:** Remove legal and administrative barriers that restrict adolescents' access to confidential FP services.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Expand Access Points Beyond Health Facilities:** Leverage pharmacies, FMCG networks, and community outlets to increase availability of affordable FP commodities.
02. **Strengthen Youth Focused FP Education:** Scale youth led platforms that provide SRH information, agency building, and confidential access pathways.
03. **Enhance Community Engagement Models:** Train and support community, religious, and political leaders as FP champions to shift norms and increase acceptance.
04. **Develop Subsidized Pricing Models:** Introduce tiered pricing and voucher systems to ensure low income women can access FP without financial hardship.
05. **Promote Male Involvement:** Implement targeted programs that engage men as partners, supporters, and advocates for FP and gender equity.
06. **Integrate FP into Social Protection:** Link FP services with poverty alleviation programs, education initiatives, and women's economic empowerment schemes.
07. **Strengthen Supply Chain Systems:** Improve last mile distribution, forecasting, and logistics to ensure consistent availability of FP commodities.

“

Family planning is a proven game changer, we know that when a woman is not exposed to unintended pregnancy, she is not exposed to the risks of pregnancy-related complications or childbirth.

— *Dr Salma Ibrahim Anas*



“

Poverty is one of the most dehumanizing things. Family planning gives people choices, and choice is the opposite of poverty.

— *Jemima Osunde*



“

We must divorce ourselves from the idea that family planning belongs only in the health sector.

— *Dr Fejiri Chinye-Nwoko*



“

Domestic resource mobilization is the pivot for national development, donor assistance is declining, and the reality must change.

— *Yusuf Nuhu*



“

Family planning is a key component of life planning.

— *Rhoda Robinson*



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Empowering Voices: Advancing Gender Equity Through Education



Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Strengthening Women's Leadership in Academic Economic Institutions in Nigeria



Panelists

- » Prof. Mercy Ada Anyiwe, Department of Economics, University of Benin.
- » Dr. Patricia Ajayi, Department of Economics, University of Ibadan
- » Prof. Michael Kunnuji, Department of Sociology, University of Lagos.

Moderator

Adekemi Omole, Gender and Social Inclusion Lead, Policy Innovation Centre

Credit: Policy Innovation Centre





Session Objectives

1. Identify and analyse visible and invisible barriers to women's leadership in academic economics and related departments.
2. Examine how gender norms, socialisation and impostor syndrome shape women's own perceptions of leadership eligibility.
3. Interrogate institutional practices, informal networks and power structures that perpetuate gendered inequalities.
4. Identify and explore the adoption of recommended interventions to strengthen gender-transformative reform in Nigerian universities.

Background

Women remain under-represented in academic leadership in Nigeria, particularly within the field of economics and related social sciences. Empirical studies show that women hold less than 35% of academic positions overall and are more concentrated in non-leadership positions, while senior management and principal officer positions are dominated by men.¹ Drawing on lived experiences, the panel opined that this under-representation is not the product of inadequate qualification but the cumulative outcome of inequitable institutional cultures, gendered power relations, and invisible but powerful constraints that shape who progresses into leadership.²

Furthermore, the influence of social norms and informal power structures over access and ascent to leadership positions cannot be overstated. Women academics experience intense work-family conflict, constrained mobility, and even household vetoes over women's career aspirations to male-dominated fields and social networks.³ This is especially the case economics as a discipline, being historically male-dominated and associated with authority, rationality and policy power; gendered divisions of labour, and opaque, social network-driven recruitment practices sustain women's exclusion.⁴ These dynamics make it essential to interrogate how social norms and institutional practices intersect to shape women's leadership trajectories in academic economic institutions and to identify pathways for systemic reform.

Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Gendered Division of Labour and Normative Gatekeeping:** Women academics continue to shoulder disproportionate domestic responsibilities, limiting their bandwidth for research and other activities that underpin promotion. Functioning as gatekeepers, family members may reinforce patriarchal expectations on a 'woman's place' and wittingly or unwittingly discourage career progression.⁵
02. **Gender Politics, Stereotypes and Behavioural Policing:** Broader evidence suggests that women in Nigerian universities may face more scrutiny and dismissive treatment, and are expected to perform far better than their male counterparts to be seen as competent. Similarly, women who are already in leadership are subjected to behaviour policing, including prescriptive expectations, in contrast to their male counterparts.⁶
03. **Impostor Syndrome and Internalised Subordination:** Internalised patriarchal narratives produce an inferiority complex, with implications for self-efficacy, voice and willingness to exercise authority; priming women to retreat from leadership positions, defer or overcompensate when in leadership.⁷

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Covert Institutional Discrimination and Gatekeeping:** Despite competence, covert exclusionary practices result in women being quietly displaced from nominations for leadership based on assumptions that a man 'fits' or 'needs' it more. This hidden gatekeeping translates to a mismatch in women's numerical presence in universities and representation in leadership.
02. **Exclusion from Networks, Mentorship and Information Flows:** Lack of mentorship, limited sponsorship and exclusion from male-dominated social and professional networks continue to negatively impact support, restricting women's access to leadership opportunities and roles.⁸
03. **Bias in Succession Traditions and Patronage:** Succession and appointment processes in Nigerian universities often operate through patronage and occasionally informal negotiation, making them particularly vulnerable to gender bias.⁹

Progress and Success Stories

- » At the University of Ibadan, the establishment of a Gender Mainstreaming Office (GMO) has coincided with a rise in women in leadership. The GMO continues to push for gender-responsive policy advocacy and monitoring.
- » At the Department of Sociology at the University of Lagos, three of the last four Heads of Department have been women, suggesting institutional norms have shifted towards a more gender-inclusive leadership profile and succession culture.
- » At the University of Benin, the availability of benefits and systems, such as sabbaticals and intra/inter-institutional mobility provides room to curate a more enabling environment for women academics to navigate career progression.



Policy Recommendations



01. **Strengthen Gender Mainstreaming:** Institutionalise and adequately resource GMOs to lead gender-responsive policies. Develop oversight mechanisms to prevent gender-related policies from being undermined or selectively applied.
02. **Enforce Transparent Succession Systems:** Implement clear, unbiased succession criteria to limit discretionary gatekeeping.
03. **Democratise Leadership Information Flows:** Ensure all leadership opportunities, processes and related aids are announced formally and equitably, reducing dependence on male-dominated informal networks.
04. **Integrate Gender Accountability Measures:** Conduct periodic gender audits of leadership structures and assess compliance.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Develop Women's Leadership Pipelines:** Design structured leadership development programmes focusing on governance, negotiation, organisational politics, and strategic communication for women in economics.
02. **Institutionalise Mentorship:** Pair scholars and formally recognise mentorship for leadership succession as part of academic workload.
03. **Equalise Institutional Support Systems:** Institutionalise equitable access to administrative assistance, workplace amenities and high quality childcare services for women in leadership, recognising these supports as essential redress for gendered labour burdens.
04. **Tackle Impostor Syndrome Systematically:** Create coaching and reflective spaces to target internalised gendered biases.
05. **Adopt Evidence-Based Practices:** Challenge resistance to feedback and promote openness to evolving best practices.

“

In the field of economics, very few women have attained leadership positions, and in the history of Nigeria, only one female has been chief economic advisor and economist. When women in economics rise to leadership positions, they need to rise and mentor the younger ones.

— Dr Patricia Ajayi



“

The first step is to be aware that there is something you want to change, and that you're committed to changing that thing. It can happen, but whoever is going to do that must come to that realization that there is need for a change.

— Prof Michael Kunnuji



“

Impediments that disturb women from advancing, particularly in academic economics are numerous. They are not visible, but they are there, and it's doing a whole lot of harm to us.

— Prof Mercy Ada Anyiwe



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When Systems Shift: Centering Girls in the Future of Policy, Power and Participation



Panelists

- » Omowumi Ogunrotimi, Executive Director, Gender Mobile
- » Progress Umoh, Speaker, Nigerian Children's Parliament
- » Jonathan Abakpa, Advocacy & Youth Program Officer, Plan International Nigeria

Moderator

Pelemo Nyajo, Former Shadow Country Director, Plan International Nigeria

Credit: Plan International Nigeria





Session Objectives

1. Examine how civil society and youth-led movements can bridge policy gaps by embedding girls' voices in governance and institutional reform.
2. Identify strategies to mobilise girls for substantive participation in policy processes and power structures.
3. Propose systemic reforms that shift resources towards girls' leadership within national institutions.

Background

Despite decades of advocacy, international commitments, and targeted programmatic efforts, over 7.6 million girls remain out of school, with secondary enrolment rates stagnant at 48% and 66% dropping out before completing junior secondary education, while confronting interlocking structural barriers that systematically undermine their potential.^[1] These barriers include pervasive gender-based violence and systematic exclusion from community and institutional decision-making. They also encompass chronically unsafe and under-resourced learning environments that threaten both physical security and academic progress. Also, deeply entrenched social norms, rooted in patriarchal expectations and early marriage practices, constrain girls' agency, aspirations, and life opportunities from early childhood.^[2] Transforming outcomes for girls demands comprehensive systemic redesign, i.e., embedding their voices, leadership, and decision-making authority as political actors within governance, rather than fragmented or short-term interventions, offering tokenistic, symbolic, or performative inclusion that fails to challenge underlying power imbalances.^[3]

Normative Issues and Challenges

- 01. **Gender-Based Violence:** There is widespread sexual violence, unsafe schools, and child marriage. Research confirms that GBV undermines girls' education, mental health, and long-term economic mobility.^[4]
- 02. **Harmful Social Norms:** Norms that silence girls, restrict mobility, or normalize early marriage persist. Evidence shows that social norms strongly shape gender inequality and limit girls' agency.^[5]

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

- 01. **Weak Institutional Capacity:** Even when policies exist, implementation is inconsistent. Studies show that governance fragmentation undermines gender reforms.^[6]
- 02. **Limited Coordination Across Sectors:** Education, security, justice, and social welfare systems operate in silos. Evidence shows that multi-sectoral coordination is essential for addressing violence and exclusion.^[7]

- 03. **Exclusion from Decision-Making:** Girls and youth are often invited symbolically rather than structurally. Studies show that tokenistic participation reinforces power imbalances and limits meaningful influence.^[8]
- 04. **Inequitable Power Structures:** There are issues around political gatekeeping, tokenism, and youth exclusion. Research shows that young people especially girls face systemic barriers to political participation in patriarchal societies.^[9]
- 05. **Political Economy Constraints:** Power dynamics, bureaucratic resistance, and political incentives shape policy uptake. Political economy analysis is essential for sustainable reform.
- 06. **Under-resourced Civil Society:** Civil society often fills gaps left by government but lacks scale. Research confirms that CSOs cannot sustainably replace state systems.
- 07. **Digital Inequality:** Girls' limited access to ICT (e.g., schools restricting girls from using computers) reflects broader digital gender gaps. Studies show that digital exclusion deepens gender inequality.^[10]

Progress and Success Stories

- » **Systems-Oriented Approaches by Civil Society:** Model Anti-Sexual Harassment Policies for Educational Institutions in Nigeria – co-created with ICPC and adopted by all 36 states – demonstrates scalable systems change.^[11]
- » **Children's Parliament Leadership:** Progress Umoh's leadership illustrates how girls can articulate policy demands and influence national discourse when given platforms.^[12]



Policy Recommendations



01. **Institutionalise Girls' Participation:** Mandate permanent seats for girls and youth representation in all ministries, councils, and parliamentary committees. Require mandatory child and youth impact assessments for every national policy.
02. **Strengthen Multi-Sectoral Coordination:** Require integration of education, justice, security, and social welfare systems through formal inter-ministerial protocols to holistically address violence and exclusion.
03. **Scale Systems-Level Prevention Frameworks:** Adopt anti-sexual harassment policies across all tertiary and secondary institutions. Establish national compliance monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.
04. **Protect Civic Space for Youth Organizing:** Amend legislation to decriminalize peaceful protest and digital activism. Establish designated safe channels for youth-led advocacy.
05. **Invest in Digital Access for Girls:** Ensure equal ICT access for girls across all schools. Allocate dedicated funding for digital literacy programmes targeting marginalised girls.
06. **Strengthen Government–Civil Society Partnerships:** Mandate co-creation protocols for all gender policy development. Establish formal mechanisms to identify and support reform-minded public officials.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Youth and Girls' Leadership Hubs:** Establish dedicated training, mentorship, and policy engagement spaces to build sustainable leadership pipelines.
02. **Community-Led Accountability Mechanisms:** Create local monitoring committees to strengthen school safety, GBV response, and policy implementation accountability.
03. **National Girls' Policy Review Council:** Form a permanent advisory body to systematically review and shape national education and gender reforms.
04. **Digital Advocacy Networks:** Require secure platforms and training to enable coordinated, safe online campaigns amplifying girls' voices in policy discourse.
05. **Intersectional Data Systems:** Implement comprehensive disaggregated data collection (gender, disability, location, socioeconomic status) to drive evidence-based policy targeting.

“

The true measure of a nation is in the dignity it gives to its daughters. Girls' voices must be structural, not seasonal.

— *Progress Umoh*



“

Civil society sits at the intersection between policy commitments and lived realities, and the real question is not whether systems exist, but whether they are shifting power, voice, and outcomes for those most affected.

— *Pelemo Nyajo*



“

We need to create our own table and invite them, not wait to be invited.

— *Jonathan Abakpa*



“

Government will always listen to government. Identify reformers within government institutions and use them to unlock access.

— *Omowumi Ogunrotimi*



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Youth Survival, Hustle, and Aspiration: Is There Really a Nigerian Dream?



Panelists 1

- » Gideon Ekong, Graduate, Nile University
- » Ayowonuola Ajala, Intern, Policy Innovation Centre
- » Faith Ebri Lawrence, Intern, Policy Innovation Centre

Panelists 2

- » Kwaji Ble Ngida, Associate, Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG)
- » Funmilayo Oyekanmi, Founder, Human & Social Sustainability Network Africa
- » Yusuff Liadi Abiodun, Executive Director, ILead Africa/Global Ambassador, Youth Democracy Cohort, European Partnerships
- » Lilian Njeri Mbuti, Youth Partnerships & Admin Officer, Transform Health Coalition

Panelists 3

- » Nafisat Adejuwon, ED, NAF Foundation/Nalafem Envoy to the African Union
- » Mimshach Obioha, CEO TeleSoftas Nigeria

Moderators

- » Adanna Omeje, Research Economist, Policy Innovation Centre
- » Prince Dirisu, Graduate, Nile University

Credit: Policy Innovation Centre





Session Objectives

1. Assess whether a shared 'Nigerian Dream' shapes youth aspirations and mobility in today's Nigeria.
2. Examine the structural, social, and gendered barriers constraining youth empowerment, leadership, and innovation.
3. Identify practical pathways for positioning young Nigerians to access economic and leadership opportunities.

Background

Nigeria has one of the youngest age structures globally, with more than half of its population under 30 and a median age of roughly 18 years, positioning the country at the center of debates on demographic risks^[1] Yet, young Nigerians face persistent, entrenched structural barriers, including high and persistent youth unemployment, inflation, pervasive insecurity, constrained upward mobility, and weak social protection systems. These realities shape aspirations, survival strategies, and the widespread 'hustle culture' that defines contemporary Nigerian youth identity. This session highlights the tension between aspiration and structural constraints, the rise of 'japa' (emigration for safety and opportunity), and contested notions of a 'Nigerian Dream' grounded in hard work, dignity, and equitable reward.^[2] It asks: What changes would enable young Nigerians to thrive at home?

Normative Issue and Challenge

- 01. Social Norms Reinforcing Inequality:** Gender norms, expectations around early marriage, and patriarchal structures limit young women's aspirations. Studies confirm that restrictive norms reduce girls' educational and economic opportunities. Evidence shows that GBV and harmful cultural practices reduce educational attainment and long-term economic mobility.^[3]

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

- 01. High Youth Unemployment and Underemployment:** Nigeria's youth unemployment rate remains among the highest globally. Studies show that a lack of decent work fuels migration, informal labor, and social frustration.^[4]
- 02. Weak Pathways from Education to Employment:** The absence of structured career pathways, internships, and related issues has contributed to the fragmentation of the education-to-work transition and unmet labor market needs in Nigeria.^[5]
- 03. Erosion of Trust:** Many young people no longer believe Nigeria can offer them stability or upward mobility, fueling the 'japa' migration wave. Research shows that declining trust in institutions reduces youth civic engagement and national optimism.^[6]

- 04. Normalization of Hustle Culture:** Youth are pressured to "hustle" for survival in an economy with limited formal jobs. Scholars note that hustle culture emerges in contexts of precarity and weak state support.^[7]
- 05. Stigma Around Failure and Vulnerability:** Nigerian youth often face pressure to succeed quickly, leading to unrealistic expectations and mental health strain. Research shows that social pressure and stigma around failure contribute to anxiety and burnout among African youth.^[8]
- 06. Economic Hardship and Inflation:** Rising inflation erodes purchasing power, making survival difficult for young people. Furthermore, evidence shows that inflation disproportionately affects youth and low-income households.^[9]
- 07. Digital Divide and Unequal Access to Opportunities:** Studies show that digital exclusion widens inequality in LMICs. Many lack access to devices, connectivity, or digital literacy, and consequently, the global opportunities digital platforms offer.^[10]
- 08. Limited Government Support Systems:** Weak social protection, limited youth-targeted programs, and inconsistent policy implementation hinder youth development. Youth-focused (and led) policies in Nigeria often lack funding and continuity.^[11]

Progress and Success Stories

Youth Resilience and Innovation: Despite structural barriers, Nigerian youth continue to excel in tech, sports, arts, and entrepreneurship, demonstrating global competitiveness. Furthermore, young Nigerians are increasingly founding organizations, leading advocacy movements, and shaping policy conversations. This includes feats such as 'Box Office Hub', which supported 2,000+ startups/SMEs and created 5,000 jobs despite economic barriers, and 'Socialander', a Pan-African digital agency now serving VFD Group and expanding across five African countries plus the US.



Policy Recommendations

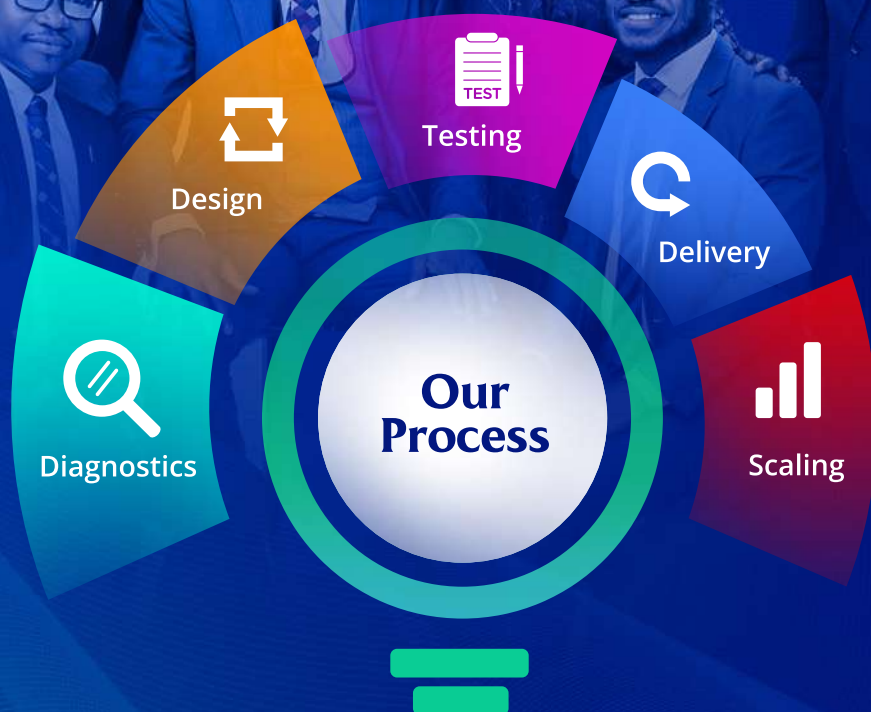


01. **Strengthen Employment Pathways:** Launch national school-to-work transition programs with mandatory traineeships.
02. **Universal Digital Access:** Subsidize devices for low-income youth and invest in affordable internet and youth tech hubs.
03. **Youth Social Protection Fund:** Allocate financial support for enterprise grants, unemployment stipends, and skills vouchers.
04. **Integrate Gender-Responsive Policies:** Address GBV, child marriage, and harmful norms through legal enforcement. Criminalize child marriage with 100% state-level prosecution targets and fund GBV survivor programs.
05. **Labor-Aligned Education:** Reform curricula to prioritise labour market needs, including soft skills and entrepreneurship.
06. **Support Youth-Led Organizations:** Provide funding, mentorship, and platforms for youth leadership and innovation, focusing on development budgets for youth-led CSOs and innovation grants.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Youth Job Hubs:** Establish local one-stop centers for career counseling, digital skills certification, and startup incubation.
02. **Develop Digital Portfolios:** Provide training to increase digital skills, with support to build and promote online portfolios.
03. **National Mentorship Network:** Connect youth with professionals across sectors, extending beyond formal institutions.
04. **Community Dialogues:** Engage parents, religious leaders, and traditional institutions to embrace gender-responsive norms.
05. **Youth Innovation Grants:** Provide seed funding for youth-led solutions in tech, health, agriculture, climate, and the SDGs.
06. **Pan-African Youth Exchange Programs:** Facilitate cross-country learning and collaboration, with a focus on Africa.



The **Behavioural Innovation Lab** is a multi-disciplinary team that uses evidence from behavioural science to improve design, testing and implementation of innovative solutions (policies, products and services) to complex human problems

Behavioural Diagnostics

Randomized Controlled Design

Social & Behavioural Change Communication Design

Behavioural Nudging

Product Design, Design Thinking & Innovation

Demand Creation & Social Marketing



Equitable Futures: New Voices and Strategies for Promoting Women in Leadership



Beyond the Seat: Building Systems that Support Women in Cabinets, Boardrooms, and Workplaces



Panelists

- » Racheal Pindar, Technical Lead, Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) Program, Nigeria Governors Forum Secretariat (Rep. Hauwa Haliru, Director, Gender Affairs, Nigeria Governors' Forum Secretariat)
- » Omowunmi Akingbohunbe, Executive Director, Women in Management, Business and Public Service (WIMBIZ)
- » Amina Oyagbola, Founder/Chairperson, Women in Successful Careers (WISCAR)
- » Jonathan Eigege, Associate Partner, DGA-Albright Stone Group

Moderator

Abosede George-Ogan, Founder & Executive Director, WILAN Global

Credit: Women in Leadership Coalition





Session Objectives

1. To examine structural and institutional barriers that limit women's influence after entering leadership positions.
2. To identify systemic reforms necessary to strengthen women's effectiveness in cabinets, boardrooms, and workplaces.
3. To explore mechanisms for sustaining women's inclusion, ensuring long-term institutional transformation.

Background

Women's political and economic representation across African countries remains structurally constrained by patriarchal norms, institutional biases, and gender-unequal distributions of labour. In Nigeria, historically, women occupy less than 7% of national parliamentary seats and fewer than 20% of board positions in formal-sector companies, despite comprising

nearly half the labour force.¹⁰ These gaps reflect structural rather than individual constraints, including inconsistent state-level adoption of affirmative action, weaker policy implementation and the absence of supportive infrastructures (e.g. care). Simply appointing a woman into high office does not automatically generate reform or influence. Without structural backing, such appointments are at best tokenistic.¹¹ These dynamics underscore the need to interrogate not only the barriers to women attaining leadership positions, but also the systemic reforms required to sustain women's effectiveness, legitimacy, continuity and planned succession once in senior roles.

Normative Issues and Challenges

01. Gendered Career Trajectories and Domestic Role Expectations: Societal expectations around marriage, childcare and domestic responsibilities constrain women's opportunities for continuous skill development and early-career progression. These role pressures contribute to differential career trajectories (as compared to their male counterparts) and higher attrition from leadership pipelines.¹²

02. Gender-Differentiated Expectations and Policing: Women in high-level positions often face heightened evaluative scrutiny and penalties for perceived missteps. This cultural script positions women as 'perfect' representatives, thereby intensifying pressure, constraining autonomy, and reinforcing tokenism.¹³

03. Patriarchal Norms and Sanctions: Despite their growing presence in Nigeria's formal workforce, women's authority in leadership is frequently undermined by patriarchal norms that construct leadership as masculine. This reduces perceived legitimacy, fuelling under-representation on corporate boards (listed firms average below 30% female representation).¹⁴

reducing access to experiential learning, strategic guidance, and advocacy. Structured mentorship is critical for strengthening women's career continuity and advancement into leadership.¹⁵

02. Uneven Adoption of Gender Inclusion Frameworks Across States: State-level variation in Nigeria's implementation of gender policies—including 35% affirmative action—produces inconsistent representation outcomes. Where statutory frameworks exist, such as in Kaduna State, women's representation improves; where absent, progress remains minimal.¹⁶

03. Non-Formalised Appointment Pathways: When women's inclusion is not institutionalised, discretionary appointments into political or corporate leadership remain vulnerable to instability, political transitions and lack of succession planning.¹⁷

04. Insufficient Public Investment in Care Infrastructure: Care responsibilities, often outsourced informally, can reduce women's participation and continuity in leadership pipelines. Comparative evidence from high-performing gender-equal countries illustrates the importance of state-supported childcare systems for sustaining women's leadership trajectories.¹⁸

05. Lack of Operational Resources and Structural Backing: Tokenism frequently places women in senior positions without corresponding substantive authority, or comparatively fewer organisational resources. Lack of sensitisation and gender-mainstreaming deficits contribute to a concentration in narrower portfolios with limited resources and influence.¹⁹

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. Limited Access to Structured Mentorship and Sponsorship Mechanisms: Many professional environments in Nigeria lack institutionalised mentorship systems,

Progress and Success Stories

- » **Incremental Political Will for Gender- Responsive Governance:** Some state-level governments in Nigeria are institutionalising gender inclusion. Kwara, Ekiti, Lagos, and Kaduna were identified as exemplars for inter-state learning.²⁰
- » **Women in Successful Careers (WISCAR) Mentoring Programme:** This programme provides role models, sponsorship, and experiential learning to increase the advancement of women in Nigeria's workforce, spotlighting long-term mentoring ecosystems.²¹
- » **WIMBIZ's WimBoard:** This initiative maintains a curated pool of board-ready Nigerian women. It has successfully increased visibility and placement, contributing to a rise in women's board representation and strengthening the leadership pipeline.²²



Policy Recommendations



01. **Mandate Implementation of Gender Quotas in Public Leadership:** In alignment with the National Gender Policy, enforce state-level executive orders mandating a minimum of 35% women in cabinets, senior civil service and leadership positions.
02. **Publish Gender Targets and Dashboards:** Require governments and listed companies to set, publicly disclose, and periodically review measurable gender-representation targets, using dashboards, for benchmarking and transparency.
03. **Institutionalise Gender-Responsive Governance:** Embed gender equity into recruitment, promotion and portfolio allocation through predictable, non-discretionary appointment systems across public and corporate institutions.
04. **Institutionalise Gender Mainstreaming and Auditing:** Integrate gender analysis into organisational policies, procedures and business plans, with gender indicators embedded in compliance audits and board-level reporting.
05. **Adopt Gender-Responsive Budgeting:** Require government and corporate actors to embed gender-responsive budgeting in planning cycles to support women's leadership pipelines and inclusion mechanisms.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Scale Structured Mentorship and Sponsorship:** Expand structured mentorship programmes to provide experiential learning, advocacy and pathways for women's advancement, including curated pipelines of 'board-ready' candidates. should include supporting SMEs by providing practical tools and cost-mitigation for adopting gender-responsive practices.
02. **Conduct System-Wide Sensitisation on the Business Case for Diversity:** Deliver sensitisation programmes for CEOs, boards, HR teams and organisational staff on the performance, governance and economic benefits of diverse leadership.
03. **Strengthen Workplace Care and Flexibility Measures:** Implement improved maternity and parental leave, hybrid/remote work options, and institutional childcare or supported childcare systems to reduce care-related attrition. This
04. **Showcase Role Models and Exemplars:** Actively identify, profile and promote women and institutions demonstrating effective gender-inclusive leadership to drive sectoral emulation and normative change.
05. **Leverage Coalitions and Movements for Reform:** Strengthen multi-stakeholder coalitions to advocate for the implementation of gender policies and link leadership reforms to broader labour, care and economic reforms.

“

If states truly want women in leadership we must move beyond words and take real steps, ensuring that states are able to pass executive orders or legislative bills mandating minimum 35% representation of women in leadership positions.

– *Racheal Pindar*



“

“Structured mentorship is extremely transformational. A mentor will become your sponsor and when you are not in the room, that sponsor becomes your advocate.

– *Amina Oyagbola*



“

After sensitization on the business case of a diverse board, policy and implementation becomes easier.

– *Omowunmi Akingbohungbe*



“

There is a very direct correlation between women's leadership and women's [increased] labour participation.

– *Jonathan Egege*



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Parity in Power: Advancing Women's Leadership for National Transformation



Panelists

- » Chief Mrs Osasu Igbiniedion Ogwuche, CEO, TOS Group
- » Dr. Chidozie Aja, Senior Special Adviser on Legislative Affairs to the Deputy Senate President
- » Dr. Bukky Shonibare, Executive Director, Invictus Africa
- » Ebi Alaibe Elezieanya, Founder I-Teach Africa initiative and founder the Einstein Group of Schools

Moderator

Dr Adaora O Sydney-Jack; Reserved Seats for Women's Campaign/TOS Foundation

Credit: TOS Group & Invictus Africa





Session Objectives

1. To explore institutional, social, and procedural barriers to equal representation in governance in Nigeria.
2. To analyse lessons from previous constitutional amendment cycles to inform strategies for the successful passage of the Reserved Seats Bill.
3. To identify mechanisms for strengthening public awareness, legislative support, and multi-stakeholder mobilisation for gender-inclusive constitutional reform.

Background

Women's political representation in Nigeria remains among the lowest globally and is widely recognised in academic literature as an outcome of entrenched structural, institutional, and socio-political constraints.²³ Despite comprising approximately 49% of Nigeria's population, women account for only 45 out of 993 in the State House of Assembly (4.5%), 19 out of 469 (3.8%) in the National Assembly, and 0 out of 36 State Governors.²⁴ These figures fall far below regional averages (e.g., 25% women in parliament), reflecting widespread exclusion across governance. Barriers such as party structures, resource gaps, and patronage networks disadvantage women in candidate selection, while their underrepresentation limits influence on policy and budgets, reinforcing a cycle of inequality.²⁵ Global evidence shows that temporary special measures, such as reserved seats, effectively break barriers to women's political participation.²⁶ Research from Rwanda, Uganda, and Tanzania indicates that constitutionally guaranteed women's seats lead to durable increases in legislative diversity, improved gender-responsive policymaking, and long-term shifts in political norms, particularly when embedded within constitutional frameworks.²⁷ Hence, for Nigeria, the Reserved Seats for Women's Bill (i.e. HB 1349 and SB 440) represents a historic step to equal representation in governance, and an opportunity to align the country with globally recognised democratic standards.

Normative Issue and Challenge

- 01. Patriarchal Attitudes Towards Women's Political Authority:** Entrenched norms and stereotypes fuel resistance to affirmative action and reinforce misconceptions that reserved seats constitute tokenism or preferential treatment.

acceptance as elected officials, preserving views of their political participation as atypical and limiting support for reform.

- 04. Public Awareness Gaps on Gender Legislation:** Evidence suggests that awareness of gender-related legislation in Nigeria remains low; for example, a national survey found that over half of Nigerians were unaware of the VAPP Act.²⁸ Limited knowledge of legal provisions reduces the capacity of citizens to participate meaningfully in constitutional reform.

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

- 01. Limited Legislative Understanding in Previous Amendment Cycles:** It has been noted that previous constitutional cycles, limited familiarity with the content, intent, and implications of the proposed bill contributed to their rejection. Misinterpretation of key provisions underscored the need for clearer, more sustained legislative engagement.

- 05. Procedural Barriers in the Constitutional Amendment Process:** The Nigerian Constitution requires a two-thirds majority of all members of each chamber—equivalent to 240 votes in the House of Representatives and 73 votes in the Senate, for any constitutional amendment to pass.²⁹ This high procedural threshold necessitates broad capacity and coalition-building.

- 02. Misaligned Advocacy Approaches in Earlier Efforts:** Campaigns have suffered from perceptions that they are confrontational, which has reduced their resonance with lawmakers. This is tied to gaps in tailored communication that presents political and social incentives for reform to the legislators, limiting the persuasive strength of engagements.

- 06. Uneven Local Dissemination of Reform Information:** Outreach activities encountered linguistic and contextual barriers across states, constraining the transmission of accurate information about the bill's content. Initiatives require collaboration with key stakeholders and community networks to support translation and localisation efforts.

- 03. Legitimacy and Representation Deficits:** Long-term marginalisation from political institutions restricts women's perceived

Progress and Success Stories

The Reserved Seats for Women's Bill has advanced the furthest in the current Assembly, relative to prior constitutional cycles. The bill has passed its first and second readings, undergone zonal public hearings, and is now moving toward a national public hearing, reflecting unprecedented political momentum. Advocacy coalitions have expanded awareness, deploying translations, local government mobilisation, and coordinated efforts with key stakeholders such as commissioners of women's affairs, traditional leaders and market associations. The increased visibility and the establishment of public platforms (e.g., reserveseatforwomen.org) demonstrate growing civic participation and support.³⁰



Policy Recommendations



01. **Adopt Constitutional Temporary Special Measures:** Amend the Constitution to establish reserved seats for women for four electoral cycles with a mandatory review after 16 years, ensuring the measure is corrective for stabilising parity.
02. **Comprehensive Legislative Engagement:** Drafting and distributing one structured briefings and explanatory notes for all legislators prior to constitutional voting to prevent misinterpretation of the bill's intent.
03. **Mandate Routine Civic Awareness Monitoring:** Introduce statutory requirements for public dissemination and continuous civic sensitisation on gender legislation to prevent misinformation on proposed reforms. This improves public engagement and strengthens the social mandate for passage.
04. **Formalise Engagement with Societal Gatekeepers:** Embed consultation with traditional rulers, religious leaders, and civic influencers into formal advocacy and consultation structures to strengthen legitimacy and sustain political pressure throughout the amendment process. Their inclusion ensures consistent messaging and broader elite alignment.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Expand Grassroots Sensitisation Platforms:** Scale multilingual, community-level outreach through collaboration with women's affairs ministries, traditional leaders, and civic organisations.
02. **Consolidate National–Subnational Advocacy Coalitions:** Strengthen coordinated networks of civil society actors, influencers, state-level champions, and grassroots organisers to maintain consistent pressure from the public hearing stage through final plenary voting. Unified messaging increases strategic leverage and reduces fragmentation.
03. **Develop and Publicise Citizen Education Tools:** Produce and publicise accessible explanatory materials including fact sheets, summaries, digital content, and bill breakdowns to close knowledge gaps. Equip and encourage citizens to access centralised portals should serve as repositories for official information and engagement resources.
04. **Integrate Monitoring Dashboards:** Track public support, legislative commitments and implementation readiness across states to sustain momentum and foster inter-state and inter-cycle learning.
05. **Build Advocacy Capacity for Evidence-Based Engagement:** Provide targeted training for advocates and citizens on how to articulate informed, data-grounded arguments addressing concerns such as cost, duration, and democratic value.
06. **Strengthen Digital and Petition-Based Civic Mobilisation:** Expand online advocacy through coordinated use of campaign websites, petitions, and social media channels to amplify visibility and demonstrate nationwide support. These platforms and possible virality serve as low-cost mechanisms for increasing citizen participation and sustaining public pressure.

“

This bill is not just a women's issue; it is a nation-building imperative.

– *Chief Mrs Osasu Igbiniedion Ogwuche*



“

A lot of women are interested in the reserved seats for women, and this is a corrective bill that will only run for 16 years.

– *Ebi Alaiibe Elezieanya*



“

Parliamentarians are not being compelled, but appealed to, and with that, interest has increased.

– *Dr Chidozie Aja*



“

Knowledge empowers; we cannot advocate for a bill we do not understand.

– *Dr Bukky Shonibare*



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Catalysing Change – Best Practices for Gender - Responsive Education and Governance



Panelists

- » Doris Mbadiwe, CEO, Interbau Foundation
- » Grace Obi-Ukpabi, Acting Director, Social Development, Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning
- » Sunday Sanusi Agbabiaka, National Data Manager, Gender-Based Violence, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs
- » Osah Oghale Gladys, Director, Co-curricular & Gender Unit, Lagos State Technical and Vocational Education Board (LASTVEB)
- » Dr. Tinuke Temitope, Director of Business Entrepreneurship, the Abuja Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI)

Moderator

Obidiran Omowumi Olumide, Deputy Director General, National Association of Small-Scale Industrialists (NASSI)

Credit: Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Skills Development for Youth Employment (SKYE II) Programme





Session Objectives

1. Analyse institutional mechanisms and cross-sector partnerships that strengthen gender-responsive governance.
2. Identify structural and operational barriers limiting women's participation in TVET, labour markets, and public-sector decision-making.
3. Spotlight coordinated reforms to demonstrate effective models for gender inclusion and share scalable practices.

Background

Nigerian public and private institutions, particularly in technical and vocational education, employment, construction, planning and budgeting have historically operated within male-dominant organisational cultures.^[1] Women remain significantly under-represented in national decision-making structures, yielding longstanding gendered barriers across both political and economic institutions.^[2] In TVET and employment, for example, industry systems and structures have long positioned technical careers as male domains; leadership positions, curricula and recruitment practices reflect this bias and constrain equal participation in skills acquisition and employment.^[3] At the same time, core governance instruments tend to operate in a largely gender-blind manner; resulting in weakened coordination across institutions, limited resource allocation for gender priorities, and uneven contribution to service delivery in areas such as GBV.^[4] Also, the absence of an integrated national data infrastructure has historically impeded evidence-based policy and accountability.^[5] These issues directly affect outcomes for women in high-impact areas such as in areas such as leadership, labour-market participation, and access to technical professions.^[6] Collectively, these realities illustrate how gender inequality is produced and sustained through the interaction of policy design, planning and budgetary allocations, administrative capacity, and the social norms that shape participation. The session, therefore, examined how coordinated gender mainstreaming, evidence-based planning and budgeting, and multi-sector partnerships can foster sustainability and an enabling environment that supports inclusion and change for women in Nigeria.^[7]

Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Persistent Cultural Stereotypes:** Social norms continue to shape perceptions of women's competency for technical and leadership roles, influencing recruitment, training participation, community support, and employer attitudes. These cultural scripts suppress women's labour-market engagement and reinforce male-centric institutional environments.³⁰
02. **Gendered Occupational Norms:** Technical and vocational fields in Nigeria remain historically male-dominated, reinforcing gender norms that limit entry, participation and career goals for women in these technical domains.³¹

compromise scalability, sustainability and institutionalisation of locally delivered interventions in the future.³²

02. **State-Level Variability in Gender Governance:** Adoption of gender-responsive planning and budgeting systems varies widely across states due to differing levels of political will and readiness, resulting in uneven national progress. This is compounded by issues such as the lack of uniform definitions (e.g. 'women-led' businesses) that give clarity to affirmative procurement policy, opening such policy interpretation to leakages.
03. **Fragmented Gender Mainstreaming:** Although gender policies exist at federal and state levels, institutional uptake is inconsistent, resulting in limited implementation, monitoring, and integration, and ultimately uneven outcomes across sectors.

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Limited Institutional Capacity:** Existing institutions may lack sufficient resources, trained personnel, and infrastructure to deliver sustained gender-responsive programming, leading to models that are overly dependent on external stakeholders. This may
04. **Limited Data Infrastructure:** While the national GBV dashboard marks important progress, persistent gaps in intersectional data, verification capacity, and system integration continue to limit effective national coordination and evidence-based policymaking.

Progress and Success Stories

- » LASVEB's gender-responsive reform has strengthened diversity and inclusion in TVET through gender-responsive school work plans, supported by school Gender Units, and capacity-building initiative implemented in partnership with GIZ across all technical colleges with focus on gender and disability inclusion in TVET.
- » Through large-scale sensitisation campaigns targeting secondary schools, communities, public institutions, and NYSC camps, the Inter-Bau Foundation supported by GIZ SKYE II Programme has expanded women's awareness of over 190 gender-neutral careers across construction sector, including paid employment and entrepreneurship career pathways for female construction professionals and artisan and increased employers' confidence in women competency through private sector engagement.
- » GBV data systems in Nigeria historically lacked national coordination, with fragmented reporting and limited technical capacity. National GBV Data Dashboard, now aggregates reports, with about 50,000 cases submitted and about 5,000 concluded prosecutions, representing unprecedented national visibility and justice-sector linkage.
- » ACCI, supported by GIZ, has launched a free national e-learning course on gender and disability inclusion. It is accessible countrywide at 'learn.accinigeria.com' and is available to all, with tailored multi-profile pathways.



Policy Recommendations



01. **Legislate Gender-Responsive Planning Requirements:** Federal and State governments should mandate the use of gender-responsive planning and budgeting framework, with measurable gender-responsive indicators across sectors and compliance integrated into budget defence processes, monitoring and reporting.
02. **Institutionalize Mandatory Gender and Disability Inclusion Training in Teacher Education:** The Federal Ministry of Education should mandate continuous professional development on gender and disability inclusion for all teachers to build teachers' competency in inclusive pedagogy, gender-sensitive language and materials, and the recognition of diverse learning disabilities, thereby preventing discrimination and promoting equitable learning outcomes.
03. **Strengthen GBV Data Governance Frameworks:** The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs should expand GBV data to include intersectional data, accredit training for key data stakeholders, and dedicated resources for capacity development, coordination and infrastructure management.
04. **Adopt a National Definition for Women-Owned/Led Businesses:** A uniform definition, "≥51% female ownership and operational control", should be approved and adopted by all stakeholders (public, private and development partners) to provide a credible basis for affirmative procurement by the Bureau of Public Procurement.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Expand Gender-Neutral Career Sensitisation and Advocacy Campaigns in Non-conventional Sectors:** TVET boards and CSOs should conduct annual sensitisation and advocacy programmes across schools, NYSC camps, and communities to expand awareness of technical career pathways for women.

Key stakeholders should be trained to use the dashboard effectively to improve coordination, reduce data fragmentation, and support evidence-based policy and program decisions.
02. **Institutionalise Gender-Inclusion Teachers Training Across all Education System:** Ministry of education and development partners should develop learning standard for gender-inclusion and disability-mainstreaming training for instructors and teachers across all learning institutions.
03. **Expand the National GBV Dashboard and Strengthen Stakeholder Capacity:** The government should partner with international NGOs and the private sector to expand the National GBV Dashboard, integrate intersectional data, and standardize reporting.
04. **Mainstream the ACCI-BEST E-Learning Platform:** Public institutions and private organisations should integrate the ACCI-BEST inclusion course into staff induction and annual training cycles to standardise inclusion competencies.
05. **Pilot and Refine Gender-Responsive Planning and Budgeting Framework:** Leveraging already existing interventions, Lagos, Edo and Plateau states should serve as structured pilots for gender-responsive planning and budgeting framework domestication at sub-national, generating evidence for national scale-up.

“

We used to have a male dominated TVET, in traits and in leadership. That gender gap created limitations for female students. So LASTVEB addressed this; we are committed to equity, inclusion, and skills for all.

– *Osah Gladys*



“

Construction careers are gender neutral. We have over 190 careers in the construction industry. Women can access all of them. We can participate.

– *Doris Mbadiwe*



“

Gender-responsive budgeting before or without a plan is not enough; it can't speak to the national plan, and subsequent available funds. We begin with gender-responsive planning, that we translate into budgeting.

– *Grace Obi-Ukpabi*



“

We now have close to 50,000 GBV cases reported nationally, and we have about 5,000 perpetrators whose cases have been concluded. The budding synergy between the Ministries of Justice gave us this good result.

– *Sunday Agbabiaka*



“

There are a lot of interventions from the government and development partners targeted towards women-owned and women-led businesses. But how are we sure that these interventions are actually reaching them? We need our own locally domiciled definition in Nigeria that supports what truly qualifies as a woman-owned business.

– *Tinuke Temitope*



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From Policy to Practice: First Ladies as Catalysts for Norm Change and Economic Empowerment



Goodwill Message

Her Excellency, Amb. Prof. Olufolake Abdulrazaq, The First Lady of Kwara State, Chairperson Nigeria Governors Spouses Forum.

Panelists

- » Her Excellency, Dr. Mrs. Bamidele Abiodun, First Lady of Ogun State
- » Her Excellency, Barr. Chioma Uzodinma, First Lady of Imo State
- » Her Excellency, Rev. (Mrs.) Eyoanwan Bassey Otu, First Lady of Cross River State (ably represented by Dr Inyang)
- » Mrs. Helen Eno Obareki, Coordinator of the Office of the First Lady, Akwa Ibom
- » Ms Scholastica Tengu Ben-Sor, Coordinator of the Office of the First Lady of Benue State
- » Edesili Okpebholo Anani, Coordinator for the Office of the First Lady in Edo State

Moderator

Omowunmi Ayoka Gbamis, Program Officer, Nigeria Governors Spouses' Forum (NGSF)

Credit: Nigeria Governors Spouses' Forum (NGSF) & Policy Innovation Centre (PIC)





Session Objectives

1. Explore First Ladies' role in localising national gender policies and driving norm change for gender equality.
2. Examine models of economic empowerment, health, education, and GBV initiatives led by First Ladies.
3. Identify partnership mobilisation and strategies for institutionalising initiatives for sustainability.

Background

Across Nigeria, First Ladies play a pivotal role in translating national gender policies into community-level action.^[1] They are often the bridge between the pinnacle of governance and citizens, especially women, girls, and vulnerable populations.^[2] They actively localize national frameworks such as the National Gender Policy and the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act.^[3] Positioned as influential “norm entrepreneurs,” First Ladies draw on their social prominence, moral authority, and public visibility to reshape gender norms, uniting stakeholders to champion and embed progressive change.^[4] State-level examples include skills training and market linkages for rural women, adolescent girls' education campaigns, cancer screening drives, survivor referral pathways, and advocacy for gender quotas in appointive roles.^[5] These platforms offer strategic leverage to accelerate Nigeria's gender agenda, while harnessing political will, funding, and partnerships.^[6] For sustained momentum, policymakers should integrate these initiatives into formal budgets, align with state plans, and institutionalize successes to ensure enduring contributions to the gender equality agenda.^[7]

Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Entrenched Gender Norms:** Deep-rooted norms continue to constrain women's autonomy and opportunities, necessitating community sensitisation and norm-shifting interventions led by First Ladies.^[8]
02. **Stigmatization:** Persistent stigma discourages GBV disclosure, limiting access to justice, consistent with evidence that social norms strongly shape reporting behaviours.^[9]
03. **Gender Roles:** Norms and cultural expectations around women's economic participation confine many to informal or unpaid work, reinforcing a need for empowerment programmes.^[10]
04. **Culture of Silence:** Normative taboos surrounding adolescent sexuality and reproductive health restrict girls' access to accurate information and services, reducing uptake of preventive interventions.^[11]
05. **Patriarchy:** Male-dominated decision-making limits women's ability to benefit from state-level empowerment initiatives unless normative power relations are addressed.^[12]

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Limited Access to Finance:** Women entrepreneurs face persistent barriers to credit due to limited collateral, poor financial literacy, and weak formal business structures.^[13]
02. **Health System Constraints:** Weak health infrastructure and high out-of-pocket costs restrict access to essential services for women. Unavailability of shelters, legal aid, and referral pathways limit GBV survivor protection and access to justice.^[14]
03. **Out-of-School Children:** High rates of out-of-school children, especially girls, undermine long-term empowerment outcomes, requiring targeted enrolment and retention interventions.^[15]
04. **Digital Exclusion:** Low digital access and literacy prevent women and girls from participating in emerging economic opportunities, particularly in underserved states.^[16]
05. **Institutional Coordination Gaps:** Fragmented coordination between state ministries, agencies, and First Lady offices slows implementation and limits the scalability of empowerment programmes.^[17]

Progress and Success Stories

- » As Chairperson of the Nigeria Governors' Spouses Forum, Her Excellency Amb. Prof. Olufolake Abdulrazaq models First Lady-led change — driving women's economic empowerment through the Ajike People Support Centre, advancing health and girl-child education, confronting gender-based violence through Kwara's survivor-centred Sexual Assault Referral Centres, and helping shape an environment in which Kwara enacted Nigeria's pioneering 35% gender inclusion law.^[18]
- » GBV response systems have been strengthened by the Nigeria Governors' Spouses' Forum, with First Ladies chairing state SGBV Committees, supporting Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) now numbering 47 across 22 states plus FCT.^[19]
- » Renewed Hope Initiative partnerships enrolled thousands of Almajiri and out-of-school children in an integrated education model. Likewise, Imo and Cross River First Ladies enrolled thousands more through state initiatives like Goodhope Women Flourish, digital inclusion programmes and displaced children schemes.^[20]
- » First Ladies, through coalitions like FLAC, conducted large-scale cancer screening outreaches reaching over 625,000 women and donated mobile clinics, enabling free medical services for thousands in rural areas.^[20]



Policy Recommendations



01. **Institutional Backing for First Lady Initiatives:** Governments should formalise and adequately resource First Lady-led programmes within state systems to protect continuity, accountability, and scale.
02. **Government Support for GBV Architecture:** State institutions and development partners should reinforce First Lady-supported GBV response systems via expanded SARCs, legal aid, and survivor-centred justice pathways.
03. **Education System Alignment:** Education ministries and CSOs should align with First Lady-led enrolment, retention, and menstrual hygiene initiatives to accelerate reductions in out-of-school rates.
04. **Enabling Digital and Fiscal Frameworks:** Stakeholders should integrate digital inclusion and gender-responsive budgeting into state planning to sustain the impact of First Lady driven empowerment programmes.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Scale First Lady Led Mentorship Models:** CSOs and NGOs partner with First Lady offices to expand mentorship and leadership pipelines for girls and young women.
02. **Strengthen Women-Focused Livelihood Platforms:** Stakeholders support and scale First Lady-endorsed agricultural and livelihood clusters for women with inputs, infrastructure, and market access.
03. **Expand Digital Skills Delivery:** NGOs and private-sector partners should co-deliver and finance digital skills programmes anchored in First Lady-led empowerment platforms.
04. **Sustain Health Access Interventions:** Governments and donors should institutionalise and finance health insurance schemes and medical outreaches pioneered or championed by First Lady offices.
05. **Reinforce GBV Case Management Networks:** CSOs and legal service providers should strengthen referral pathways, survivor support, and case management systems coordinated through First Lady offices.

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“

The well-being of women and girls and indeed vulnerable groups remain a pivotal indicator of how well any nation is faring in driving her development plan.

– H E Amb Prof *Olufolake Abdulrazaq*



“

We must shift from charity to sustainable empowerment so women can build lasting livelihoods.

– *Helen Eno Obareki*



“

A nation that ignores its girls cannot build a future strong enough to shelter its people.

– *Barr Chioma Uzodinma*



“

We must name and shame perpetrators, so justice becomes a deterrent, not a dream.

– *Edesili Okpebholo Anani*



“

It is about humanity; every intervention must restore dignity and opportunity.

– *Rev (Mrs) Eyoanwan Bassey Otu*



Inclusive Security: Integrating Civilian Voices into Nigeria's Peacebuilding Architecture



Panelists

- » Rear Admiral Olu Bankole, Chief of Defence, Civil Military Relations, Defence Headquarters
- » Brigadier General Jon Temlong OON (Rtd), Pioneer Commander, Multinational Joint Task Force; Consultant on National Security
- » Air Vice Marshal (AVM) Ibikunle Daramola, Chief of Civil Military Relations, Nigerian Air Force
- » Lt. Col. (Dr) Susan Johnson Dibal (Rtd), Head of Veteran Services, Defence Health Maintenance Limited
- » Major General E. Onoja, Deputy Chief of Civil Military Affairs, Army Psychological Operations
- » Commodore I. Pepple, Director, Innovation & Concepts Development, Naval Headquarters

Moderator

Rinmicit Aboki, Gender Lead, DGA-Albright Stonebridge Group

Credit: Policy Innovation Centre (PIC)





Session Objectives

1. Identify gaps in Nigeria's current peace and security architecture that limit meaningful civilian engagement.
2. Examine the role of civil-military relations in strengthening trust and cooperation with communities.
3. Explore mechanisms for integrating community-generated intelligence, early warning signals, and local knowledge into national security decision-making.
4. Examine the contributions of women, youth, veterans, and civil society to peacebuilding.
5. Recommend strategies for building inclusive, gender responsive, and community-owned peace architectures.

Background

Nigeria's evolving security landscape, marked by insurgency, banditry, and communal conflict, demands a shift from traditional state-centric security responses to more inclusive, community-driven peacebuilding approaches. Boko Haram/ISWAP has caused tens of thousands of deaths and displaced over two million people, while armed banditry and kidnappings remain widespread across multiple states.^[1] Evidence shows that sustainable peace is more likely when civilians, especially women and youth, are meaningfully integrated into security governance.^{[2],[3]}

This session convened senior military leaders and security experts to examine how Nigeria can institutionalize civilian participation in peacebuilding, strengthen civil-military relations, and build trust between communities and security actors. The conversation emphasized that inclusive security is no longer optional for Nigeria; it is foundational to national stability.

Normative Issues and Challenges

- 01. **Gender Norms:** Entrenched gender norms restrict women's participation in security decision-making, despite evidence that women's involvement improves peace durability and community resilience^[4].
- 02. **Cultural Hierarchies:** Traditional authority structures often overshadow inclusive dialogue, limiting the diversity of voices in peacebuilding.

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

- 01. **Weak Institutional Mechanisms for Civilian Engagement:** Nigeria lacks standardized frameworks for integrating community insights into security planning, resulting in fragmented engagement.
- 02. **Distrust:** Communities often fear retaliation or mistrust security agencies, weakening early warning systems and reducing intelligence flow.
- 03. **Normalization of Violence Reduces Collective Agency:** Prolonged exposure to conflict has normalized insecurity in some regions, reducing community engagement and weakening social cohesion.^[5]

04. **Marginalization of Civilian Voices:** Nigeria's security institutions have historically prioritized military authority over community participation, limiting the integration of local perspectives into peacebuilding. Top-down security models often fail to address the root causes of conflict.^[6]

05. **Limited Trust Between Security Agencies and Communities:** Historical abuses, poor accountability, and slow response times have eroded trust, reducing cooperation.

06. **Insufficient Resourcing for Local Peace Structures:** Community peace committees and local mediators often operate without funding, training, or formal recognition.

07. **Poor Integration of Community-Generated Data:** Early warning information from civil society and local monitors is rarely incorporated into national security systems.

08. **Digital Exclusion and Limited Reporting Channels:** Rural communities lack access to digital tools for reporting threats, reducing the reach of early warning mechanisms.

Progress and Success Stories

- » The Defence Headquarters and service branches have strengthened civil-military relations units, improving communication and community engagement. Women-led and youth-led peace initiatives are enhancing early warning systems and community resilience.
- » Local peace committees in several states have successfully mediated disputes and prevented escalation.
- » Veterans' support programs, such as those led by Defence Health Maintenance Limited, are improving reintegration and reducing vulnerabilities among ex-service personnel.



Policy Recommendations



01. **Institutionalize Civilian Participation in Security Governance:** Establish formal mechanisms for community representation within state and national peace councils, ensuring gender and youth inclusion.
02. **Strengthen Legal Frameworks for Civil-Military Collaboration:** Develop national guidelines defining roles, responsibilities, and accountability structures for civilian engagement in peacebuilding.
03. **Integrate Community-Generated Data into National Early Warning Systems:** Harmonize civil society early warning platforms with government systems to improve responsiveness and accuracy.
04. **Expand Gender Responsive Peacebuilding Policies:** Implement Nigeria's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 by ensuring women's leadership in peace committees, mediation teams, and security oversight bodies.
05. **Enhance Accountability and Human Rights Compliance:** Strengthen oversight of security agencies to rebuild trust and ensure that civilian engagement occurs in safe, rights-respecting environments.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Support and Scale Community Peace Committees:** Provide training, funding, and formal recognition to local peace structures to enhance their mediation capacity.
02. **Build Community Capacity for Early Warning and Response:** Train civilians—especially women and youth—in conflict analysis, reporting, and non-violent dispute resolution.
03. **Develop Safe, Accessible Reporting Channels:** Expand digital and offline mechanisms for communities to report threats anonymously and securely.
04. **Strengthen Dialogue Platforms Between Security Agencies and Communities:** Facilitate regular town halls, joint trainings, and trust-building activities to improve cooperation.
05. **Invest in Youth-Led Peace Innovation:** Support digital peacebuilding tools, creative campaigns, and community organizing led by young people.

“

Trust is the currency of security, and it must be rebuilt through transparency, accountability, and partnership.

— *Air Vice Marshal (AVM) Ibikunle Daramola*



“

Security cannot be achieved without the people who live the reality of insecurity every day.

— *Rear Admiral Olu Bankole*



“

Local knowledge is not supplementary; it is essential for understanding conflict dynamics and designing effective responses.

— *Major General E. Onoja*



“

Communities are not passive victims; they are active peacebuilders whose insights must shape national responses.

— *Brigadier General Jon Temlong (Rtd)*



“

Innovation is central to modern peacebuilding; we must rethink how we gather intelligence, engage communities, and build resilience.

— *Commodore I. Pepple*



“

Women and youth are the missing middle in Nigeria's peace architecture; they carry the burden of conflict but are excluded from the solutions.

— *Lt Col (Dr) Susan Johnson Dibal (Rtd)*



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Cocktail & U-Network Launch

The U-Network ('Usawa' Network) is a Pan-African movement and community of practice that unites gender equality advocates, institutions, and allies across Africa. It exists to preempt isolation and siloed efforts thus bridging divides between activists, policymakers, researchers, funders, and practitioners — co-creating African-led solutions for equity, inclusion, and justice.

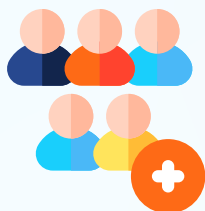
"Usawa," meaning equity in Swahili, reflects the Network's central ethos: fairness, mutual respect, and solidarity in action.

The U-Network is an initiative of the Policy Innovation Centre



GS25 Highlights

ATTENDANCE – IN-PERSON

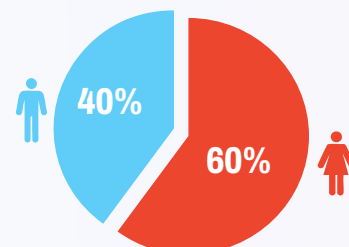


1612

Day 1 Attendance

1376

Day 2 Attendance



ATTENDANCE – VIRTUAL



3848+

Streamed Online

INCLUSION



>5%

...of attendees and volunteers were persons with disability

SPEAKERS & PANELISTS



159+

Speakers and panelists

Academia

Celebrities

Military

Policymakers

Healthcare

Transportation

Advocacy coalitions

International Delegates

Executives

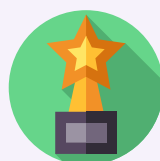


PRESENTATIONS AND PITCHES



60+

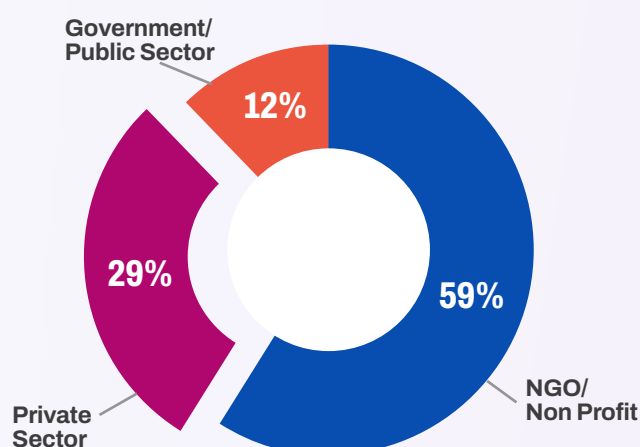
**Innovation Pitches
& Research
Presentations**



₦5,000,000

Worth of prizes & awards given

SECTORS REPRESENTED



Education / Training	16%
Social Sciences / Humanities	15%
Healthcare / Medicine	12%
Others	9%
Finance / Business / Consulting	8%
Academia / Research	7%
Environmental / Sustainability	5%
Others	6%
Technology / IT / Software	5%
Arts / Creative Industries	5%
Industry / Manufacturing	1%
Agriculture / Food Systems	9%
Others	2%
Engineering	1%

PARTNERS



34

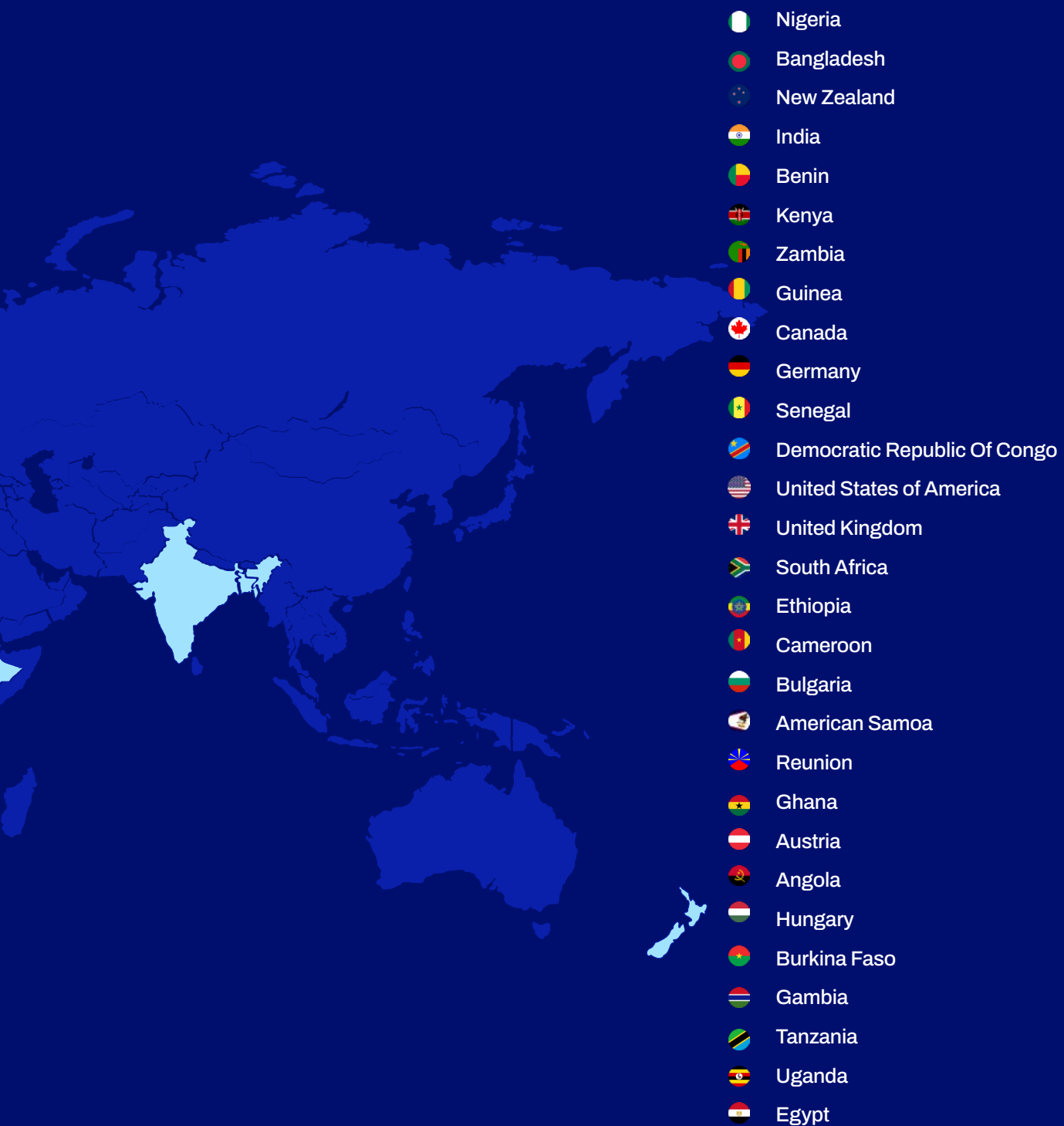
**Partner
Organizations**



COUNTRIES REPRESENTED (ONSITE & ONLINE)



5 Continents
29 Countries





Bridging the Digital Gender Divide: Inclusive Technology for All



From Bias to Balance: Shaping a Practical Governance Framework for Ethical and Inclusive AI in Nigeria



Panelists

- » Chioma Agwuegbo, Executive Director, TechHerNG
- » Dolapo Abede, Founder & Lead Consultant, WillWay Paradigm
- » Adekemi Omole, Gender and Inclusion Lead, Policy Innovation Centre

Keynote Address

Prof Fola Adeleke, Co-Founder & Executive Director, Global Center on AI Governance

Moderator

Dr. Kunle Kakanfo, Managing Partner, African Hub for Innovation and Development (AHFID)

Credit: Luminate





Session Objectives

1. Explore the intersection of AI, gender, and inclusive governance within Nigeria's digital transformation agenda
2. Engage on practical standards for gender-responsive and inclusive AI to enable bias auditing
3. Outline the governance framework needed to adapt the public-good AI model to Nigeria's context, focusing on data protection and accountability
4. Catalyze national and subnational dialogue on sovereign AI infrastructure for inclusive service delivery
5. Identify practical policy and programmatic pathways for implementing gender-inclusive AI governance and ethical impact assessments.

Background

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping governance, service delivery, and economic systems globally, and Nigeria is no exception. As Nigeria and the African continent undergo an accelerated digital transformation, driven by digital identity systems, fintech expansion, e-government platforms, and data-driven public services, AI is becoming increasingly embedded in everyday decision-making. However, Nigeria's existing social inequalities, gender gaps, and infrastructural limitations risk being replicated and amplified in AI systems if ethical safeguards are not established.

Nigeria ranks 125 out of 146 countries on the Global Gender Gap Index,^[1] reflecting persistent disparities in economic participation, political representation, and digital access. With women making up only 22% of the total number of engineering and technology graduates^[2] and persons with disabilities facing systemic exclusion, the datasets used to train AI systems are already skewed. Without intentional governance frameworks, AI risks deepening discrimination in areas such as hiring, credit scoring, public service access, and political participation.

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Offline Gender Inequality Replicates Itself in AI Systems:** AI cannot be equitable when the offline environment is deeply unequal; exclusion inevitably appears in digital systems.
02. **Intersectional Exclusion Intensifies Bias in AI:** Women with disabilities, rural women, and other marginalized groups face compounded discrimination, which becomes embedded in AI tools when their lived realities are not represented in datasets.^[3]
03. **Lack of Foundational Gender and Rights Protections Weakens AI Governance:** Nigeria's failure to pass the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill (2016)^[4] and the slow domestication of the VAPP Act undermines the legal foundation needed to protect women and girls in digital spaces.
04. **Civic Space Restrictions Limit Inclusive AI Development:** Shrinking civic space and restrictive laws, such as the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) (Amendment) Act, 2024, reduce the ability of civil society and youth movements to shape AI governance and advocate for rights based approaches.
05. **Institutional Biases Shape Data Collection:** Existing datasets reflect societal biases such as male dominant hiring patterns or discriminatory credit scoring, which are then reproduced by AI systems, reinforcing inequality.^[5]
06. **Absence of National AI Frameworks with Gender and Inclusion Provisions:** Existing AI-related policies and frameworks in Africa rarely include gender considerations, and Nigeria lacks a comprehensive national AI governance framework that centres inclusion.^[6]
07. **Poor Data Quality and Limited Representation in Training Data:** Nigeria's datasets are often incomplete, urban biased, or non representative, which leads to AI systems that fail to serve diverse linguistic, cultural, and demographic groups.^[7]
08. **Limited Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities:** Many AI tools and digital platforms are not designed with universal accessibility in mind, making them unusable for people with visual, hearing, or mobility impairments.
09. **Low Public Awareness and Digital Literacy:** Many Nigerians lack the digital literacy needed to understand AI systems, assert their rights, or identify algorithmic harms, which weakens public trust and accountability.
10. **Insufficient Government Capacity for AI Oversight:** Government institutions lack the technical expertise, regulatory tools, and resources needed to monitor AI deployment, enforce standards, or conduct algorithmic audits.
11. **Fragmented Multi Stakeholder Coordination:** Collaboration between government, civil society, academia, and private sector actors remains limited, slowing progress toward a unified national AI governance agenda.

Progress and Success Stories

- » **AI Collective Nigeria:** A multi stakeholder platform shaping national AI governance.
- » **PIC's Gender Responsive AI Research:** Intersectional analysis of AI frameworks.
- » **TechHerNG's Digital Rights Advocacy:** Strengthening protections for women online.
- » **WillWay Paradigm's Disability Inclusive AI Work:** Ensuring accessibility in AI design.
- » **Local innovators are developing AI tools in Nigerian languages, including Pidgin, which expands accessibility for low literacy populations.**
- » **Nigeria's participation in global AI governance networks is strengthening its capacity to shape responsible AI policies.**



Policy Recommendations



01. **Develop a National AI Governance Framework:** Nigeria should establish a comprehensive AI policy that embeds gender equality, disability inclusion, and human rights protections from the outset.
02. **Mandate Inclusive and Representative Data Practices:** Government and private sector actors should be required to collect, audit, and use datasets that reflect Nigeria's demographic diversity, including gender, disability status, and linguistic groups.
03. **Institutionalize Algorithmic Transparency and Accountability:** Nigeria should adopt mandatory algorithmic impact assessments, public disclosure requirements, and independent oversight mechanisms for high risk AI systems.
04. **Strengthen Legal Protections for Digital Rights:** Nigeria should update and enforce data protection, anti discrimination, and consumer protection laws to safeguard citizens from algorithmic harms.
05. **Ensure Government Leadership with Civic Space Protection:** Government should lead AI infrastructure development while guaranteeing that civil society, researchers, and innovators can participate freely without fear of repression.
06. **Integrate Accessibility Standards into All AI Systems:** National guidelines should require universal design principles to ensure that AI tools are accessible to persons with disabilities.
07. **Invest in Public Digital Literacy and Awareness:** Government and partners should implement nationwide digital literacy programs to help citizens understand AI systems and exercise their rights.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Conduct Intersectional Gender and Disability Audits of AI Systems:** Public and private institutions should regularly evaluate AI tools to identify and correct discriminatory outcomes.
Tools: Innovators should prioritize AI systems that support Nigerian languages and dialects to expand access for low literacy populations.
02. **Co Create AI Solutions with Marginalized Groups:** Women, youth, and persons with disabilities should be directly involved in the design, testing, and evaluation of AI products and services.
03. **Establish Multi Stakeholder AI Governance Councils:** Nigeria should create national and state level councils that bring together government, academia, civil society, and industry to guide AI development.
04. **Develop Local Language AI**
05. **Build Government Capacity for AI Regulation:** Training programs should be developed for regulators, policymakers, and public institutions to strengthen their ability to oversee AI systems.
06. **Create Public Interest AI Research Hubs:** Nigeria should invest in research centers focused on ethical AI, gender and disability inclusion, and context appropriate innovation.

“

We cannot have gender inequality offline and expect gender equity online.

– *Chioma Agwuegbo*



“

If you do not include people with disabilities from the beginning, you will spend far more trying to retrofit accessibility later.

– *Dolapo Abede*



“

We must first understand where we are through data before we can design ethical AI systems that serve everyone.

– *Adekemi Omole*



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Economic Empowerment, Affordable Housing & Sustainable Livelihoods



From Policy to Impact: What We've Learned from the Domestication of the National Women's Economic Empowerment Policy



Panelists

- » Alhaja Adiat Apena, Iyaloja-General, Ikeja LGA
- » Jelilat Ismaila-Ayinde, Divisional Head, SME Lending, Bank of Industry
- » Dr. Osasuyi Dirisu, Executive Director, Policy Innovation Centre
- » Dr Amina Hanga, Executive Director, Isa Wali Empowerment Initiative
- » Adejoke Tunde, Business Lead, Commercial Banking, Access Bank

Moderator

Rinnicit Temlong, Gender Lead, DGA-Albright Stonebridge Group

Credit: DGA-Albright Stonebridge Group





Session Objectives

1. Identify the lived experiences and economic barriers faced by women, especially informal workers, and understand how norms and cultural contexts shape women's economic participation.
2. Examine lessons from Lagos and Kano States on domestication of the WEE Policy and recommend strategies for scaling.
3. Explore how financial institutions can design inclusive products that respond to women's realities; highlight bottom-up, community-driven policy design for sustainable WEE outcomes.

Background

Nigeria's National Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Policy provides a national normative framework for gender-responsive economic governance.^[23] It targets structural, financial, and socio-cultural barriers that limit women's full and productive participation in economic life. The policy aligns WEE with inclusive growth, macroeconomic stability, and sustainable development goals. Women constitute nearly half of Nigeria's population and play central roles in the informal and care economies; yet they face intersecting systemic constraints.^[24] Sub-national domestication of the WEE Policy, starting with Lagos and Kano States, has created a vital laboratory for implementation and institutional learning.^[25]

Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Patriarchal Norms:** Patriarchal expectations limit women's autonomy, access to credit and assets, and participation in formal markets, particularly in regions with deep-rooted patriarchal structures.^[26]
02. **Gender Equality Backlash:** Misconceptions about gender equality, particularly fears that it imposes culturally inappropriate roles, fuel resistance to WEE. They provoke backlash and policy opposition in conservative Nigerian contexts.^[27]

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Barriers to Accessing Formal Finance:** Nigerian women entrepreneurs face restrictive lending requirements, excluding them from formal credit. Consequently, market women tend to prefer informal systems operating outside banks.^[28]
02. **Exclusion from Policy Decision-Making:** Women remain under-represented in financial product design and economic policy formulation in Nigeria. Reduced participatory policy design hampers policy uptake, efficacy, and sustainability.^[29]
03. **Financial Literacy Constraints:** Many women in the informal sector face limited literacy and financial knowledge, which limits their ability to access formal banking services and credit services. This contributes to gendered financial exclusion.^[30]
04. **Language Barriers in Financial Product Design:** Financial products are often not translated into local languages, making them inaccessible. The absence of language-appropriate communication minimises uptake of financial services.^[31]
05. **Weak Institutional Coordination and Slow Policy Domestication:** Limited structured collaboration between state ministries, financial institutions, and women's groups, combined with prolonged consultation, political buy-in, and contextual adaptation processes, slows the domestication and effective implementation of the WEE policy.^[32]

Progress and Success Stories

- » **Lagos State** successfully used a bottom-up participatory, community-driven approach to policy design, consulting market women, private sector actors, and financial institutions, to develop a WEE roadmap grounded in lived realities.^[33]
- » Efforts to advance the WEE policy in **Kano State** exemplify efforts to leverage contextual adaptation to promote in a culturally sensitive Nigerian context for increased buy-in.^[34]
- » **Bank of Industry (BOI)** introduced the Guaranteed Loan for Women (GLOW) initiative, offering up to ₦50 million with simplified collateral requirements and a 7% interest rate.^[35]



Policy Recommendations



01. **Co-Creation of WEE Policies:** States should leverage a bottom-up policy design, embedding women in policy drafting.
02. **Reform of Lending Criteria:** Financial institutions should develop a standardised framework for credit appraisal, revised to reduce reliance on fixed collateral and adopt alternative credit scoring (e.g., group guarantees and savings records).
03. **Formal WEE Inter-Agency Coordination Platforms:** State governments should establish standing WEE coordination mechanisms, anchored in the Ministry of Women Affairs or Planning, to align policy, financing, and implementation.
04. **Market-Based Financial Product Dissemination:** Banks and MFIs should deploy market-level financial outreach strategies, including product translations into dominant local languages and partnerships to increase awareness.
05. **Formal Integration of 'Esusu' Systems:** Governments should recognise informal savings groups within financial sector regulations, incentivise bank partnerships, and provide pathways for group registration and access to formal credit lines.
06. **Financial Capability Building and Flexible Credit:** States should deliver market-based financial capability programmes aligned with women-focused loan products that offer flexible, income-sensitive repayment suitable to informal enterprises.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Co-Creation of WEE Policies:** States should leverage a bottom-up policy design, embedding women in policy drafting.
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Market is money and money is market. No amount of money is too much for us to grow our businesses.

– *Alhaja Adiat Apena*



“

Policy must be for humans, not for the boardroom.

– *Dr Osasuyi Dirisu*



“

Women repay loans better than men, and the data proves it.

– *Adejoke Tunde*



“

We must design WEE policies that reflect our cultural and religious realities.

– *Dr Amina Hanga*



“

We did not sit in our offices to design this product; we asked women what they needed

– *Jelilat Ismaila-Ayinde*



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From Aid to Investment – Leveraging Economic Diplomacy for Africa’s Inclusive Development



Panelists

- » Ambassador Alfredo Miranda, Ambassador of Mexico to Nigeria
- » Ambassador ‘Dapo Oyewole, Secretary-General, Conference of Speakers and Presidents of African Legislatures (CoSPAL)
- » Thelma Ekiyor-Solanke, Chairperson, The Nigeria Philanthropy Office, Nigeria
- » Ayodele Olojede, Divisional Head, Retail SMEs, Wema Bank
- » Prof Noel Tagoe PHD, FCMA, Founding Dean of the Nile University Business School, Abuja, Nigeria

Chair

Ambassador Yusuf Tuggar, Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria.

Moderator

Dr Osasuyi Dirisu, Executive Director, Policy Innovation Centre.

Credit: Policy Innovation Centre





Session Objectives

1. Examine how economic diplomacy can promote inclusive development, addressing barriers across gender, youth, and marginalized groups.
2. Contribute to the development of a Gender and Inclusion Framework for Economic Diplomacy by identifying key opportunities for integrating inclusion into economic diplomatic, trade, and policy strategies.
3. Discuss innovative strategies for collaboration between governments, the private sector, and non-profits in advancing inclusivity.
4. Develop actionable recommendations for enhancing governance to empower women, youth, and marginalized communities.

Background

African economic diplomacy framing is undergoing a structural shift from aid dependent development models toward investment driven, partnership based models. This transition aligns with continental aspirations under the African Union's Agenda 2063, which emphasizes self reliance, industrialization, and intra African trade.^[1] Aid to Africa has stagnated, while foreign direct investment (FDI) and diaspora remittances have grown significantly, with remittances now exceeding Official Development Assistance (ODA) in many countries.^[2]

Africa's economic potential is significant, with a combined GDP of \$3.4 trillion and a population projected to reach 2.5 billion by 2050.^[3] Yet inclusive growth remains uneven. Despite transformative initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which could increase intra African trade by 52% by 2035, implementation gaps persist.^[4] Intra regional trade remains low at 18%, compared to 59% in Asia and 69% in Europe.^[5] Women, youth, and other vulnerable populations remain disproportionately excluded from formal economic opportunities, despite women comprising 70% of the informal economy on the continent.

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. Fragmented Trade and Investment Policies:

Disparate national regulations hinder cross border investment and trade.

02. Aid Dependence: Aid has historically functioned as a “crutch,” reinforcing dependency rather than enabling structural transformation. Prolonged dependence on aid can weaken domestic accountability and distort policy priorities.^{[6],[7]}

03. Gender Exclusion in Economic Governance:

Despite progress, women remain underrepresented in trade negotiations, PPP design, and economic diplomacy spaces. There is evidence that gender blind trade agreements often exacerbate inequalities.^[8]

04. Limited Inclusion of Marginalized Voices:

Negotiation tables often exclude grassroots actors, youth, and persons with disabilities, leading to policies that do not reflect lived realities.

05. Weak Institutional Ecosystems: Many African countries lack the policy coherence, regulatory frameworks, and institutional capacity required to leverage investment opportunities effectively.^[9]

06. Insufficient Data and Impact Measurement:

Many PPPs lack gender responsive metrics, limiting the ability to track inclusion outcomes.

07. Gender Gap in Infrastructure Investment:

Without childcare, safe transport, and anti harassment policies, women cannot fully participate in infrastructure and investment projects.^[10]

08. Limited Financial Literacy and Trade

Literacy: As highlighted by panelists, marginalized groups often lack the knowledge needed to engage meaningfully in trade and investment ecosystems.

Progress and Success Stories

- » **Mexico's Social Investment Model:** Ambassador Miranda highlighted Mexico's shift toward universal social protection, including pensions and rural employment programs. Social investment policies stimulate inclusive growth and reduce poverty.^[11]
- » **Private Sector Innovations:** Wema Bank's cluster lending model for market women and its digital gender responsive lending algorithm demonstrate how private capital can drive inclusive finance, significantly increasing women's access to credit.
- » **Diaspora Capital Mobilization:** The partnership between Wema Bank and NIDCOM to channel diaspora funds toward job creation aligns with evidence that diaspora investment is a major driver of SME growth and innovation in Africa (Ratha et al., 2019).^[12]



Policy Recommendations



01. **Embed Gender and Inclusion in Trade and Investment Agreements:** Mandate gender responsive and equity focused provisions in all bilateral and multilateral agreements, supported by measurable indicators.
02. **Strengthen Institutional Capacity for Economic Diplomacy:** Invest in training negotiators, analysts, and policymakers to integrate inclusion into economic diplomacy frameworks.
03. **Legislate Inclusive Participation:** Require meaningful representation of women, youth, and marginalized groups in national and regional negotiation delegations.
04. **Develop National Philanthropy and Impact Investing Policies:** Establish regulatory frameworks that incentivize in-country philanthropic capital and social investment.
05. **Enhance Regional Policy Harmonization:** Align national regulations to facilitate cross border PPPs and maximize AfCFTA benefits.
06. **Mobilize Diaspora Capital:** Create structured platforms for diaspora investment in job creation, SMEs, and innovation ecosystems.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Inclusive PPP Design:** Integrate gender impact assessments, hiring quotas, childcare facilities, and anti harassment policies into all PPP frameworks to ensure equitable participation.
02. **Trade and Investment Literacy Programs:** Partner with philanthropies and academic institutions to deliver targeted literacy programs for women, youth, and marginalized groups.
03. **Private Sector–Led Inclusive Finance Models:** Scale gender responsive lending products, digital credit scoring tools, and cluster based financing for informal and rural women entrepreneurs.
04. **Participatory Monitoring Mechanisms:** Establish joint monitoring systems involving government, civil society, and private sector actors to track inclusion outcomes in economic diplomacy initiatives.

“

If we pay attention to the trends in the diplomatic environment, we will observe that African diplomacy is increasingly focusing on creative solutions that cater to our unique needs, and Nigeria is playing a significant role in this shift.

– *Ambassador Yusuf Tuggar*



“

Mexico is not here to give lessons; we are here to share experiences of inclusive transformation.

– *Ambassador Alfredo Miranda*



“

Aid is a crutch, it was meant to help us walk, but now we should be sprinting.

– *Ambassador 'Dapo Oyewole*



“

Social policy is economic policy, they are not separate

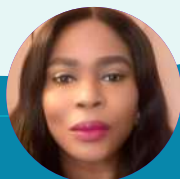
– *Professor Noel Tagoe*



“

Inclusion is not just numbers, it is the quality of participation.

– *Thelma Ekiyor-Solanke*



“

Inclusion is not just numbers, it is the quality of participation.

– *Ayodele Olojede*



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Financing a Women - Led future: Women Business Centre Model



Panelist

» Joy Aderele, Country Director, Self Help Africa

Moderator

Dorcas Kwamande, Project Coordinator, Rural Women Entrepreneurs Project,
Self Help Africa

Credit: Self Help Africa





Objectives of the Women Business Centre (WBC) Model

The Women Business Centre model was designed to achieve the following objectives:

- 1. Empower Rural Women as Entrepreneurs:** The program builds the capacity of women in existing social groups and associations to develop entrepreneurial skills and expand their businesses.
- 2. Promote Value Addition and Product Innovation:** Women receive training to improve product quality, packaging, branding, and innovation to increase market competitiveness.
- 3. Enhance Women's Income and Agency:** Beyond increasing income, the project strengthens women's decision-making power and financial autonomy within households and communities.
- 4. Foster Gender Inclusion:** The initiative engages husbands, community leaders, and other stakeholders to address negative social norms and build supportive environments for women entrepreneurs.
- 5. Strengthen Women's Participation in the Local Economy:** The model helps women integrate more effectively into local and rural markets through access to finance, digital tools, and enterprise support.

Background

The session focused on presenting the Women Business Center (WBC) model, implemented by Self-Help Africa under the Rural Women Entrepreneurs Project. The initiative aims to empower rural women economically by providing access to finance, digital tools, entrepreneurship training, and supportive community structures. Self-Help Africa is an international NGO headquartered in Dublin, working in 17 countries and active in Nigeria since 2009. The organization focuses on sustainable livelihoods through community-led, market-based, and enterprise-driven approaches.

The WBC model addresses key barriers faced by rural women such as limited access to finance, exclusion from markets and technology, and restrictive social norms. By establishing community-based enterprise hubs, the model enables women to strengthen their businesses, expand market access, and participate more actively in the local economy. Over a three-year period, the project has demonstrated that empowering women economically can transform households, communities, and local economies.

Normative Issue and Challenge

01. Social and Cultural Barriers: Negative social norms sometimes restrict women's ability to participate fully in economic and decision-making processes.

02. Low Digital Literacy: Many rural women initially lacked the digital skills required to access online markets and modern business tools.

03. Limited Production Capacity: Beneficiaries reported that while demand for their products has increased, they often lack sufficient capacity or resources to meet growing market demand.

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. Limited Access to Finance: Although women own a significant proportion of businesses, only a small percentage of loans reach them due to lack of collateral and financial history.

Progress of the Women Business Centre (WBC) Model

The WBC model has produced significant outcomes across participating communities.

- » 50 functional Women Business Centres established
- » Over 2,000 women reached through training and enterprise support
- » 34 savings groups formed
- » Over 200 facilitators trained from within the communities
- » 10 telemedicine clinics revitalized
- » 24 health workers trained
- » 10 ICT volunteers trained
- » 200 women trained in menstrual health management
- » Market activation events connecting women to broader markets



Policy Recommendations



01. **Integrate Women's Enterprise Development into National Policies:** Women-led enterprise support should be incorporated into national development and social protection frameworks.
02. **Promote Gender-Responsive Financing:** Governments and financial institutions should establish funding mechanisms tailored to women entrepreneurs.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Scale the WBC Model Nationally:** Development partners and organizations should replicate the model across Nigeria and potentially in other countries.
02. **Increase Investment in Rural Digital Infrastructure:** Expanding digital access and training will enable rural women to connect with broader markets and services.
03. **Strengthen Partnerships:** Collaboration among government, NGOs, private sector actors, and community institutions is essential for sustaining and expanding impact.

Success Stories

One participant, Louisa, a former roadside tailor from Cross River State, shared that through the digital training and business support provided by the project, she improved her sewing skills by using online resources and began marketing her products on social media. As a result, she received an international order from the United Kingdom after posting one of her designs online and successfully produced and delivered the product, earning her first income in foreign currency.

Another beneficiary explained that women in her community have also benefited from the initiative by forming savings groups, accessing loans to start or expand their businesses, and gaining greater respect within their households due to their economic contributions. These testimonies highlight how the WBC model has strengthened women's financial independence and increased their influence within their families and communities.



The Missing Voices in Public Finance: Inclusive Fiscal Management for Real Change



Panelists

- » Nafiu Shehu, Special Advisor, Executive chairman, Kano State Internal Revenue Service
- » Ugochi Ehiahuruike, Executive Director, Social and Integral Development Centre (SIDECE), Anambra State
- » Dr. Chukwuemeka Onyimadu, Feminist Economist & Programme Specialist, Women's Economic Empowerment, UN Women.
- » Bilikisu Oluwakemi Olawoyin, Gender Desk Officer, Oyo State Primary Health Care Board

Moderator

Razak Adewale Fatai, Chief Data Officer, Nigerian Governors' Forum

Credit: International Budget Partnership, Nigeria





Session Objectives

1. Identify structural barriers excluding marginalised groups from fiscal processes and community needs-based reforms.
2. Highlight community-led and gender-responsive approaches alongside global best practices for inclusive fiscal governance.
3. Recommend institutional reforms ensuring public finance delivers equitable outcomes for women and vulnerable groups.

Background

Public finance systems in Nigeria determine national priorities through resource mobilisation, allocation, and expenditure, yet systematically exclude women, rural communities, informal workers, persons with disabilities, and youth from fiscal decision-making processes.^[1] Structural barriers persist, including the exclusion of marginalized groups from budget and tax consultations, tokenistic participation, gender-blind budgeting, institutional fragmentation, and shrinking civic space limiting civil society engagement.^[2] Non-normative challenges such as limited disaggregated data, weak accountability, informal taxation, poor gender mainstreaming, and transparency compound these issues at subnational levels.^[3]

These dynamics manifest empirically: women occupy under 10% of fiscal leadership roles,^[4] Nigeria scored 24/100 on budget transparency,^[5] while over 80% of workers are in the informal sector,^[6] and youth constitute 70% of the population^[7], yet lack representation.

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Weak Institutional Coordination:** Fragmented roles between ministries of finance, planning, gender, and sector MDAs hinder coherent gender responsive fiscal reforms. Institutional fragmentation is a major barrier to inclusive budgeting in LMICs.^[8]
02. **Gender Blind Budgeting:** Despite rhetoric around gender responsive budgeting, most Nigerian budgets do not reflect needs. Gender blind fiscal systems worsen inequalities in health, education, and economic participation.^[9]
03. **Shrinking Civic Space:** Civil society organizations face increasing constraints in engaging the government on fiscal transparency. Shrinking civic space reduces the effectiveness of public accountability mechanisms.^[10]
04. **Exclusion of Marginalized Groups from Fiscal Decision Making:** Women, rural communities, and informal workers rarely participate in budget formulation or tax policy discussions. Research shows that fiscal systems often reinforce gender and social inequalities when marginalized groups are excluded.^[11]
05. **Tokenistic Participation:** There was emphasis on most consultations being symbolic. Communities submit charters of demand, but these rarely influence final budget allocations. Tokenistic participation undermines trust and weakens accountability.^[12]
06. **Data Gaps and Transparency Deficits:** Without gender- and disability-disaggregated data, budgets fail to reflect real needs, while many states withhold timely, accessible budget documents, both undermining evidence-based fiscal planning and inclusive governance. Gender equality appears in policy rhetoric but lacks mainstreaming in expenditure.^[13]
07. **Weak Feedback and Accountability Mechanisms:** Citizens lack channels to monitor budget implementation or report gaps, exemplified by informal workers targeted for revenue without representation, which deepens distrust and reduces compliance. Social accountability tools significantly improve service delivery when well institutionalised.^[14]

Progress and Success Stories

- » **Community Led Participatory Budgeting (Anambra State):** SIDECE's work with IBP introduced identity marker-based participatory budgeting, ensuring single mothers, women farmers, PWDs, and artisans shape community charters of demand.
- » **Digital Tax Administration (Kano State):** KIRS introduced e-tax platforms (EasyTax, eRoad) and increased women's representation in leadership roles, improving compliance and reducing corruption.



Policy Recommendations



01. **Mandate Inclusive Budget Processes:** Enact legislation requiring participatory budgeting frameworks at the federal and state levels, incorporating gender-responsive budget tags across all MDAs and formalizing inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms led by the Budget Office of the Federation.
02. **Operationalize Disaggregated Data Systems:** Amend the Fiscal Responsibility Act (2007) to mandate all MDAs to collect sex, age, disability, and location disaggregated data, with indicators embedded in strategies and performance benchmarks.
03. **Institutionalise Multi-Stage Accountability:** Establish legally binding public hearings at planning, approval, execution, and evaluation phases, complemented by citizen-accessible budget summaries

and quarterly implementation performance dashboards per the Open Government Partnership commitments.

04. **Implement Progressive Tax Reforms:** Legislate representation guarantees for informal sector taxpayers through constituency budget consultations and service delivery commitments, alongside gender-sensitive revenue measures such as gender sensitive tax policies that reduce burdens on women-dominated sectors.
05. **Strengthening Civic Space:** Amend the NGO Regulation Bill to safeguard the rights of CSOs to engage in fiscal governance. Allocate dedicated budget lines to strengthen civil society capacity for fiscal monitoring and advocacy.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Scale Digital Participatory Budgeting Platforms:** Create digital and in-person platforms for communities to submit priorities and track implementation, alongside targeted capacity-building and subsidies for women, PWDs, and rural constituencies to ensure equitable platform access.
02. **Operationalize GRB Technical Units:** Constitutionally designate GRB focal points and trained officers within MDA Permanent Secretaries' offices, with mandatory certification through the Ministry of Women Affairs' training framework.

03. **Deploy Social Accountability Architecture:** Roll out standardized community scorecards, citizen budget tracking committees, and digital redress portals linked to state Anti-Corruption Agencies.
04. **Launch State Fiscal Inclusivity Index:** Annual ranking methodology assessing subnational performance across gender budgeting, participatory metrics, and transparency indicators, with results integrated into FAAC revenue sharing formulae.

“

We must move beyond tokenism.
Communities must shape, not
just observe, budget decisions.

– *Ugochi Ehiachuruike*



“

Gender must not be a mention;
it must be mainstreamed.

– *Dr Chukwuemeka
Onyebuchi Onyimadu*



“

Taxation without representation
is still happening in the informal
sector.

– *Razak Adewale Fatani*



“

We can build the capacity of
traditional institutions, letting them
know that the voices of these less
privileged are so important to
transform our society.

– *Billikisu Oluwakemi
Olawoyin*



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Safe, Inclusive, and Gender- Responsive Systems



Mobility For All: Innovating for Safer and More Inclusive Transportation



Panelists

- » Mary Ogwu, Businesswoman, Orange Market
- » Daniel Clement Moses, National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) FCT Representative
- » Kenneth Echiche, Person with Disability/Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities Representative
- » Glory Ejeje, Ride-hailing/Airport Services Representative, Managing Director, SRE Services & Logistics
- » Enahoro Okhae, CEO, God is Good Motors (GIGM)
- » Dr. Julius Oluwafunmiyi Ajayi, Transport & Logistics Specialist
- » DCC Okpe Ekpe Omadachi, Head, AHR, Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC)
- » Weyinmi Aghadiuno, Head of Regulatory & Policy Africa, Bolt Nigeria
- » Okonkwo Florence Nonubari, FCT Administration, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Transportation

Moderator

Kayode Okikiolu, TV Anchor, Channels Television

Credit: Policy Innovation Centre





Session Objectives

1. Highlight challenges to inclusive mobility and delineate the cultural and social norms (e.g. gender bias, disability stigma) that impede equitable mobility for women and PWDs, with a focus on lived experiences and research.
2. Evaluate existing barriers and explore how they intersect with social attitudes to hinder equitable access to transportation.
3. Feature innovative practices and measures to inform reforms that ensure affordable, safe, and inclusive transport for all.

Background

Nigeria's mobility landscape faces significant challenges, particularly for women and persons with disabilities (PWDs). Public transportation is the primary mode for most, particularly city dwellers, yet transit systems often fail to account for the needs of vulnerable groups.³¹ Women and PWDs typically rely more on public transport than men (due to lower access to private vehicles), yet they face discrimination and harassment and violence.³² For example, Lagos and other major urban centres report some of the highest prevalence of harassment incidents globally, severely compromising women's sense of safety while commuting.³³ Such threats not only jeopardize women's personal security but also constrain their mobility and participation, reinforcing gender inequality in access to services and employment.³⁴ Similarly, an estimated 25–30 million Nigerians are PWDs, yet the built environment and transport services remain largely inaccessible. Legacy urban plans often omit disability considerations, despite the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act of 2018 mandating them.³⁵ The failure to implement accessibility standards within the Act's five-year moratorium (now elapsed) means many transport projects were built without ramps or assistive features.³⁶ The session recognised mobility as essential to inclusive development, emphasising the need for equitable solutions.

Normative Issue and Challenge

01. Gender Stereotypes and Gatekeeping: In the Nigerian transport sector, entrenched norms ascribe jobs to men and lower competence to women.³⁷ Such biases held by passengers and peers inhibit opportunities and integration for women.

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. Stigma Against PWDs: Misconceptions and micro-aggressions about disability and their effects hinder mobility for PWDs. For example, some drivers avoid picking up passengers using wheelchairs to 'escape' a perceived burden of assistance. These pervasive ableist attitudes and exclusionary behaviours undermine equal access and dignity.³⁸

02. Harassment and Mobility Fear: Women and PWDs often encounter harassment and intimidation. The abuse faced in transport hubs creates a culture of fear that deters usage. Such aggressions are often underreported or trivialized.³⁹

03. Infrastructure Gaps: Transportation infrastructure in Nigeria often does not meet basic safety and accessibility standards; terminals are overcrowded, and vehicles lack features like ramps, disproportionately affecting vulnerable riders.

04. Limited Voice and Representation: Women and PWDs are underrepresented in transport planning and decision-making. This ideological gap reinforces an ableist and patriarchal default model, limiting responsiveness in policy and design.⁴⁰

05. Unregulated Transit: Urban mobility relies heavily on informal transport operators and routes, unregistered and unvetted, with minimal oversight. The resulting inefficiencies and unpredictability further exacerbate commuter vulnerability.

06. Affordability and Rising Costs: High transport costs, with no subsidies or fare controls, disproportionately affect low-income women and PWDs, who are already more likely to be economically disadvantaged due to gendered barriers.⁴¹

07. Limited Transit Coverage and Digital Divide: Formal public transport has limited reach; while tech-based mobility can provide better coverage and safety, many women and PWDs (especially in low-income or rural areas) cannot afford or access them.

08. Enforcement and Governance Deficits: Even where protective transport laws and policies exist, enforcement is inconsistent, allowing violations like overcrowding and rider discrimination to continue, reducing accountability.

Progress and Success Stories

- » **Improving Formal Oversight:** FRSC conducts regular safety audits and sensitization campaigns at motor parks, while pushing for stricter enforcement. Likewise, NURTW has trained park marshals in safety and emergency response, signalling a cultural shift.⁴²
- » **New Bus Terminals in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT):** The FCT Administration has recently built bus terminals designed to reduce crime by moving commuters into secure, managed facilities and increase accessibility in mind. These terminals are equipped with CCTV surveillance, proper lighting, escalators, and elevators. Expansion into Abuja's suburbs is expected.



Policy Recommendations



01. **Enforce the 2018 Disability Act Access Laws:** All public transport terminals and vehicles should be audited for compliance with the Act, with penalties for operators and agencies failing to redevelop within 2 years of inspection.

01. **Strengthen Transit Safety Regulations:** Introduce and enforce safe transit policies, with a reporting system. Regular government-led safety audits should be codified into law, mandating annual audits of major motor parks and transit routes.

01. **Institutionalise Inclusive Transport Planning:** At the State level, update transport policies to mandate an 'inclusion impact assessment' for new major transport projects, with a

focus on planning and participation in relation to women and PWDs.

01. **Gender-Responsive Policies:** Develop targeted policies to boost women's participation and safety in transport. This should be tied to compliance and licensing and include guidelines for unions and companies on creating safe workplaces for all.

01. **Data-Driven and Smart Mobility Governance:** Leverage technology to improve oversight and commuter confidence. Utilise anonymized data on incidents, service usage by gender, etc., to inform policy and feed into a Mobility Observatory.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Capacity Building for Inclusive Service:** Implement comprehensive training programs for transport personnel on disability etiquette, gender sensitivity, and customer safety. FRSC and unions can collaborate on mandatory certification courses.

02. **Awareness Campaigns:** Partner with influencers on nationwide awareness campaigns to challenge harmful norms and inform citizens about inclusive mobility. These campaigns should spotlight testimonies and the right to access public spaces.

03. **Affordable & Accessible Mobility Schemes:** Develop targeted schemes to improve mobility options for vulnerable groups. For instance, a subsidised transit pass for low-

income women and a transit service for PWDs using SMS booking systems.

04. **Expansion of Safe Infrastructure Projects:** Fund at least one modern, accessible bus park in each State as models of good practice. Additionally, upgrade smaller-scale infrastructure, such as sheltered bus stops and pedestrian crossings, in various locations.

05. **Multi-Stakeholder Coordination and Innovation:** Establish a standing Inclusive Mobility Task Force that brings together government agencies, transport unions, private sector providers, and advocacy groups for women and PWDs.

“

Impairment versus barriers equals disability. When you remove the barriers, the disability disappears. So, if inclusive policies and documentations are put in place, there will be no disability.

– *Kenneth Echiche*



“

The real challenge is cultural. At Bolt, when we introduced women-for-women rides, many women refused female drivers, saying, ‘women can’t drive.’ That bias is a major obstacle to true inclusion

– *Weyinmi Aghadiuno*



“

The statistics represent missed chances and systemic exclusion. Design must be human-centred. We must not plan so that the government will look good. We must plan so that the people the government is serving will be good.

– *Dr Julius Ajayi*



“

“Women are not included. The few who participate face abuse and security risks. Even at airports where you’d expect civility, women drivers are not welcomed. We need more advocacy and inclusion for women in transportation.

– *Glory Ejeje*



“

The bigger problem for inclusion would be the fact that our sector is largely not regulated.

– *Enahoro Okhae*



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Bridging the Disability Gap: Opportunities for Workplace Inclusion in Nigeria



Panelists

- » Dolapo Agbede, Founder & Lead Consultant, WillWay Paradigm
- » Mayowa Akiode, Human Resource Partner, Policy Innovation Centre
- » Eseoghene Adams, Gender & Inclusion Advisor, Policy Innovation Centre
- » Barrister Justice Christopher, Principal Partner, Just Ace Law Firm

Moderator

Rotimi Ojo, Founder & CEO, Unleash Awareness Africa Ltd.

Credit: Policy Innovation Centre





Session Objectives

1. Examine the structural, legal, and cultural barriers limiting workplace inclusion for PWDs.
2. Identify opportunities for skills development, education, and employment pathways for PWDs.
3. Explore organizational strategies for embedding disability inclusion within DEI frameworks.
4. Highlight the role of leadership, HR systems, and legal enforcement in driving compliance.
5. Provide actionable recommendations for building inclusive, accessible, and equitable workplaces.

Background

Disability inclusion is a critical but often overlooked dimension of Nigeria's workforce development agenda. "Nearly 12% of Nigerians aged 15 and older living in households have some level of disability, with 2% experiencing severe disabilities."^[1] The country faces significant barriers to ensuring equitable access to education, employment, and economic participation. Global evidence shows that Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) experience disproportionately lower employment rates, higher poverty levels, and systemic exclusion from workplace opportunities.^[2]

Despite the passage of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (2018), implementation remains weak. Many workplaces lack accessible infrastructure, inclusive hiring practices, or reasonable accommodations. Social stigma, deep rooted prejudice, and limited awareness further constrain opportunities for PWDs to thrive professionally.

This session explored the legal, institutional, and cultural barriers to workplace inclusion and highlighted practical strategies for building disability inclusive organizations. It emphasized the need for policy enforcement, leadership modelling, HR driven reforms, and community level reorientation to bridge Nigeria's disability inclusion gap.

Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Misconceptions:** Disability is sometimes viewed as a “bad omen,” influencing how PWDs are treated in professional and social settings.^[3]
02. **Lack of Early Educational Access:** Many PWDs are denied schooling due to family stigma or institutional rejection, limiting future employability.^[4]
03. **Social Exclusion:** PWDs frequently experience subtle discrimination, such as being ignored, infantilized^[5], or treated as “specimens” of curiosity.

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Inaccessible Infrastructure:** Many workplaces lack ramps, lifts, tactile indicators, accessible restrooms, or assistive technologies.^[6]
02. **Stigmatization:** PWDs are often perceived as incapable or burdensome, leading to discriminatory attitudes in recruitment, task allocation, and workplace interactions.^[7]

03. **Weak Legal Enforcement:** Although the Disability Act mandates equal employment and reasonable accommodation, sanctions for non compliance are rare.
04. **Limited Funding for Accessibility:** Retrofitting buildings or procuring assistive devices is often deprioritized due to perceived cost burdens.
05. **Bias in Professional Perception:** Colleagues may assume PWDs are hired for tokenism rather than competence, undermining their contributions and confidence.
06. **Judicial Delays:** Legal cases on discrimination face slow adjudication, discouraging PWDs from seeking justice.
07. **Fragmented Institutional Coordination:** Agencies such as the National Orientation Agency (NOA) and the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) have limited visibility and enforcement capacity.
08. **HR Gaps:** Many organizations lack inclusive policies, disaggregated data systems, or structured M&E frameworks to track disability inclusion.

Progress and Success Stories

- » **Growing DEI Awareness:** Nigerian workplaces are increasingly integrating disability into broader DEI strategies, moving beyond gender only approaches.
- » **Remote Work Opportunities:** The rise of digital and remote work has expanded employment pathways for PWDs, especially those facing mobility challenges.
- » **Youth Focused Skills Development:** Digital skills, videography, and remote friendly competencies are emerging as viable career paths for PWDs.
- » **Legal Frameworks in Place:** The Disability Act provides a strong foundation for equal employment, reasonable accommodation, and anti discrimination protections.



Policy Recommendations



01. **Strengthen Enforcement of the Disability Act:** Empower the NCPWD to impose sanctions for non compliance, especially in cases of workplace discrimination or inaccessible infrastructure.
02. **Mandate Accessibility Standards:** Require all public and private buildings to meet universal design standards, including ramps, lifts, tactile indicators, and accessible restrooms.
03. **Expand Public Awareness Campaigns:** Direct NOA to implement nationwide disability awareness programs to challenge stigma and promote inclusion.
04. **Institutionalize Inclusive Education:** Enforce mandatory admission and accommodation for PWDs in primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions.
05. **Provide Incentives for Inclusive Employers:** Offer tax breaks, grants, or recognition awards for organizations that demonstrate strong disability inclusive practices.
06. **Establish Fast Track Judicial Processes:** Create specialized tribunals or fast track mechanisms for disability related discrimination cases.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Develop Inclusive HR Policies:** Organizations should embed disability inclusion in recruitment, onboarding, performance management, and promotion systems.
02. **Conduct Regular Inclusion Audits:** Assess accessibility, representation, leadership diversity, and workplace accommodations annually.
03. **Use Disaggregated Data:** Track recruitment, retention, and promotion of PWDs using disability disaggregated HR data.
04. **Invest in Assistive Technologies:** Provide screen readers, Braille displays, voice enabled lifts, ergonomic tools, and other accommodations.
05. **Strengthen Leadership Modeling:** Encourage CEOs and senior leaders to champion disability inclusion through engagement with PWD staff visibly.
06. **Expand Skills Development Pathways:** Partner with training institutions to provide digital, vocational, and remote friendly skills for PWDs.
07. **Promote Co Creation of Accommodations:** Work directly with employees with disabilities to design personalized support systems.
08. **Build Inclusive Culture:** Implement mandatory DEI and unconscious bias training for all staff, with a focus on disability awareness.

“

When life gives you lemons, make lemonade — look at the skills in demand and tailor your abilities to opportunities

– *Mayowa Akiode*



“

The law may be there, but deep rooted prejudice requires reorientation and awareness.

– *Barrister Justice Christopher*



“

Institutions are made up of people — if people have biases, you face them every day. Leadership must model inclusion — when leaders show up for PWDs, everyone else pays attention.

– *Dolapo Agbede*



“

Inclusive workplaces begin with intentional policies. If inclusion isn't written into your systems, it won't be implemented. That's why organizations must design inclusive policies, collect disaggregated data, and conduct regular audits to truly understand whether they are creating environments where people with disabilities can thrive.

– *Eseoghene Adams*



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Shared Care, Shared Power: Rethinking Roles for a Fairer Future for All



Equity Begins at Home: Families as the Foundation for a Just and Resilient Society



Panelists

- » Princess Joan-Anne Jummai Idonije, mnim, mnsn, Special Assistant Technical, Women Affairs and Community Engagement to the Minister of Women Affairs
- » Chioma Momah, Head of Policy & Public Affairs, Guinness Nigeria
- » Oluwatoyin Ogunkanmi, Clinical/Family Psychologist, Oleaster Wellbeing and Recovery Centre
- » Dr. Kelechi Anikude, Environmental Engineer, Content Creator
- » Tomike Adeoye, MD/CEO, Malia World & Light Hill Africa; Content Creator

Moderator

Comfort Booth, Lawyer/TV Personality

Credit: Policy Innovation Centre & Federal Ministry of Women Affairs (Nigeria)





Session Objectives

1. Examine how family structures and cultural norms shape perceptions of equity.
2. Identify practical strategies for embedding fairness and shared responsibility within households.
3. Explore the role of parenting, communication, and role modeling in raising equitable children.
4. Highlight policy gaps and opportunities for strengthening family systems in Nigeria.
5. Discuss how culture and faith can either reinforce or challenge inequitable practices

Background

Families are the earliest and most influential social institutions shaping identity, values, and interpersonal relationships. UNICEF estimates that up to 80% of early socio-emotional development occurs at the household level, shaping life-course outcomes.^[15] Studies show that equitable family environments, where fairness, shared responsibility, and mutual respect are practiced, produce healthier, more resilient individuals and communities.^[16]

In Nigeria, however, traditional gender norms, cultural expectations, and faith based interpretations often reinforce unequal power dynamics within households.^[17] Data from the 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) show that decision-making in households is predominantly male-led: in over 60% of married households, husbands alone make decisions about major expenditures, healthcare, or mobility.

This session examined how equity can be fostered within families, how cultural and faith traditions influence perceptions of justice, and what policies and social supports are necessary to strengthen families as the foundation of a just society. The conversation emphasized that equity is not 'sameness'; it is fairness, balance, and the intentional recognition of individual needs and capacities.

Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Gendered Role Expectations:** Nigerian families often assign domestic responsibilities based on gender rather than capability. Studies show that early gendered socialization reinforces long term inequities in labour division, self efficacy, and career aspirations.^[18]
02. **Patriarchal Decision Making:** Many households still operate under patriarchal norms where men are primary decision makers and women's voices are secondary. Patriarchal family structures limit women's agency and perpetuate intergenerational inequality.^[19]
03. **Cultural Reinforcement of Inequity:** Practices such as privileging male children, excluding women from leadership roles in traditional systems, or expecting daughters to perform more domestic labor are well documented contributors to gender inequity.^[20]
04. **Faith Based Misinterpretations:** Religious teachings are sometimes interpreted in ways that reinforce female subordination. Faith institutions can either challenge or entrench gender inequity depending on interpretation and leadership.^[21]
05. **Internalized Bias:** Women themselves may perpetuate inequitable norms, such as mothers reinforcing gendered chores or women's groups in parts of Nigeria perpetuating structures that enforce harmful widowhood practices.^[22]

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Absence of a National Parenting Framework:** Nigeria lacks a standardized parenting policy to guide families on child development, discipline, and equitable upbringing. Evidence shows that national parenting frameworks improve child outcomes and reduce violence.
02. **Limited Social Support Systems:** Inadequate childcare, parental leave, and family friendly workplace policies disproportionately burden women.
03. **Educational Inequities:** Girls and children with disabilities are more likely to be excluded from schooling.
04. **Weak Enforcement of Family Related Policies:** Even where laws exist, such as the Child Rights Act, implementation is inconsistent across states. Weak enforcement undermines family stability and child protection.
05. **Economic Pressures:** Rising living costs and unemployment strain families, often reinforcing traditional gender roles as coping mechanisms. Economic stress is linked to increased conflict and reduced family cohesion.

Progress and Success Stories

- » **Emerging Family Policy Development:** The Ministry of Women Affairs is developing a national family policy under the Renewed Hope Agenda, signaling institutional recognition of family systems as a development priority.
- » **Role Modeling by Women Leaders:** Panelists demonstrated how women in leadership challenge stereotypes and inspire equitable aspirations for younger generations.



Policy Recommendations



01. **Develop and implement a National Parenting Framework:** Establish standardized guidelines for equitable parenting, child development, and family well being.
02. **Strengthen Family Friendly Workplace Policies:** Expand parental leave, flexible work arrangements, and employer supported childcare.
03. **Promote Gender Responsive Education:** Ensure equal access to schooling for boys and girls, including children with disabilities.
04. **Integrate Equity Education into School Curricula:** Teach fairness, empathy, and shared responsibility from early childhood.
05. **Support Community Based Family Programs:** Leverage traditional leaders, faith institutions, and civil society to promote equitable norms.
06. **Enhance Enforcement of Family Related Laws:** Strengthen implementation of the Child Rights Act and domestic violence laws.
07. **Invest in Family Counseling and Mental Health Services:** Expand access to family psychologists and community based support systems.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Parenting Education Workshops:** Deliver community level training on equitable parenting, communication, and conflict resolution.
02. **Household Equity Toolkits:** Provide families with practical guides on sharing chores, decision making, and financial responsibilities.
03. **Faith Based Equity Dialogues:** Partner with religious leaders to promote balanced interpretations of teachings on family roles.
04. **Community Mentorship Programs:** Pair young couples with trained mentors to support equitable family practices.
05. **Media Campaigns on Shared Responsibility:** Use radio, TV, and digital platforms to normalize equitable household roles.
06. **School Based Family Clubs:** Engage children and parents in activities that reinforce fairness, empathy, and inclusion.
07. **Support Groups for Fathers:** Encourage men's involvement in caregiving and emotional labor through fatherhood circles.

“

Equity is a process that leads to a goal, and that goal is equality of opportunity.

– Princess Joan-Anne
Jummai Idonije



“

Equity is not equality; it is raising each child based on who they are, not who we assume they should be.

– Oluwatoyin Ogunkanmi



“

The home is the first school of policy and governance.

– Chioma Momah



“

Everyone must bring something to the table. Women are no longer limited by the tag 'woman.'

– Tomike Adeoye



“

Train children to challenge barriers. Nothing should restrict them.

– Dr Kelechi Anikude



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Men's Roundtable: Rethinking Masculinity, Power, and Shared Responsibility in the Nigerian Home



Panelists

- » Samuel Nwakoamah, Researcher, Policy Innovation Centre
- » Dr. Patricia Ajayi, Lecturer, University of Benin
- » Chima Okoli, Program Manager & Gender Specialist
- » Joseph Ekong, CEO, Biblical Billionaire Consult

Moderator

Niyi Adekanla, Policy Innovation Centre

Credit: Policy Innovation Centre





Session Objectives

1. Examine how men's household decision-making shapes family wellbeing and authority structures.
2. Explore how masculinities influence partnership, communication, and shared responsibilities.
3. Assess how socialisation, culture, and religion shape men's views of leadership and authority.
4. Identify pathways and recommend strategies for transitioning from patriarchal to more equitable family models.

Background

The Men's Roundtable explored how gender norms, cultural expectations, and socialization shape men's roles within Nigerian households. While national conversations on gender equity often focus on women and girls, men's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours remain central to transforming family dynamics and achieving equitable homes.^[36] Research shows that patriarchal norms significantly influence decision-making, emotional expression, caregiving, and financial responsibilities in African families.^[37] The session examined how men negotiate power, partnership, and responsibility in contemporary households, and how shifting norms are reshaping expectations of masculinity.^[38]

Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Patriarchy:** Early socialisation patterns normalise male unilateral decision-making, embedding gendered power hierarchies within household governance.^[39]
02. **Cultural and Religious Norms:** Deeply rooted cultural and religious norms continue to privilege male authority, constraining women's participation in household decision-making. Research confirms that this is a major barrier to gender equitable family practices in West Africa.^[40]
03. **Gender Norms:** Despite evidence showing benefits, shared decision-making is frequently perceived as incompatible with dominant masculinity ideals and seen as a threat to masculinity.^[41]
04. **Toxic Masculinity** Men are often discouraged from vulnerability or seeking support, suppress communication and vulnerability, weakening family cohesion and conflict resolution.^[42]
05. **Gender Roles:** Traditional norms assign financial leadership to men and caregiving to women, even when women contribute significantly to household income. This reinforces inequity and unbalanced responsibility.^[43]

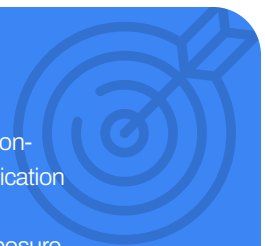
06. **Social Sanctions:** Men adopting partnership-oriented practices often face resistance from family and community, generating intra-household tension and undermining efforts.^[44]

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Economic Pressures Outpacing Normative Change:** Rising living costs and dual-income realities are reshaping household needs faster than prevailing gender norms can adapt.^[45]
02. **Erosion of Positive Masculinity Mentorship:** Community mentorship structures for positive masculinity have weakened, leaving young men without guidance and models for healthy, equitable masculinity.^[46]
03. **Limited Reflective and Communication Spaces:** The absence of safe, intentional spaces for men to reflect on gender norms and communicate, and deficient household communication practices, reinforces unilateral decision-making, emotional disengagement, and slow progress toward equitable family structures.^[47]

Progress and Success Stories

- » Men on the panel and session attendees shared experiences of adopting partnership-based decision-making, showing that equitable homes are viable and beneficial. They reported improved communication and stronger marriages.
- » Younger Nigerians are increasingly embracing shared responsibilities, influenced by education, exposure, and evolving gender norms.



Policy Recommendations



01. **Promote Family Centred Gender Education:** Government and civil society should integrate gender equitable family practices into school curricula, premarital counselling, and community programs.
02. **Strengthen Male Engagement in Gender Equality Programs:** National and state gender policies should explicitly include men as partners, not just observers, in promoting equitable households.
03. **Support Community Dialogues on Masculinity:** Religious institutions, traditional councils, and community groups should host structured conversations on healthy masculinity and shared responsibility.
04. **Integrate Positive Masculinity into National Parenting Frameworks:** Parenting programs should teach fathers how to model empathy, communication, and collaborative leadership.
05. **Encourage Workplace Policies That Support Shared Caregiving:** Employers should adopt paternity leave, flexible work arrangements, and family-friendly policies that enable men to participate in caregiving.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Establish Men's Support and Reflection Groups:** Create safe spaces where men can discuss identity, expectations, and challenges related to masculinity and family roles.
02. **Mentorship Programs:** Engage male role models to teach emotional intelligence, respect, and shared responsibility.
03. **Implement Couple Centred Communication Workshops:** Provide families with tools for joint decision making, conflict resolution, and financial planning.
04. **Launch Media Campaigns on Modern Fatherhood:** Use storytelling, radio, and digital platforms to normalize partnership-based family models.
05. **Train Religious and Community Leaders on Gender Equitable Messaging:** Equip influential leaders to promote inclusive interpretations of cultural and religious teachings.

“

Partnership does not make you weak;
it makes you a leader.

– *Dr Patricia Ajiyi*



“

When families run as partnerships,
they achieve more.

– *Samuel Nwakoamah*



“

There is a mentorship gap for men
today; we have lost many of the
rites that guided masculinity.

– *Chima Okoli*



“

When both parties agree, both
parties bear the load if it goes
south or works out fine.

– *Joseph Ekong*



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Easing the Burden: What Works for Recognition, Reduction, and Redistribution of Unpaid Care Work?



Panelists

- » Ada Osademey - Udechukwu, Senior Gender Advisor, Africa, International Finance Corporation
- » Caroline Faturoti, Head of Gender and Social Inclusion, Nigeria Bureau of Statistics
- » Dr. Runo Onosode, Technical Expert, ILO Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Department
- » Dr. Emem Omokaro Ph.D, Executive Chair, The Dave Omokaro Foundation- Host of the International Institute on Ageing UN Satellite Center for sub-Saharan Africa. Former & Pioneer Director General National Senior Citizens Centre
- » Grace Obi-Ukpai, Director of Social Development, Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning

Moderator

Precious Adigwe, Programs Officer, Gender Mainstreaming and Inclusion

Credit: UN Women - Nigeria





Session Objectives

1. Identify key institutional, data, and labour barriers to recognising and valuing unpaid care work in Nigeria.
2. Examine emerging models for formalising childcare and eldercare and implications, particularly for women's unpaid care.
3. Highlighting the development of standards and professionalisation routes, and investment models that expand care.

Background

Unpaid care work is a foundational but undervalued component of economic and social life; it sustains labour-force participation, human development, and the daily functioning of households.

^[1] This remains largely unrecognised in national plans and policies. Women and girls undertake a disproportionate share of unpaid domestic and care work, reflecting entrenched gender norms and constraining women's labour-market participation and earnings.^[2] Care is frequently treated as a private family responsibility and culturally coded as 'non-work', which contributes to exclusions from national budget architectures and labour protections. This produces a policy paradox: government and markets depend on care, but institutions often fail to recognise, measure, or govern it.^[3]

International statistical standards, including the International Classification of Activities for Time Use Statistics 2016 (ICATUS 2016) and SDG indicator 5.4.1, provide a framework for measuring unpaid domestic and care work and for constructing accounts that render this work visible to macroeconomic and fiscal policy.^[4]

Normative Issue and Challenge

01. **Prevailing Social Norms: Cultural** perceptions in Nigeria regard care work as informal, of low status, or as a stopgap until 'real' work begins, as opposed to productive labour, reinforcing stigma and suppressing professional identity.^[5]
02. **Gender Roles:** Care work is socially assigned to women and girls, who disproportionately undertake unpaid care. This sustains time poverty, limiting equitable redistribution of care and participation in paid labour and education.^[6]
03. **Evolving Cultural Expectations:** Urbanisation and migration weaken the traditional African family-care model, producing conflict between paid work obligations and care obligations, and hinder acceptance of formal care services, such as paid elder care.^[7]

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Statistical Invisibility and Lack of National Data Coverage:** When unpaid care is not measured or documented, it is excluded from economic planning, budget prioritisation, and policy appraisal. Moreover, the Time Use Survey is not yet nationally or geopolitically representative, and results remain pending,

limiting data-driven decision-making.^[8]

02. **Coordination Complexity:** Care-related efforts remain relatively siloed across stakeholders. Fragmented efforts across stakeholders risks duplication and incoherence without an overarching care policy or clear division of labour.^[9]
03. **Affordability–Quality Tension:** Quality and affordability are seen as difficult to achieve simultaneously, limiting uptake and scale of formal services. This incentivises informal caregiving, including reliance on minors and added exposure to abuse.^[10]
04. **Labour Standards Gap:** Without domestication of relevant international standards and enforceable national protections, caregivers, especially in domestic settings, operate without legal safeguards, health coverage, or pathways for redress.
05. **Weak Professionalisation and Underdeveloped Care Infrastructure:** Gaps in standardised training, certification, and quality assurance restrict formal labour market access for care workers and limit service quality. Care services suffer from limited public infrastructure, low private sector engagement, and lack of scalable financing mechanisms.^[11]

Progress and Success Stories

- » Care has been admitted into the Nigerian Skills Qualification Framework; national occupational standards and training manuals have been developed with multi-stakeholder participation; training providers have been accredited (including the University of Benin Teaching Hospital), enabling predominantly female caregivers to be certified across Levels 1–5.
- » Nigeria has completed its first ICATUS 2016–aligned Time Use Survey in Lagos, Kaduna, Borno, and Cross River, generating sex-disaggregated data on unpaid care work to support SDG 5.4.1 reporting and gender-responsive planning.



Policy Recommendations



01. **Institutionalise Care in National Planning:** Embed care economy priorities in the 2026 National Development Plan (human capital sub-chapter) and standard chart-of-accounts integration.
02. **Scale Care Data Systems:** Expand time-use measurement beyond pilot states and operationalise SDG 5.4.1 reporting to enable benchmarking and investment targeting.
03. **Adopt Care Satellite Accounts:** Integrate unpaid care work into national accounting frameworks to strengthen fiscal visibility and policy justification.
04. **Domesticate Decent Work Standards:** Ratify and implement relevant ILO standards for domestic/care work, including protections on wages, hours, and access to health insurance.
05. **Create a Care Governance Mechanism:** Establish an umbrella coordination platform (e.g., care commission approach) to regulate certification, inspection, and quality assurance across care domains.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Professionalise the Care Workforce:** Scale NSQF-aligned accreditation pathways with recognition of prior learning routes.
02. **Domiciliary Care Models:** Expand licensed home-based care agencies, with family supervision and reporting channels.
03. **Build State Implementation Capacity:** Replicate state capacity-building pilots, at least one per state or as resources allow.
04. **Expand Employer-Supported Childcare:** Implement multi-employer childcare hubs and cost-sharing voucher schemes.
05. **Mobilise Care Finance Instruments:** Deploy blended finance, results-based mechanisms, and challenge funds to scale care enterprises and improve service availability and quality.

“

Care work is the foundation of every economy. You need it for productivity.

– *Grace Obi-Ukpai*



“

Nigeria has unlocked the geriatric social care space. So, our women and girls who were not recognised can enter the geriatric social care markets as certified professionals.

– *Dr Emem Omokaro*



“

The time use survey is indeed a landmark effort... it's the first time that the National Bureau of Statistics uses the framework of ICATUS 2016.

– *Caroline Faturoti*



“

Unpaid care work is an essential infrastructure, just the way you have road infrastructure and energy infrastructure; unpaid care work is that significant.

– *Dr Runo Onosode*



“

Providing care is a competitive advantage for employers; it strengthens their bottom line.

– *Ada Osademey-Udechukwu*



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GESI Foyer

Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) Foyer

The PIC Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) Foyer is an innovative multidisciplinary hub that serves as a platform for capacity development, networking, research, and partnerships to advance gender-responsive policies, programs, initiatives, and practices in Africa. At the PIC, our Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) program is focused on supporting an enabling policy environment for gender and social inclusion; gender systems strengthening; and gender transformative programming. Our approach embeds capacity building, skills transfer, and participatory strategies to create sustainable impact.

Our Pillars



Policy and
Governance



Gender System
Strengthening



Gender &
Social Inclusion
Programming

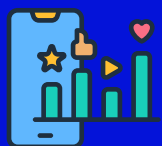
Key Initiatives & Programs

- ✓ Gender and Inclusion Summit
- ✓ Gender Network Africa
- ✓ Gender and Development Course
- ✓ Gender for Private Sector Development Course
- ✓ Customized Gender-Focused Training
- ✓ Gender & Social Inclusion Programming

Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) Policy Domestication and Implementation; A Scoping Assessment of Women in Economic Leadership in Nigeria; Strengthening Women Leadership in Academic Economic Institutions; Gender Analysis of the Mining Sector and other gender-focused programs are being implemented by the Policy Innovation Centre



GS-25 Digital Engagements



11.1M

Total impressions generated spanning 9 countries and 3 continents



5.7M

Unique individuals reached with GS25 content and messaging



208K

Meaningful engagements and interactions with our content across five major digital platforms



78K

Direct clicks driving traffic to summit resources and information



54K

Profile visits from audience seeking deeper brand connection





Behind the Scenes: Gender, Inclusion, and the Creative Economy



Dressed to Disrupt: Gender, Power, and Purpose in Fashion



Panelists

- » Madam Dora Godwin, Seamstress, Entrepreneur, Trainer
- » Prudential Gabriel, Founder, Prudential Styling & Prudential Fashion Academy

Moderator

Princess Agunbiade, Founder, BBB Women Organization

Credit: Policy Innovation Centre





Session Objectives

1. Examine how fashion shapes gender identity, agency, and social power.
2. Highlight pathways for women's economic empowerment within the fashion industry.
3. Identify structural barriers limiting women's participation and growth in the sector.
4. Showcase lived experiences of resilience, entrepreneurship, and community impact.

Background

Fashion is a powerful cultural and economic force that shapes identity, visibility, and agency. Globally, the fashion and creative industries contribute significantly to employment and entrepreneurship, especially for women and youth. UNCTAD's global survey reveals the economic contributions of the creative economy across different countries, ranging from 0.5% to 7.3% of GDP and employing between 0.5% to 12.5% of the workforce.^[8] In Nigeria, the fashion sector is one of the fastest growing segments of the creative economy, offering pathways for income generation, skills development, and social mobility.

Yet, structural barriers persist. Women in fashion often operate in the informal sector, face limited access to capital, and navigate gendered expectations around modesty, appearance, and professionalism. At the same time, fashion serves as a medium for reclaiming identity, challenging stereotypes, and advancing gender equity. This session explored how fashion can be leveraged as a tool for empowerment, economic inclusion, and cultural transformation, highlighting lived experiences from grassroots entrepreneurs to industry leaders.

Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Gender Stereotyping:** Women's clothing choices often determine how they are perceived and treated. Research shows that fashion is deeply tied to gender norms, influencing respect, safety, and social acceptance.^[9]
02. **Stigma and Ableism:** Disability intersects with gender to shape life opportunities. Studies confirm that women with disabilities face compounded discrimination in creative industries and informal work^[10].
03. **Cultural Misconceptions About Women's Work:** Tailoring and fashion design are often undervalued despite being major contributors to women's livelihoods. This aligns with evidence showing that sectors dominated by females are frequently dismissed as "informal" or "less professional".^[11]
04. **Internalized Bias and Social Policing:** Women are often judged by other women, mothers, peers, and community members, based on their clothing choices. This reflects broader patriarchal norms that regulate women's bodies and behavior.^[12]
05. **Identity and Agency:** Fashion is a medium through which women negotiate identity, belonging, and autonomy.^[13]

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Limited Access to Capital and Equipment:** Many women in fashion lack access to modern sewing machines, workspace, or mobility aids if they are experiencing mobility limitations.
02. **Informal Sector Vulnerabilities:** Most women operate outside formal structures, limiting access to credit, social protection, and business development services. In sub-Saharan Africa, 74% of women in non-agricultural jobs are in informal employment^[14].
03. **Skills Gaps and Training Barriers:** Many aspiring designers lack access to quality training due to limited formal opportunities.
04. **Business Sustainability Challenges:** Entrepreneurs struggle with staffing, quality control, and scaling.

Progress and Success Stories

- » **Grassroots Empowerment:** Madam Dora Godwin has trained over 200 girls, demonstrating how informal sector entrepreneurs can drive community level empowerment and skills transfer.
- » **Women Led Job Creation:** Prudential Gabriel's academy has trained over 5,000 women, creating employment and building a pipeline of skilled female designers.



Policy Recommendations



01. **Strengthen Access to Finance for Women in Fashion:** Establish gender responsive credit schemes, grants, and equipment financing tailored to creative MSMEs.
02. **Formalize and Support Informal Sector Tailors:** Provide business registration support, cooperative structures, and access to social protection.
03. **Expand Vocational Training and Apprenticeship Programs:** Partner with fashion academies to scale high quality, affordable training for women and girls.
04. **Promote Disability Inclusive Creative Workspaces:** Provide mobility aids, ergonomic equipment, and accessible workspaces for women with disabilities.
05. **Integrate Fashion into National Creative Economy Policy:** Recognize fashion as a strategic sector for women's economic empowerment.
06. **Support Digital Literacy and E Commerce Adoption:** Equip women with skills for online marketing, branding, and digital sales.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Community Based Fashion Hubs:** Establish local hubs providing shared equipment, training, and mentorship for women.
02. **Women Led Supply Chain Networks:** Build networks linking designers, tailors, fabric suppliers, and distributors to strengthen market access.
03. **Creative Entrepreneurship Bootcamps:** Offer training on pricing, financial management, branding, and customer relations.
04. **Fashion Advocacy Platforms:** Support campaigns that promote diverse expressions of identity and challenge harmful stereotypes.
05. **Health and Safety Interventions:** Provide ergonomic training, adaptive equipment, and health insurance for tailors and designers.
06. **Showcase Women Designers:** Create platforms—fashion shows, exhibitions, digital showcases—to amplify women's work and attract investment.

“

Fashion can be more than fabric;
it is a force for visibility, autonomy,
empowerment, and equity.

– Princess Agunbaide



“

I didn't go into fashion to make
money. I just wanted to adjust my
own clothes, but that was how
I found my purpose. Anything
you find yourself doing, do it well.
Before you can do it well, you
must first find yourself.

– Prudential Gabriel



“

I have trained more than 200 girls.
I get joy teaching them so they can
become something in society.

– Madam Dora Godwin



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SCALING RURAL WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS FOR COMMUNITY-LED DIGITAL ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE

THE WOMEN BUSINESS CENTRE (WBC) MODEL.

About Scaling Rural Women Entrepreneurs for Community-Led Digital Adaptation and Resilience

The project aimed to empower rural women in Vandeikya Local Government Area (LGA) of Benue State and Obanliku LGA of Cross River State in Nigeria by addressing critical barriers limiting women's participation and growth in entrepreneurship.

The WBC Model

The WBC model provides an empowering platform for female entrepreneurs. The model leverages women's clubs as networking opportunities, skill development and knowledge-sharing to succeed in their businesses. This cooperative approach empowers women with leverage that would otherwise be challenging to attain as individuals.

Project Implementation Approach

The project targets majorly rural women in enterprise and facilitates the set up of WBCs as part of existing collectives. This model presents access to resources such as entrepreneurship training, financial and digital literacy, digital marketing and e-commerce among others, while serving as a platform to promote improved health and wellbeing in their communities.

Key Achievements

2,087

Women supported with financial management skills, digital literacy and business capacity to access markets.



200

Facilitators trained in financial management skills, digital literacy and business capacity access to markets.



50

WBCs established for women in enterprise to access business growth resources, including digital tools.



34

Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) established to strengthen women's financial resilience and access to capital.



Looking Ahead

- Need to expand gender-responsive financial inclusion programs.
- Future efforts should focus on scaling the WBC model, embedding gender norm transformation within enterprise and expanding digital inclusion.

Call to Action

Invest in a female-led enterprise today for a more prosperous and resilient society. Want to know how? Contact Self Help Africa.

- Programmatic priorities should include continued capacity building, improved access to finance through microcredit and revolving funds, stronger value chain integration, investment in rural infrastructure and digital technologies, and enhanced collaboration between government, financial institutions, and civil society.



nigeria@selfhelpafrica.org



selfhelpafrica.org



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Men as Champions in Strengthening Legal Frameworks for Gender Justice & Protection



Shifting Norms, Saving Lives: The Equity Model for Impactful Change



Panelists

- » Dorothy Njemanze, Founder, Dorothy Njemanze Foundation
- » Tola Sunmonu-Balogun, Associate Partner, McKinsey & Company

Moderator

Dr. Raihanah Ibrahim, Principal, SCIDaR

Credit: Sustainable Comprehensive Initiatives for Development and Research (SCIDaR)





Session Objectives

1. Examine the role of diversity in equitable workforce design and female progression patterns in Nigeria.
2. Explore institutional barriers, impacts and enablers to equitable participation and outcomes across socioeconomic systems.
3. To identify elements of the Equity Model, such as inclusive policies, institutional reforms and practical supports – that create enabling environments for systemic norm transformation.

Background

Equity as a systemic intervention involves intentionally redesigning institutions to address structural inequalities and dismantle entrenched patriarchal norms. Equity-based models use interconnected mechanisms such as diversity promotion, flexible work arrangements, and gender-responsive budgeting to build inclusive and accountable systems. Persistent labour market disparities highlight this need: women hold only 33% of entry-level corporate roles, are overrepresented in informal employment, and face higher mid-career attrition due to unpaid care work (78.9% of women compared to 54.3% of men)

⁴³ These patterns reflect structural barriers within corporate pipelines alongside broader economic precarity and a need to increase access. Gender-based violence, affecting over 30% of women aged 15-49, further reflects systemic failure, especially in informal spaces and weak care and justice systems ⁴⁴.

Addressing these challenges requires structural transformation of policies, workplace cultures, and support systems through an equity lens.

Normative Issues and Challenges

- 01. Unequal Gendered Caregiving Norms:** Domestic responsibilities are culturally feminised, contributing to mid-career female attrition (e.g. role overload, inferred penalties for usage) and limited support for shared parenting roles. This frames care provisions like parenthood leave and crèches as women-specific, while male involvement remains culturally discretionary.⁴⁵
- 02. Paternal Care Stigmatisation:** Male employees face cultural discomfort and workplace scepticism when requesting caregiving flexibility. These effects of cultural norms exhibited in workplace perceptions may dissuade male employees from utilising paternity leave or flexible arrangements, limiting recognition or tracking of paternal caregiving and uptake.⁴⁶
- 03. Culture of Silence:** Cultural expectations of women's emotional restraint, economic submission, and tolerance of harm inhibit access to institutional support and inclusivity. For example, GBV survivors may be subjected to one-size-fits-all antenatal practices eulogising partners, who are in fact perpetrators, suppressing disclosure of their reality.⁴⁷
- 04. Men as Sole Decision Makers:** Religious and cultural beliefs position men as authoritative decision-makers over women's reproductive choices within the household and subsequently workspaces. With no safeguards, unilateral family planning attempts to retain control over reproductive rights (e.g. IUD) often trigger violence and reinforce dependence.⁴⁸

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

- 01. Workforce Pipeline Leakage:** Corporate entry-level female representation at 33% encounters mid-career leakage linked to care demands. Although those who remain experience promotion parity, the significant drop-off highlights inadequacies in available support system, underscoring the need for both entry and retention interventions.⁴⁹
- 02. Gendered Career Aspirations:** Occasionally, there is a disconnect between programming built on existing norms, and evolving aspirations. For example, programmes may assign girls from low-income backgrounds to vocational post-education pathways based on societal expectations. However, many increasingly aspire toward formal education and upward mobility.
- 03. Flexibility Implementation Gaps:** Flexible arrangements often result in lower-quality assignments or reduced advancement, reflecting insufficient adaptation of performance structures. Performance metrics unchanged by leave or flexible arrangements penalise users, with token paternity provisions failing to redistribute care responsibilities effectively.⁵⁰
- 04. Eligibility, Deficits and Justice Access Barriers:** Maternity protections are often tied to marital status, exposing unmarried women, GBV survivors and others to risks (e.g. dismissal). Women in home-based employment may face workplace harms such as unregulated coercion and surveillance. Yet, escalating costs of formal justice systems exclude many from redress.⁵¹

Progress and Success Stories

- » McKinsey & Company's 2025 analysis of 324 organizations employing 1.4 million people across India, Nigeria, and Kenya documents Nigeria's distinctive "narrow but stable" female pipeline pattern. Women show higher promotion velocity post-entry despite entry constraints (33% vs. 45-50% in peer countries), pointing to a level of career fluidity. This suggests that prioritising entry and mid-career leakage will contribute to significantly increasing gender parity in leadership.⁵²



Policy Recommendations



01. **Universal Household Workspace Protections:** Legislate privacy standards and safeguarding prohibitions against coercion/ surveillance in domestic and home-based labour, incorporating subsidised legal aid for enforcement.
02. **Inclusive Employment Safeguards:** Legislate universal access to reproductive and caregiving protections, such as maternity leave, regardless of marital status, employment classification, or sector (formal, informal, or home-based).
03. **Standardised Paternity Leave:** Introduce enforceable, standardised paid paternity leave with a minimum duration. Establish uptake tracking and legal remedies in cases of illegal or fraudulent (non-)use (e.g. abandonment of dependents provisions).
04. **Inclusive Safeguards for Informal Workspaces:** Integrate home-based and informal labour into national labour protections, mandating privacy, safety, and fund subsidised legal redress mechanisms and psychosocial support for low-income workers.
05. **Inclusive Health Protocols:** Mandate confidential, survivor-sensitive, rights-based care delivery in all healthcare facilities.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Targeted Entry and Retention Pipelines:** Co-design (with women) and deploy apprenticeships, internships and mid-career 'returnship' programmes to expand female entry and mitigate mid-career and care-related leakages found.
02. **Output-Focused Flexibility Frameworks:** Redesign institutional cultures and performance systems, and train managers to de-link career progression from physical presence or rigid schedules, ensuring assignments and promotion for all.
03. **Gender-Responsive Safeguarding for All:** Distribute toolkits and capacity-building for SMEs and home enterprises to meet minimum safeguarding and feedback standards and set up reporting channels tailored to resource constraints.
04. **Participatory Parenting Support Design:** Employ feedback consultations with diverse caregivers to develop lifecycle- lifecycle-based parental support systems. Include flexible time options, mentorship resources, and role modelling.

From Influence to Impact: Engaging Religious and Traditional Leaders in Community-Led Models that Advance Equity and GBV Prevention



Panelists

- » Dr. Sumaye Fadimatu Hamza, President, Federation of Muslim Women's Associations of Nigeria (FOMWAN)
- » Sis MaryAnn Chikelue, Executive Director, Interfaith Dialogue Forum for Peace (IDFP) & Coordinator, Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace (COFP)
- » His Royal Highness, Mai Kaltungo; Engr. Sale Muhammadu Umar, OON, Deputy Chairman, Gombe State Council of Emirs & Chiefs, Northern Traditional Rulers Council, North-East Coordinator
- » His Royal Majesty, Igwe Samuel Ikechukwu Asadu Jr (Igwe Ogadagidi), Chairman, Enugu State Council of Traditional Rulers
- » Dr. Bashir Mundi, Department of Religion, University of Georgia, USA

Context setting

Joy Ehinor-Esezobor, Program Manager, Ford Foundation

Moderator

Dr. Somawina Nwegbu, Public Health Specialist, Policy Innovation Centre

Credit: Policy Innovation Centre & Ford Foundation





Session Objectives

1. Examine the importance of community ownership and collective action in GBV prevention.
2. Assess the role of RTLs in shifting harmful norms and legitimizing GBV prevention.
3. Identify strategies for mobilizing social networks and community institutions.
4. Share practical examples of culturally informed, community-driven approaches.

Background

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a pressing human rights, public health, and development crisis in Nigeria and across sub-Saharan Africa, with one in three African women and 31% of Nigerian women experiencing some form of violence in their lifetime^{53 54}. GBV prevalence is intricately linked to established gender inequalities and entrenched social, religious, and cultural norms^{55 56}.

Religious and Traditional Leaders (RTLs) are uniquely influential in many Nigerian and African communities, as they embody an intersection of spiritual, cultural, and political authority. Consequently, embedding interventions within these and other community structures, mobilizing their social networks, and leveraging gatekeepers to legitimize change will translate into sustainable GBV prevention⁵⁷. This session explored how RTLs can move from influence to impact by advancing equity and GBV prevention through collective action and culturally grounded leadership.

Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Cultural Norms:** Practices such as polygamy, widowhood rites, and female circumcision persist in many communities, contributing to GBV. These are often justified through cultural or religious interpretations, despite contradicting human rights frameworks.³
02. **Gatekeeper Influence:** RTLs can either catalyze or obstruct change. Their authority must be leveraged through sensitization and structured engagement to avoid reinforcing harmful norms.⁵⁸

rural communities where women lack access to formal employment, making them more vulnerable to exploitation and violence.

02. **Accountability Gaps:** Without mechanisms to monitor RTL commitments, advocacy risks reverting to the status quo. Participatory scorecards and community feedback loops are emerging tools to address this.⁴
03. **Policy Fragmentation:** GBV prevention is often siloed across health, justice, and social sectors. Integrated models are needed to embed prevention within community governance structures.⁵
04. **Service Gaps:** Survivors frequently rely on informal networks due to limited access to formal services. Community-based protective structures, such as women's groups and faith-based organizations, are essential.⁴

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Economic Vulnerabilities:** Women's economic/financial dependence on partners or family members is a critical risk factor for GBV⁵⁹. The risk is further exacerbated in

Progress and Success Stories

- » **Economic Empowerment Initiatives:** HRH Mai Kaltungo, Engr. Sale Muhammadu Umar described cassava and sugarcane processing programs that increased women's income and reduced domestic violence. These align with evidence that economic empowerment reduces GBV risk⁶⁰.
- » **Institutional Reform:** HRM Igwe Samuel Ikehukwu Asadu Jr. signed a communique banning harmful practices such as GBV and integrated women into his cabinet, demonstrating how traditional institutions can model equity.
- » **Interfaith Collaboration:** The collaboration between the Federation of Muslim Women Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN) and the Women Wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria (WOWICAN) in referring and managing reported cases of GBV illustrates how interfaith alliances can provide survivor support, promoting inclusive advocacy and action.



Policy Recommendations



01. **Embed GBV Prevention in Community Structures:** Support RTLs to institutionalize equity-driven practices within councils and congregations.
02. **Develop Accountability Mechanisms:** Establish monitoring frameworks to track RTL commitments and measure progress.
03. **Invest in Women's Economic Empowerment:** Scale community-based livelihood programs that reduce vulnerability to GBV.
04. **Strengthen Interfaith Platforms:** Expand partnerships between Muslim and Christian women's organizations to provide survivor support.
05. **Promote Grassroots Mobilization:** Allocate resources for community-level education and awareness campaigns.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Community-Led Models:** Expand the inclusion of women councillors within traditional governance structures to institutionalize gender representation, ensuring that women's perspectives are embedded in decision-making processes and that community-led GBV prevention strategies reflect the lived realities of both women and men.
02. **Faith-Based Advocacy:** Train religious leaders to consistently deliver equity-focused sermons and facilitate structured community dialogues. Equipping them to challenge harmful gender norms, leverage their moral authority to legitimize GBV prevention, and foster inclusive cultural narratives that resonate with congregations.
03. **Grassroots Education:** Embed GBV awareness programs into schools, religious institutions, and local councils. This creates sustained platforms for early sensitization, intergenerational learning, and community-wide norm change, thereby strengthening prevention efforts at the most localized levels of society.
04. **Collaborative Monitoring:** Establish joint monitoring frameworks that bring together civil society organizations, government agencies, and RTLs. This enables participatory evaluation of GBV prevention outcomes, enhances accountability, and ensures that interventions remain culturally relevant and evidence-driven.

“

Islam is not against culture per se, but it is not in support of culture when the culture is unjust, when it discriminates, or when it is violent.

– *Dr Bashir Mundi*



“

If you empower the women, you empower the nation. The society cannot just arrogate power to men; it must be negotiated with women.

– *HRM Igwe Samuel
Ikechukwu Asadu Jr*



“

We tell our people to engage women as partners, not property. Today, we have over 80 women councillors serving in the traditional ruling council,”

– *HRH Mai Kaltungo, Engr
Sale Muhammadu Umar*



“

Human dignity is the foundation of gender equality; discrimination dehumanizes us all. Religious institutions must dissuade masculinity that violates inclusivity.

– *Sis Mary Ann Chikelue*



“

Collaborative effort is key—religious leaders must speak with one voice in condemning GBV and changing mindsets through the pulpit.

– *Dr Sumaye Hamza*



“

Religious and traditional leaders play important role in the society. They are like trees with deep roots that do not fear the wind

– *Joy Ehinor-Esezobor*



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New Voices, Stronger Communities: Shifting Norms to End Child Early and Forced Marriage



Panelists

- » Amina Hanga, Executive Director, Isa Wali Empowerment Initiative
- » Princess Joan-Anne Jummai Idonije, Mnim, Mnsn, Special Assistant Technical, Women Affairs And Community Engagement To The Minister Of Women Affair
- » Victoria Bello, Deputy Director, Centre for Health Education

Moderator

Dr Maryam Adu Haruna, Programme Advisor, Policy Innovation Centre

Credit: Policy Innovation Centre & Gates Foundation





Session Objectives

1. Explore how poverty, gender norms, and social expectations make some girls more vulnerable than others.
2. Discuss how evidence from the Nigeria Survey on Adolescent Health and Well-being can inform targeted, context-sensitive interventions.
3. Highlight safe spaces, youth clubs, and community engagement models that delay marriage and keep girls in school.
4. Examine how federal and state institutions (especially the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs) frame and respond to CEFM.
5. Identify concrete policy and programmatic strategies to shift harmful norms and strengthen accountability at the community level.

Background

Despite the Child Rights Act (2003) and the National Gender Policy (2021–2026), Child, Early, and Forced Marriage (CEFM) remains widespread in Nigeria, with some states recording up to 44% of girls married before age 18, as highlighted in the Nigeria Survey on Adolescent Health and Wellbeing presented in the session. The study that is being conducted by PIC is covering 14 states and the FCT. It shows that poverty, family honour, dowry, tradition, and silence from community gatekeepers continue to sustain the practice, with 95% of marriage decisions guided by families and community/religious leaders^[1]

The session situated CEFM as both a rights violation and a driver of intergenerational poverty, school dropout, gender-based violence, and poor health outcomes. It emphasized that equity “begins at home”: in how families value girls, allocate resources, and interpret culture and religion. The conversation focused on shifting norms, strengthening community-led solutions, and aligning national policy with local realities.

Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Gender norms:** Girls are primarily seen as future wives and mothers, with their value tied to marriage and childbearing rather than education or economic potential.^[2]
02. **Family Honour:** Out-of-wedlock pregnancy is treated as a family disgrace, with early marriage used to “cover” shame. This reflects broader findings that CEFM is often used to control girls’ sexuality and restore perceived family honour.^[3]
03. **Culture of Silence:** Parents rarely discuss Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) with girls, leaving them without accurate information to make safe choices.³
04. **Gender Roles:** Parents who see educating girls as a “waste” because they will marry and “belong” to another family. Research confirms that such norms reduce investment in girls’ schooling and normalize early marriage as the default pathway.^[4]

consistently links low educational attainment with a higher risk of child marriage and reduced life opportunities.²

03. **Resistance to naming “child marriage”:** Some state actors insist on using only “forced marriage” and reject “early/child marriage” terminology, reflecting political and religious sensitivities. This resistance undermines accurate data collection and honest public discourse on CEFM.
04. **Limited adolescent focused services and safe spaces:** There is a scarcity of safe spaces, shelters, and adolescent focused outreach for girls resisting forced marriage. This gap leaves girls with few protection options when they push back against family or community pressure.³
05. **Fragmented institutional response and weak local structures:** CSOs reported difficulty engaging local government structures on CEFM, with unclear mandates and weak or non functional women’s development centres. This mirrors broader findings that institutional fragmentation and under-resourced gender machinery hinder effective implementation of child marriage policies.²

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Poverty and economic insecurity:** Poor households marry off girls to reduce “mouths to feed” or access bride price. Evidence shows that poverty is a major structural driver of child marriage in Nigeria, as families use marriage as a survival strategy.⁴
02. **Educational exclusion and weak retention:** Girls who drop out of school are quickly steered toward marriage. Research

06. **Implementation gaps despite legal frameworks:** While all 36 states have domesticated the Child Rights Act (2003), enforcement is uneven. The Ministry of Women Affairs emphasized that federal authorities rely on advocacy rather than direct compulsion, reflecting the federal structure and the gap between law and practice documented in national policy analyses.

Progress and Success Stories

- » **Data driven advocacy and programming:** Locally grounded data, such as the Nigeria Survey on Adolescent Health and Well-being, helps quantify the scale of CEFM, amplify girls’ voices, and guide interventions toward the most affected communities. The data also helps to monitor whether policies and programmes are working and where course correction is needed.
- » **National policy leadership and regional engagement:** The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs highlighted Nigeria’s role as a Pathfinder country on ending violence against children and the development of a costed national action plan. High level summits and engagement with governors’ spouses signal growing political recognition of CEFM as a national priority.



Policy Recommendations



01. **Strengthen enforcement of the Child Rights Act** by improving coordination between federal, state, and local government structures, ensuring that violations are reported and addressed consistently.
02. **Integrate community gatekeepers—religious leaders, traditional rulers, and women leaders—into norm change strategies**, ensuring they champion the protection of girls' rights.
03. **Expand adolescent-friendly services and safe spaces**, ensuring girls have access to information, psychosocial support, and alternatives to early marriage.
04. **Improve data systems by standardizing definitions and reporting mechanisms**, especially in states where officials resist acknowledging “child marriage.”
05. **Increase investment in girls' education through scholarships, retention programs**, and community-based incentives, particularly in rural and low-income communities.
06. **Strengthen social protection programs that reduce economic pressures on families**, including cash transfers, livelihood support, and food security initiatives.
07. **Enhance collaboration between Ministries of Women Affairs and Education**, ensuring that interventions targeting girls are holistic and coordinated.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Scale up safe space programs** for adolescent girls, focusing on life skills, literacy, SRHR education, and leadership development.
02. **Establish community-led norm change initiatives**, including dialogue circles, father-to-father forums, and youth advocacy groups.
03. **Develop localized communication strategies that avoid confrontational language**, using culturally appropriate framing to address early marriage.
04. **Strengthen local government capacity by training women development officers and community extension workers**, ensuring they can support prevention efforts.
05. **Implement community-based monitoring systems**, enabling families and leaders to track progress and hold themselves accountable.
06. **Support economic empowerment programs for women and families**, reducing the financial incentives that drive early marriage.

“

Data gives us the direction our interventions should take.

– *Victoria Bello*



“

Government alone cannot do it. We need traditional institutions, CSOs, and communities to come on board.

– *Princess Joan-Anne Jummai Idonije*



“

If you go in saying ‘we are here to end child marriage’, you will hit a wall. Let the community name the problem, then you work with them on the solutions

– *Amina Hanga*



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Leveraging the 3-Ps: Pulpit, Policy, and Practice – for Inclusive Development



Panelist

» Apostle Emmanuel Iren, Lead Pastor & Founder, Celebration Church International

Moderator

Dr Osasuyi Dirisu, Executive Director, Policy Innovation Centre (PIC)

Credit: Policy Innovation Centre





Session Objectives

1. Identify how faith leaders can use the pulpit to shift mindsets and promote gender equity and social inclusion.
2. Examine the gaps between faith teachings and cultural practices that perpetuate inequity.
3. Explore how faith institutions can use social data to design more impactful and non-tokenistic interventions.
4. Understand the constraints that limit faith leaders from advocating for equitable policies and laws.
5. Recommend strategies for integrating equity, fairness, and justice into faith-based governance and community engagement.

Background

Faith institutions remain among the most influential social structures in Nigeria, shaping values, norms, and public behaviour across generations. With over 90% of Nigerians identifying with a religion, faith leaders hold significant power to influence social attitudes, promote equity, and challenge harmful norms. Religious leaders can accelerate social change by intentionally integrating equity, justice, and inclusion into their teachings.^{[1],[2]}

This session explored how the “Pulpit, Policy, and Practice” can be strategically leveraged by faith leaders to promote inclusive development. The conversation emphasized that equity is not an external agenda to be “added” to faith practice but is embedded in the core teachings of many religious traditions, including Christianity. The session also examined the tensions between faith and culture, the role of social data in shaping faith-based interventions, and the barriers that prevent faith leaders from speaking boldly on issues of justice and inclusion.

Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Cultural Bias:** Many congregations interpret religious teachings through cultural lenses that reinforce patriarchal norms, leading to practices that contradict core faith principles of equity and justice.^[3]
02. **Religious Norms:** Many faith leaders and congregants do not recognize equity as intrinsic to religious teachings, resulting in limited emphasis on justice, fairness, and inclusion within sermons and faith-based programs.
03. **Faith–Culture Conflict:** Deeply rooted cultural traditions sometimes contradict religious principles of fairness and dignity, yet these traditions continue to shape behaviour. Cultural norms often override religious norms in shaping gender relations.^[4]
04. **Stigmatization:** Some faith communities rationalize injustice against individuals perceived as morally “non-conforming,” which undermines universal human dignity and reinforces exclusion.
02. **Resistance to Social Justice Messaging:** Congregants often perceive discussions on gender equity, inclusion, or social justice as political or distracting from “core spiritual matters,” creating resistance to pulpit-based advocacy
03. **Resource Constraints:** Economic hardship reduces the capacity of faith leaders to invest in social programs, as congregants and institutions prioritize survival over social advocacy.
04. **Lack of Structured Platforms for Dialogue:** Faith institutions often lack formal mechanisms for discussing equity, justice, and inclusion, limiting opportunities for mindset transformation.
05. **Silence Due to Fear of Backlash:** Faith leaders may avoid speaking on sensitive issues due to fear of criticism from congregants or misinterpretation as political activism.
06. **Fragmented Faith-Based Interventions:** Many impactful initiatives occur quietly and independently, without coordination or visibility, limiting their potential to influence broader social norms.

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Limited Use of Social Data:** Faith institutions rarely use data on poverty, inequality, or social vulnerability to design interventions, resulting in tokenistic charity rather than systemic impact.

Progress and Success Stories

- » Faith leaders are increasingly recognising equity and inclusion as core spiritual responsibilities, with many already running health, social welfare, and gender-focused initiatives, and showing growing openness to data-driven and policy-informed engagement that strengthens the bridge between faith and development practice.



Policy Recommendations



01. **Integrate Equity into Faith-Based Governance:** Faith institutions should embed equity, fairness, and justice into their doctrinal teachings, leadership structures, and community programs.
02. **Promote Data-Driven Faith Interventions:** Faith institutions should adopt social data to design targeted, sustainable, and non-tokenistic programs addressing poverty, inequality, and vulnerability.
03. **Develop Faith Sensitive Equity Frameworks:** National and state policies should include guidelines for partnering with religious institutions to advance inclusive development.
04. **Support Faith Leaders to Speak on Justice:** Provide training and platforms that equip faith leaders to confidently address sensitive issues such as gender-based violence, discrimination, and harmful cultural norms.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Create Faith-Based Equity Platforms:** Establish regular forums where faith leaders can discuss inclusion, justice, and social transformation.
02. **Develop Sermon Guides on Equity:** Produce faith-aligned teaching materials that help leaders integrate equity into weekly sermons and discipleship programs.
03. **Train Faith Leaders on Social Data Use:** Build capacity for interpreting poverty, gender, and livelihood data to inform impactful interventions.
04. **Launch Community Dialogues on Faith and Culture:** Facilitate conversations that help communities distinguish between cultural practices and faith principles.
05. **Strengthen Faith-Based Social Programs:** Support churches and mosques to scale existing health, education, and welfare initiatives using evidence-based models.

“

Implicit in the preaching of the gospel is equity. When the purpose of God's Word is misunderstood, tradition replaces truth and abuse becomes inevitable. Equity is not an addendum to our faith...Until we truly value the common person, national transformation will remain out of reach.

- *Apostle Emmanuel Iren*



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Collaborative Strategies for Achieving Food Security and Sustainable Agriculture



Feeding the Future – Tackling Nutrition & Food Insecurity with Inclusive and Sustainable Solutions



Panelists

- » Mrs Uju Rochas-Anwukah, Senior Special Assistant to the President on Public Health, Office of the Vice President on Nutrition
- » Dr. Megor Ikuenobe, Founder, Lead Oak Women and Children Foundation
- » Osenaga Orokpo, CEO/President Shield Africa
- » Tomisin Odunmbaku, Project Manager, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition

Moderator

Muhammad Muzzamil Momoh, Programme Consultant, Sahel Consulting and Agriculture and Nutrition Ltd.

Credit: Policy Innovation Centre





Session Objectives

1. Examine how agricultural infrastructure gaps and social determinants influence maternal and child malnutrition.
2. Discuss cross-sectoral policy opportunities to reduce malnutrition.
3. Develop strategies to embed nutrition education in schools, maternal health services, and community programs.

Background

Nigeria faces a triple burden of malnutrition: undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and rising overnutrition driven by weak infrastructure, entrenched cultural norms, and fragmented policy responses. Agriculture contributes 24% of Nigeria's GDP^[1]. However, over 40%^[2] of fresh produce from smallholder farmers in Nigeria is lost post-harvest due to poor storage, logistics, and limited cold-chain systems^[3]. Transport costs account for 30–50% of food value, further inflating prices and restricting access to nutrient-rich foods for vulnerable households^[4].

There is a correlation between social determinants such as early child marriage, limited education, and poverty with maternal and child malnutrition in Nigeria^[5]. Harmful cultural myths (e.g., about colostrum or eggs) undermine nutrition practices^[6]. Adolescent girls remain a neglected group, despite the prevalence of early child marriage and evidence that 35.3% of children under 5 years are stunted³, perpetuating intergenerational cycles of poor health and cognitive loss.

The session emphasized that nutrition is a multi-sectoral challenge requiring bottom-up coordination across health, education, agriculture, WASH, and social protection.

Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Cultural Norms:** Early marriage (and consequently adolescent pregnancy⁶¹), food myths, and gendered household food allocation undermine maternal and child nutrition.
02. **Gatekeeper Influence:** Traditional and religious leaders wield strong social influence shaping community norms and health behaviors; their active engagement in the design and implementation of health and nutrition interventions mitigates resistance and strengthens adoption.
03. **Education Gaps:** Low nutrition literacy among women and adolescent girls is reinforced by prevailing social norms that limit their access to information and decision-making, perpetuating poor dietary practices and poor health outcomes.

Non - Normative Issues and Challenges

01. **Infrastructure Deficits:** Poor road networks linking agriculture production hubs to urban centres, limited cold-chain capacity, and sparse irrigation limit production, market access, elevate post-harvest loss, and increase food costs in Nigeria.
02. **Policy Fragmentation:** Nutrition-sensitive infrastructure planning is often excluded from agricultural and health strategies.
03. **Service Gaps:** Heavy reliance on traditional birth attendants in many parts of the country, as much as 70% in some states, translates to limited access to skilled delivery care and the nutrition literacy provided in such settings⁶².
04. **Funding & Accountability:** Insufficient nutrition budget lines and weak sub-national-level coordination undermine programme continuity, execution, and accountability across Nigeria's nutrition and health systems.

Progress and Success Stories

- » **Fortification Programs:** Africa Improved Foods (AIF) Rwanda produces fortified blended foods for mothers and children in partnership with the Government of Rwanda and CHAI⁶³.
- » **Shield Africa Farmers' Academy:** The programme equips participants with sustainable and profitable agricultural skills, covering areas like crop and fish farming, land preparation, pest management, and post-harvest management.
- » **Lead Oak Women and Children Foundation** is coordinating the mapping of locally available and affordable nutrient rich foods in Kaduna and Kebbi states, producing nutritional guides to prevent malnutrition.
- » **The Nutrition 774 (N-774) Initiative** is a nationwide, government-led, decentralised programme in Nigeria designed to combat malnutrition across all 774 LGAs through a multi-sectoral approach focused on Health, Food Systems, Education, Social Protection, and WASH⁶⁴.



Policy Recommendations



01. **Embed GBV Prevention in Community Structures:** 1. Invest in Nutrition-Sensitive Infrastructure: Expand rural feeder roads, aggregation hubs, irrigation, and cold storage.
02. **Localize Nutrition:** Promote diverse Nigerian foods through school meals, seasonal eating, and community demonstrations.
03. **Scale Fortification Smartly:** Sustain research-backed fortification while expanding local product innovation.
04. **Prioritize Adolescents:** Integrate nutrition literacy and services into schools and skills centers; link with SRH programs.
05. **Engage Gatekeepers:** Partner with traditional and religious leaders to counter harmful myths and co-design interventions.
06. **Strengthen Primary Care Pathways:** Train and integrate TBAs for referrals and basic nutrition counseling.
07. **Institutionalize Data & Accountability:** Adopt nutrition scorecards, ring-fence budget lines, and publish disaggregated results.
08. **Catalyze Youth in Agriculture:** Support farmer academies, MSMEs, and off-take models for nutrient-rich crops.

Programmatic Recommendations



01. **Community-Led Models:** Scale farm-to-school programs, home gardens, and women/youth-led initiatives.
02. **Technology & Data:** Deploy digital mapping, nutrition scorecards, and mobile tools for monitoring and targeting.
03. **Cross-Sectoral Coordination:** Strengthen LGA-level planning and budget alignment across health, agriculture, and education.
04. **Behavior Change Campaigns:** Embed nutrition literacy in schools, maternal health services, and community outreach.
05. **Partnerships:** Mobilize private sector, civil society, and development partners to close funding and capacity gaps.

“

Cultural practices and customs are central to communities across Nigeria. Traditional and religious leaders are the gatekeepers to behavioural change, as a result, we must engage them with respect and partner with them as co-creators of solutions to malnutrition in Nigeria.

– *Dr Megor Ikuenobe*



“

Malnutrition is a quiet killer in Nigeria, it doesn't announce itself like gunfire, it does not make the headlines like insecurity. However, it kills more dreams than conflicts ever will.

– *Mrs Uju Rochas-Anwukah*



“

We must first understand our food system. Real solutions begin when everyone truly knows who “everyone” is within our food system

– *Tomisin Odunmbaku*



“

Innovation must be driven by research and adequately funded; fortification initiatives in Rwanda have achieved over 90% improvement in iron status and reduced night blindness

– *Osenaga Orokpo*



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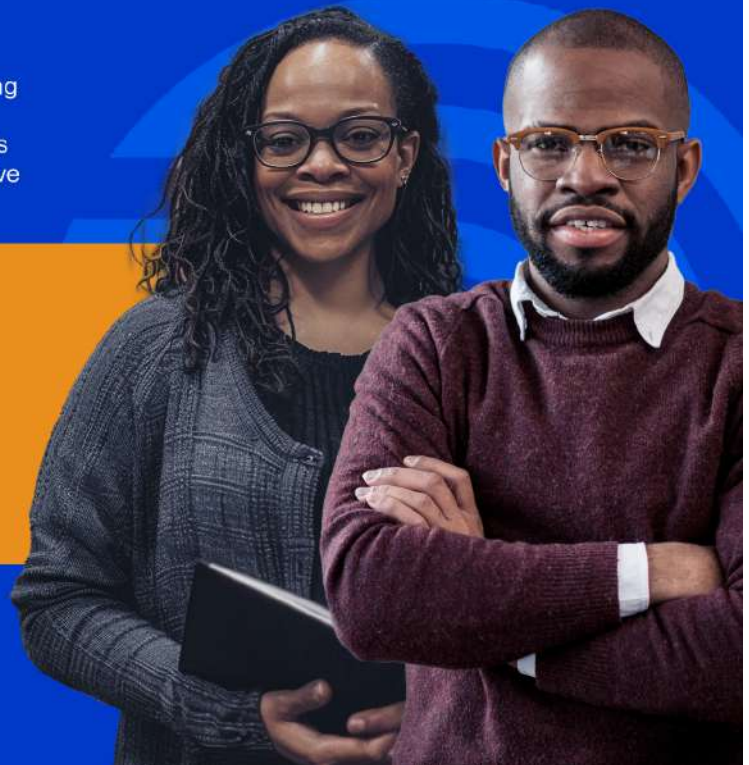
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Exhibition Stand & Mothers Lounge



Appendix



Agenda

Tuesday, September 2, 2025: Day 0

TIME	TITLE	ACTIVITY	SPEAKER	VENUE
9:00am – 4:00pm	Measuring What Matters: Beyond Measurement: Deepening Multidimensional Poverty Insights for Policy and Programmatic Action	Learning Workshop	Policy Innovation Centre (PIC)	PIC Office

Wednesday, September 3, 2025: Day 1

TIME	TITLE	ACTIVITY	SPEAKER	VENUE
8:00 am – 9:00 am	Registration	Tag Pickup	Policy Innovation Centre	Pre-Function Area
9:00 am – 9:05 am	Introduction to the Summit	Welcome and Introductions	Policy Innovation Centre	Pre-Function Area
9:05 am – 10:00 am	Main Hall	Breakout Session 1	Part 1 » Gideon Ekong, Nile University of Nigeria. » Ayowonuola Ajala, Intern, PIC » Faith Ebri Lawrence, Intern, PIC Part 2: » Funmilayo Oyekanmi, Founder, Human & Social Sustainability Network Africa. » Kwaji Ble Ngida, Associate NESG. » Lilian Njeri Mbuthi, Youth Partnerships & Admin Officer, Transform Health Coalition, Kenya » Yusuff Liadi Abiodun, Executive Director, ILead Africa. Part 3: » Guest Speakers: Nafisat Adejuwon, ED, NAF Foundation/Nalafem Envoy to the African Union » Mimshach Obioha, CEO TeleSoftas Nigeria Moderators: » Adanna Omeye, Research Economist, PIC » Prince Dirisu, Nile University	Main Hall

09:05 am - 10:00 am	Bridging the Disability Gap: Opportunities for Workplace Inclusion in Nigeria	Breakout Session	» Dolapo Agbede, Founder and Lead Consultant, Will Way Paradigm. » Mayowa Akiode, Human Resources Officer, PIC. » Justice Christopher, Principal Partner, Just Ace Law Firm. » Ese Adams, Gender and Inclusion Advisor, PIC. Moderator: » Mr. Rotimi Ojo, Founder & CEO, Unleash Awareness Africa Ltd	Main Hall
	The Men's Roundtable; Building Inclusive Households Together	Breakout Session	Behavioural Insight Team, PIC	Acacia A & B
10:00 am - 10:05 am	Security briefing/Music	Music	El-Excess Entertainment	Pre-Function Area/ Main Hall
10:10am – 10:15am	Welcome Speech	Welcome Remark	Mr. Udemé Ufot, Chairman, Policy Innovation Centre	Main Hall
10:15am – 10:20am	Opening Speech	Opening Remark	Mr. Olaniyi Yusuf, Chairman, Nigeria Economic Summit Group	Main Hall
10:20am – 10:25am	Special Guests	Special Recognition	Government/Donors/Development Partners/Private Sector	Main Hall
10:25am - 10:35am	Special Remarks	Special Remarks	Hansatu Adegbite, GS25 Technical Advisory Committee, Chair. Ms. Beatrice Eyong, UN Women Country Representative Nnanna Anyim-Ude, Board Member, Nigeria Economic Summit Group	Main Hall
10:35am -10:45am	Opening ceremony	Opening ceremony	El-Excess Entertainment	Main hall
10:45 am - 10:50am	Video Presentation	Gender and Inclusion Summit	PIC/ Media Team	Main Hall
10:50 am - 10:55am	Introduction to the Gender and Inclusion Summit	Presentation	Dr. Osasuyi Dirisu, Executive Director, Policy Innovation Centre	Main Hall
10:55am – 11:20am	Keynote Speech	Keynote Speech	Oley Dibba-Wadda, Founder & CEO, Gam Africa Institute for Leadership (GAIL); The Gambia Board Member, Women Political Leaders (WPL), Belgium.	Main Hall

11:20am – 11:25am	Keynote Address	Keynote Address	Hon. Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim, fsi, Honourable Minister, The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development	Main Hall
11:25am – 11:40am	Fireside Chat	Fireside Chat	Hon. Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim, fsi, Honourable Minister, The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development Moderator: Hansatu Adegbite, GS25 Technical Advisory Committee, Chair	Main Hall
11:40am – 12:10pm	Catalysing Change: Best Practice for Gender - Responsive Education and Governance	Plenary	» Doris Mbadiwe, CEO, InterBau Foundation » Mrs. Grace Obi-Ukpabi, Acting Director, Social Development, Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning » Mr. Sunday Sanusi-Agbabiaka, Director, Planning, Research and Statistics, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs. » Mrs. Osah Oghale Gladys, Director, Co-curricular & Gender Unit, Lagos State Technical and Vocational Education Board (LASTVEB) » Dr. Tinuke Temitope, Director of the Business Entrepreneurship, Abuja Chamber of Commerce and Industry – (ACCI-BEST) Moderator: Ms. Obidiran Omowumi Olumide, Deputy Director General, National Association of Small-Scale Industrialists (NASSI)	Main Hall
12:10pm – 12:15pm	GS-25 from the streets of UNN	Video Presentation	PIC/ Media Team	Main Hall
12:15pm – 12:45pm	New Approaches for Expanding Access to Quality Education and Inclusive Development	Ministerial Interview	Dr. Tunji Alausa CON, The Honourable Minister, Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria. Moderator: Dr Charles Usie, Country Director, Plan International	Main Hall
12:45pm – 01:20pm	Lunch and Exhibition Tour/ M&E	Lunch and Exhibition Tour	PIC Team	Main Hall
01:20pm – 02:05pm	Shifting Norms, Saving Lives: The Equity Model for Impactful Change	Breakout Session	» Dorothy Njemanze, Founder, Dorothy Njemanze Foundation » Chibueze Ewuzie, Chief Innovation Officer, SCIDaR » Tola Sunmonu-Balogun, Associate Partner, McKinsey & Company Moderator: Dr Raihanah Ibrahim, Principal, SCIDaR	Acacia A & B

Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Strengthening Women's Leadership in Academic Economic Institutions in Nigeria	Breakout Session	Keynote/Context Setting Jackson Otieno, Program Manager, Co-impact Africa » Prof. Michael Kunnuji, Head of Department, Sociology, University of Lagos » Prof Mercy Ada Anyiwe, Dept of Economics, University of Benin. » Dr. Patricia I. AJAYI, Department of Economics, University of Ibadan. Nigeria Moderator Adekemi Omole, Gender and Social Inclusion Lead, Policy Innovation Centre.	Obecha A and B
Inclusive Security: Integrating Civilian Voices into Nigeria's Peacebuilding Architecture	Breakout Session	» Rear Admiral Olu Bankole, Chief of Defence, Civil Military Relations, Defence Headquarters » Brigadier General Jon Temlong (RTD) OON, Pioneer Commander, Multinational Joint Task Force and Consultant on National Security » Air Vice Marshal (AVM) Ibikunle Daramola, Chief of Civil Military Relations Nigerian, Nigerian Air Force » LT COL (Dr) Susan Johnson Dibal, Head of Veteran Services Defence Health Maintenances Limited » Commodore Ibifubara Pepple,Director Innovation and Concepts Development at Naval Headquarters, Representative of the Navy » Maj Gen M.E Onoja, Deputy Chief of Civil-Military Affairs Army Psychological Operations Moderator: Rinmicit Aboki, Gender Lead, Albright Stonebridge Group	Main Hall
The Missing Voices in Public Finance: Inclusive Fiscal Management for Real Change	Breakout Session	» Bilikisu Oluwakemi Olawoyin, Oyo state Primary health care board gender desk officer » Chukwuemeka Onyebuchi Onyimadu, Economist, UN Women Nigeria » Nafiu Shehu, SA, Executive chairman, Kano State Internal Revenue Service » Ugochi Ehiahuruike, ED, Social and Integral Development Centre (SIDECE) Moderator: Razaq Adewale Fatai, Chief Data Officer, Nigeria Governors' Forum	Main Hall Ball Room 4
Mobility for All: Innovating for safer and more inclusive transportation	Video Presentation	PIC/Media Team	Main Hall
Mobility for All: Innovating for safer and more inclusive transportation	Breakout Session	Part 1: » Mary Ogwu, Businesswoman, Orange Market » Mrs. Glory Ejeje, Managing Director of SREE Services and Logistics » Kenneth Echiche, Representative, JONAPWD » Alhaji Bashir G. Bello, Secretary-in-charge, FCT NURTW	Main Hall

Part 2:

- » Enahoro Okhae, CEO, God is Good Motors
- » Dr. Julius Oluwafunmiyi Ajayi, Transport and Logistics Specialist
- » DCC Okpe Ekpe Omadachi, Head AHR, Federal Road Safety Corps.
- » Weyinmi Aghadiuno, Head of Regulatory & Policy Africa, BOLT Nigeria

Moderator: Kayode Okikiolu, TV Anchor, Channels Television

	From Barriers to Access: Addressing HPV Vaccination Disparities in Nigeria	Breakout session	» Dr. Chito Nwana, Obstetrician and Gynecologist, CEO/MD Tabitha Medical Center » Abisola Akindolire, HPV Lead, Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), Nigeria » Prof. Amos Bassi, Public Health Specialist, Professor and Deputy Provost, Nile University. Moderator: Dr. Ishak Lawal, Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist, FMC Birnin-Kebbi/CEO End Cervical Cancer Nigeria.	Acacia A & B
	Beyond the Seat: Building Systems that Support Women in Cabinets, Boardrooms, and Workplaces	Breakout Session	» Hauwa Haliru, Director, Gender Affairs, Nigeria Governors' Forum Secretariat » Omowunmi Akingbohunbe, Executive Director, WIMBIZ » Amina Oyagbola, Founder/Chairperson, Women in Successful Careers (WISCAR) » Jonathan Eigege, Associate Partner, DGA-Albright Stone Group Moderator: Abosede George- Ogan, Founder & Executive Director, WILAN Global	Obecha A and B
	Financing a Women - Led future: Women Business Centre Model	Breakout session	Joy Aderele, Country Director, Self Help Africa, Dorcas Kwamande, Project Coordinator, Rural Women Entrepreneurs Project	Ball Room 4
03:00pm - 03:30pm	Leveraging the 3- Ps: Pulpit, Policy and Practice – for Inclusive Development	Fireside Chat	Apostle Iren Emmanuel, Lead Pastor and Founder, Celebration Church International Moderator: Dr Osasuyi Dirisu, Executive Director, Policy Innovation Centre	Main Hall
03:30pm - 03:40pm	Research Presentation	Oral Presentation	» Prof. Michael Kunnuji, Head of Department, Sociology, University of Lagos » Dr Bukola George, Advocacy and Research Manager, Policy Innovation Centre » Prof. Hauwa Lamino Abubakar, Head of Department, Business Administration, Management and Entrepreneurship, Nile University » Dr Isaac Oyekola, Social Research Specialist, Policy Innovation Centre	Main Hall

04:35pm - 04:45pm	Research Presentation	Oral Presentation	Prof. Michael Kunnuji/Dr Bukola George/Prof. Hauwa Lamino Abubakar/Dr Isaac Oyekola	Main Hall
04:45pm - 05:40pm	Engaging Religious and Traditional Leaders in Community-Led Models that Advance Equity and GBV Prevention	Plenary Session	» Dr Sumaye Fadimatu Hamza. IFPF. FCILED. FCANEP, Federation of Muslim Women's Associations of Nigeria (FOMWAN) President » Sis MaryAnn Chikelue, Executive Director, Interfaith Dialogue Forum for Peace & Coordinator Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace. » His Royal Highness, Mai Kaltungo; Engr. Sale Muhammadu Umar OON, Deputy Chairman, Gombe State Council of Emirs & Chiefs, Northern Traditional Rulers Council, North-East Coordinator. » His Royal Majesty, Igwe Samuel Ikechukwu Asadu Jr (Igwe Ogadagidi), Chairman, Enugu State Council of Traditional Rulers » Dr Bashir Mundi, Imam and Resident Scholar, West Cobb Islamic Center, the greater Atlanta area, USA. Moderator: Dr Somawina Nwegbu, Public Health Specialist, PIC	Main Hall
05:40pm - 05:45pm	Closing for Day 1			
6:30pm - 8:30pm	An Evening with Oley Dibba Wadda & Launch of the U-Network (Strictly by Invitation)			

Thursday, September 4, 2025: Day 2

TIME	TITLE	ACTIVITY	SPEAKER	VENUE
8:00am – 9:00am	Registration	Registration	Policy Innovation Centre	Pre-function Area
9:00am – 9:05am	Introduction to the Summit	Welcome and Introductions	Policy Innovation Centre	Main Hall
9:10am – 09:55am	Feeding the Future: Tackling Nutrition and Food Insecurity with Inclusive and Sustainable Solutions	Breakout Session	- Mrs Uju Rochas-Anwukah, Senior Special Assistant to the President on Public Health, Office of the Vice President on Nutrition - Dr. Megor Ikuenobe, Founder, Lead Oak Women and Children Foundation - Tomisin Odunmbaku, National Coordinator SBN, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) - Osenaga Orokpo, CEO/President Shield Africa Moderator: Muhammad Muzzamil Momoh, Programme Consultant, Sahel Consulting and Agriculture and Nutrition Ltd.	Main Hall
	Equity Begins at Home: Families as the Foundation for a Just and Resilient Society.		- Oluwatoyin Ogunkanmi Clinical/Family Psychologist, Oleaster Wellbeing and Recovery Centre. - Chioma Momah, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, Guinness Nigeria - Joan-Anne Jummai Idonije, Special Assistant Technical, Women Affairs and Community Engagement to the Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development - Musa Aliu, Deputy Director, Child Development, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development - Dr. Kelechi Anikude, Environmental Engineer, Content Creator - Tomike Adeoye, MD/CEO, Malia World & Light Hill Africa; Content Creator Moderator: Comfort Booths, Lawyer/TV Personality	Ball Room 4
	Innovation for Social Impact; Harnessing Solutions for Health, Agric and Nutrition (Pre-Pitch Session)		COACHES Mr Segun Sangowawa, Head of Business Development, Plan International, South Sudan Dr Akin Oke, Managing Consultant, Easy Data Ltd	Acacia A and B
09:55am – 10:05am	Networking Break/ Music Rendition	Networking Break/Music Rendition		

10:05am – 10:10am	The National Anthem	The National Anthem	PIC Media Team	Main Hall
10:10am – 10:15am	Special Guests	Special Recognition	Government/Donors/Development Partners/Private Sector	Main Hall
10:15am – 10:25am	Special Remarks	Special Remarks	Dr. Usie Charles, Country Director, Plan International Nigeria, CO-Chair TAC Ms. Matilda Asante Asiedu, Second Deputy Governor, Central Bank of Ghana Ayodele Olojede, Divisional Head- Retail and SMEs, Wema Bank Adejo Yetunde, Business Lead Commercial Banking, Access Bank Ambassador Alfredo Miranda, Ambassador of Mexico to Nigeria HE Amb. Prof. Olufolake Abdulrazaq, The First Lady of Kwara State, Chairperson Nigeria Governors Spouses Forum	Main Hall
10:25am – 10:30am	Video Presentation	Gender and Inclusion Summit	PIC/Media Team	Main Hall
10:30am – 10:35am	About the PIC	Presentation	Dr Osasuyi Dirisu, Executive Director, PIC	Main Hall
10:35am – 10:45am	Keynote Speech	Keynote Speech	Mr. Ekenem Isichei, Deputy Director of Programme Advocacy & Communications, Gates Foundation.	Main Hall
10:45am – 11:30am	From Policy to Impact: What We've Learned from the Domestication of the National Women's Economic Empowerment Policy	Plenary	» Abidogun Omolara, Iyaloja General, Ikeja » Dr Osasuyi Dirisu, Executive Director, Policy Innovation Centre » Jelilat Ismaila-Ayinde, Divisional Head SME Lending, Bank of Industry » Dr. Amina Hanga, Executive Director, Isa Wali Empowerment Initiative Moderator: Rinmicit Aboki, Gender Lead, DGA-Albright Stonebridge Group	Main Hall
GS-25 Raffle Draw				

12:00pm – 12:20pm	Parity in Power: Advancing Women's Leadership for National Transformation	Plenary	» Chief Mrs Osasu Igbiniedion Ogwuche, CEO, TOS Group » Dr. Chidozie Aja, Senior Special Adviser on Legislative Affairs to the Deputy Senate President » Bukky Shonibare, Executive Director, Invictus Africa Moderator: Dr Adaora O Sydney-Jack; South-East Zonal Coordinator, Reserved Seats for Women's Campaign/ TOS Foundation	Main Hall
12:20pm – 01:00pm	When Systems Shift: Centering Girls in the Future of Policy, Power and Participation	Breakout Session	» Ogunrunti Omowunmi, Executive Director, Gender Mobile » Precious Ogu, Speaker of the Nigerian Children's Parliament » Jonathan Abakpa, Advocacy and Youth Programme Officer, Plan International Nigeria Moderator: Pelemo Nyajo, Former Shadow Country Director, Plan International Nigeria	Ball Room 4
	Reclaiming Safe Motherhood: Why Women Are Still Dying in Childbirth: Systemic Barriers and the Case for MPDSR Reform	Breakout session	» Dr Veronica Iwayemi, Acting Director Medical services and Disease Control, Lagos State Primary Health Care Board, LSPHCB » Mansura Yahaya-State MCH Coordinator, Kano state Ministry of Health » Dr Dayo Adeyanju, National Coordinator, MAMI Moderator: Dr. Kemi Agbaoye, Director of Programmes, Nigeria Health Watch	Main Hall
	From Policy to Practice: First Ladies as Catalysts for Norm Change and Economic Empowerment	Breakout Session (Strictly by Invitation)	» HE Mrs. Eyoanwan Bassey Otu, Cross River State » Mrs. Helen Eno Obareki Coordinator - Office of the First Lady, Akwa Ibom State » HE Mrs. Bamidele Abiodun, Ogun State » HE Barr. Chioma Uzodinma, Imo State Moderator: Omowunmi Ayoka Gbarnis, Program Officer, NGSF	Obecha A and B
	Beyond Health: Positioning Family Planning as a Cornerstone of Gender Equity and Socioeconomic Growth	Breakout session	» Chair: Salma Ibrahim Anas, MBBS, FMCPH, MWACP » Special Adviser to the President on Health, Federal Republic of Nigeria. » Yusuf Nuhu, Manager, Advocacy, Accountability & Partnerships, FP2030 North, West & Central Africa Hub » Rhoda Robinson, Executive Director, HACEY Health Initiative » Dr Fejiro Nwoko, Chief Executive Officer, Nigeria Solidarity Support Fund » Jemima Osunde, Actress and Advocate Moderator: Margaret Bolaji. Manager, Youth Partnerships, FP2030 North, West & Central Africa Hub	Acacia A and B
01:00pm – 01:30pm			Tea Break and Exhibition Tour	

01:30pm – 02:15pm	From Bias to Balance: Shaping a Practical Governance Framework for Ethical & Inclusive AI in Nigeria	Breakout Session	Context setting: Prof Fola Adeleke, Co-Founder & Executive Director, Global Center on AI Governance » Adekemi Omole, GESI Lead, PIC » Dolapo Agbede, Founder and Lead Consultant, WillWay Paradigm » Chioma Agwuegbo, Executive Director, TechHerNG Moderator: Dr Kunle Kakanfo, Managing Partner, AHFID	Main Hall
	New Voices, Stronger Communities: Shifting Norms to End Child Early and Forced Marriage	Breakout Session	» Maryam Albashir, Centre for Girls Education » Victoria Bello, Deputy Director, Centre for Girls Education (CGE) » Joan-Anne Jummai Idonije, Special Assistant Technical, Women Affairs and Community Engagement to the Minister of Women Affairs » Dr. Amina Hanga, Executive Director, Isa Wali Empowerment Initiative » Prof. Michael Kunnuji, HoD, Sociology Department, University of Lagos Moderator: Dr. Maryam Ado Haruna, Program Advisor, PIC	Ball Room 4
	Easing the Burden: What Works for Recognition, Reduction, and Redistribution of Unpaid Care Work?	Breakout Session	» Ada Osademey - Udechukwu, Senior Gender Advisor, Africa, International Finance Corporation » Caroline Faturoti, Head of Gender and Social Inclusion, Bureau of Statistics » Dr Runo Onosode, Technical Expert, ILO Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Department » Emem Omokaro Ph.D, Executive Chair, The Dave Omokaro Foundation- Host of International Institute on Ageing UN Satellite Center for sub-Saharan Africa. Former & Pioneer Director General National Senior Citizens Centre Moderator: Precious Adigwe, Programs Officer Gender Mainstreaming and Inclusion	Obecha A and B
	Research Presentation	Oral Presentation	Prof. Michael Kunnuji, Head of Department, Sociology, University of Lagos Dr Bukola George, Advocacy and Research Manager, Policy Innovation Centre Prof. Hauwa Lamino Abubakar, Head of Department, Business Administration, Management and Entrepreneurship, Nile University Dr Isaac Oyekola, Social Research Specialist, Policy Innovation Centre	Acacia A and B

02:15pm - 02:45pm	Innovation for Social Impact; Harnessing Solutions for Health, Agric and Nutrition (Pitch Session)	Plenary	JUDGES Dr. Tobiloba Moody, Director, World Intellectual Property Organisation, Nigerian Office Dr. Fejiro Chinye-Nwoko Chief Executive Officer, Nigeria Solidarity Support Fund Lagos, Nigeria Professor Chimezie Anyakora Chief Executive Officer Bloom Public Health Abusufyan Ibrahim MAHMOOD, CRM, Non-Interest (Islamic) Banking/Halal Economy Specialist, MSME Directorate, Bank of Industry	Main Hall
02:45pm – 03:55pm	From Aid to Investment: Leveraging Economic Diplomacy for Africa's Inclusive Development	High – level Plenary	Chair: Amb. Yusuf Tuggar The Honourable Minister, Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria Part 1: » Ambassador Alfredo Miranda, Ambassador of Mexico to Nigeria » Amb. 'Dapo Oyewole, Secretary General of the Conference of Speakers & Presidents of African Union Legislatures (CoSPAL) Part 2: » Prof Noel Tagoe PHD, FCMA, CGMA, Founding Dean of the Nile University Business School, Abuja, Nigeria » Thelma Ekiyor-Solanke, Chairperson, The Nigeria Philanthropy Office/SME.NG Moderator: Dr Osasuyi Dirisu, Executive Director, Policy Innovation Centre	Main Hall
GS-25 Raffle Draw				

04:00pm - 04:50pm	The National Dialogue on Transforming Gender Norms for Adolescent Health and Wellbeing	Plenary	Chair: Dr Iziaq Adekunle Salako, Honorable Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare Special Remark: H.E. Barr. Chioma Uzodimma, First Lady of Imo State, President of First Lady Against Cancer (FLAC) Context Setting: Isaac Oritogun, Senior Research Advisor, PIC » Dr. Amina Dorayi, Nigeria Country Director, Pathfinder International » Dr. Binyerem C. Ukaire, FWACS - Director and Head, Family Health, Federal Ministry of Health & SW » Dr. Habiba Mohammed, Director, Centre for Girls Education (CGE) » Emmanuel Ajah, Country Director, Marie Stopes International (MSI Nigeria) Moderator: Dr Jennifer Anyanti, Deputy Managing Director, Strategy, Technical and Growth Society for Family Health	Main Hall
04:50pm – 05:30pm	Dressed to Disrupt: Gender, Power, and Purpose in Fashion Dressed to Disrupt: Gender, Power, and Purpose in Fashion	Plenary Session Session Anchor: Kemi Omole	Session 1: Madam Dora Godwin, Fashion Designer, Edo State Session 2: Prudent Gabriel, Modest Fashion Advocate Moderator: Princess Agunbiade, Founder, BBB Women organization	Main Hall
05:30pm - 05:40pm	Presentation of Prizes	Research Presentations	Gates Foundation Representative / Dr Tayo Aduloju CEO, Nigerian Economic Summit Group	Main Hall
05:40pm - 05:45pm	Vote of Thanks	Closing Session	Dr Osasuyi Dirisu – Executive Director, PIC	Main Hall
05:45pm - 05:50pm	Music Rendition	Music Rendition	El Excess Entertainment	Main Hall

Innovation Hackathon



List of Presenting Authors and Abstract Titles

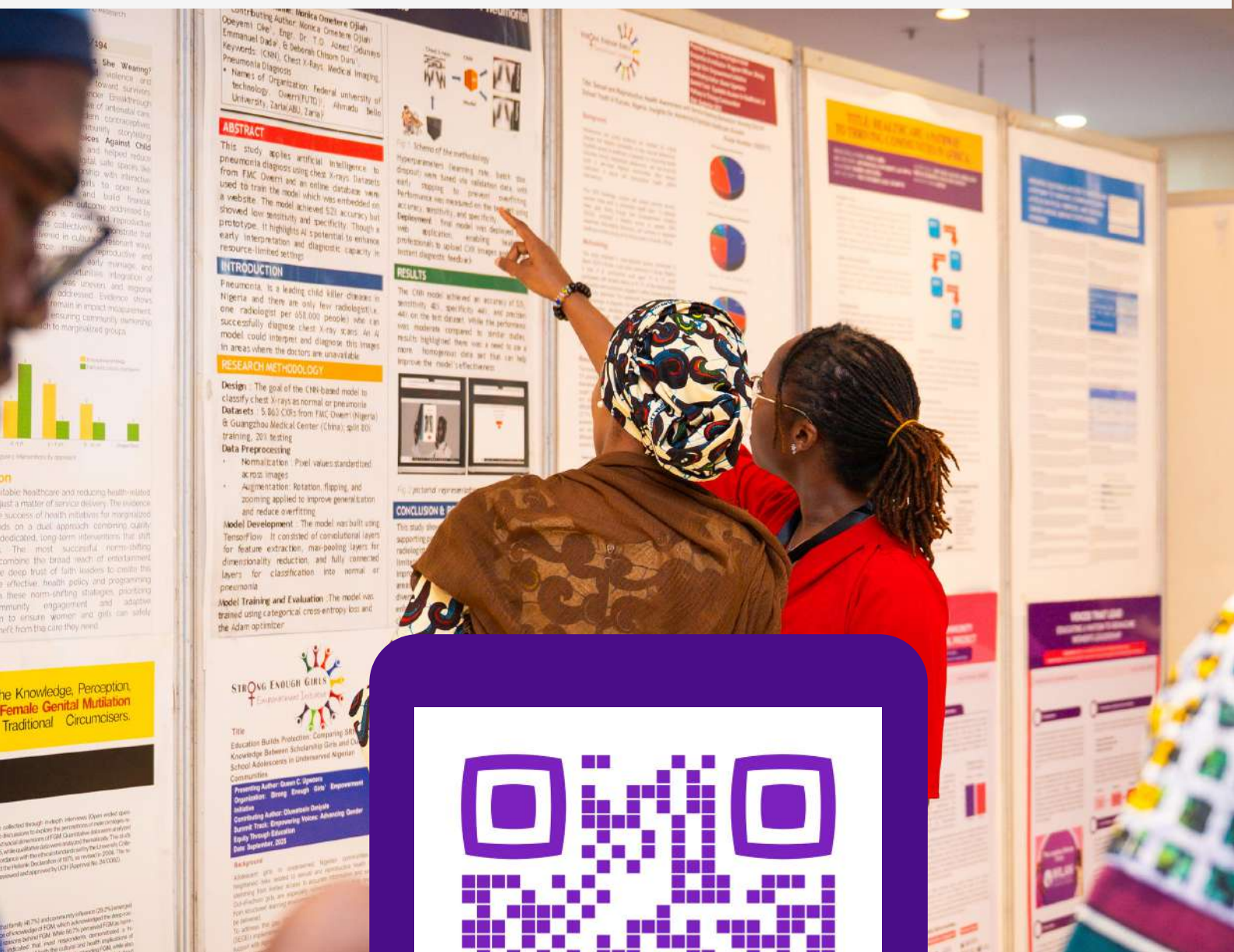
Presenting Author	Abstract Title
Eseoghene Adams	Rethinking Male Engagement in Ending Gender-Based Violence
Mohammed M Alhaji	Characterizing e-Pharmacy Readiness for Family Planning Among Young Women in Lagos, Nigeria
Queen Ugwoeru	Education Builds Protection: Comparing SRHR Knowledge Between Scholarship Girls and Out-of-School Adolescents in Underserved Nigerian Communities
Omileha Isaac	Visual Voices beyond entertainment: Leveraging Creative Media in Shaping Gender Discourse Through Community Screenings
Bamidele Oyewum	Project Agbebi: A blueprint for transforming maternal care in Nigeria
Chibuzo Nwagboso	Invisible Labor, Visible Gains: Gendered Dimensions of Waste Reuse and Agricultural Sustainability
Victory Ekpın	The Role of Women's Groups in Community Mobilization for Primary Health Services in Southern Nigeria: A Qualitative Study
Praise Okoro	The Impact of Menstrual Health Challenges and Inadequate Sanitation on School Attendance Among Adolescent Girls in Conflict-Affected Adamawa State
Seyi Anwo	Disrupting Harmful Gender Norms to End Child Marriage: Insights from a Human-Centred Study with Stakeholders in Oyo State, Nigeria
Oluwayemisi A. Adaka	Effect of Mobile Phone-based Education on HIV Self-Testing uptake by Female Sex Workers in Bayelsa State, Nigeria: A Quasi-experimental Study
Gladys Emmanuel	Mobilizing Male Allies for Community-Led Gender Justice: Lessons from the Anti-Gender-Based Violence Champions Project in Abuja
Onyinye Onuh	Bridging the gap: leveraging AI technologies to reduce gender inequality in the Nigerian educational sector
Caroline Onwuezobe	Community-Led Interventions to Improve SRH Access and Reduce SGBV among Adolescent Girls and Young Women in Jos, Nigeria
Adewumi Adediran	Nested Effects of Social Support on Gender-Based Violence and School Engagement: A Large-Scale Multilevel Study from Nigeria
Karen Jay-Yina	Leveraging SEMAs to Deliver Emergency Agricultural Assistance to Women in Fragile AgriFood Systems in Nigeria
Stephanie Mkpuefuna	Collaborative Intervention On Food Security And Sustainable Farming: Advancing Innovation, Policy, And Women's Empowerment In Agriculture
Julius Ajayi	Towards Inclusive Mobility: An Assessment of Gender-Specific Barriers to Public Transport Access in Ibadan
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Victoria Ajinomoh	A systematic literature review of strategies for advancing women's leadership in Nigeria
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Basirat Rasaq-Shuaib	Amplifying Unheard Voices: Mothers' Knowledge and Agency as Catalysts for Inclusive Education and Gender Equity in Nigeria
Halima Buba	Advancing Gender Equity and Lifelong Learning through CRoWN: A Community-Driven Approach to Reducing Zero-Dose Children in Northern Nigeria
Maryam Ado Haruna	Enhancing Adult Vaccine Uptake through Evidence-Based Social and Behavior Change Interventions in Nigeria: Insights from COVID-19
Zainab Haruna	Leveraging Hyper Local Seedling Hubs in Northern Nigeria to Improve Farmers Practice of Climate-Smart Agriculture
Fadila Jumare	Strengthening Food Security through Gender Sensitive Community Engagement: Insights from a Cross-Country Study on Chicken Meat and Egg Consumption
Osaretine Famous	Rooted in Confidence: Empowering Girls for Leadership from the School Level Up
Afeez Olajire	Improving Access to Family Planning in Bauchi State: Designing a Locally Led Strategy to Strengthen Demand for Reproductive Health Services
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Boluwatife Sofola	Accessibility and Utilization of Sexual and Reproductive Health Services among Inmates in a Correctional Center, Southwest Nigeria
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Anjolaoluwa Ayodele	Closing the Leadership Gender Gap from Within. Subtitle: How redesigning institutional systems can advance women's career prospects
Peace Mary Abah	Beyond bystanders: Male legal practitioners as drivers of gender-responsive justice reform
Olubukola Olumuyiwa	Advancing gender inclusive economic growth through integrated business and financial approaches
Adejoke Oke-Samuel	Gendered Realities of Informal Waste Work Among Young Girls in Akure, Ondo State
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Ceri Onyekwere	Pathways to Engaging Men as Champions for Gender Equity and Justice: Insights from Men in Nigeria's Accounting Profession
Hamza Datti	Rural Women Enterprise Accelerator Project
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Dorothea Fakrogha	Equitable Access to Healthcare: A Pathway to Thriving Communities
Angel Garba	Healthcare: A Pathway To Thriving Communities In Africa
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Ramatu Ada Ocheikliye	Addressing Period Poverty and Shame in Nigerian Communities through Mobile Cinema
Irene Oluwashina	The Role of Digital Literacy in Reducing Gender Inequality: Evidence from Community-Based Interventions in Nigeria
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Keturah Adeniji	Gender dynamics in Africa's creative economy: emerging voices and innovative approaches
Becky Dike	Educate Her, Elevate All: Empowering Women Across Generations Through Inclusive Education
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Jamaldeen Oluwasegun Akanbi	Multi-Stakeholder Strategies For Advancing Inclusive And Sustainable Food Systems
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Mathew Andrew Acheme	Exploring Strategies to Close the Gender Gap in Education and Promote Lifelong Learning through Gender-Inclusive SRHR Interventions in IDP Camps

Abstract Presentation & Stand





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