

GENDER IN NIGERIA REPORT 2012

IMPROVING THE LIVES OF GIRLS AND WOMEN IN NIGERIA

ISSUES
POLICIES
ACTION

2nd edition



FOREWORD

ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND WOMEN IN NIGERIA

Why should we as citizens and policy makers pay attention to the situation of women in our country? Nigeria has the largest population of any African country, some 162.5 million people. Of this magnitude 49% are female; some 80.2 million girls and women. So any discussion about Nigeria's future must necessarily entail consideration of girls and women, the role they play and the barriers they face in making the future.

54% of Nigerians still live in poverty and the proportion has doubled since 1980 (when about 28% were classified as poor). Nigeria's human development indicators are also worse than those of comparable lower middle-income countries. 42% of Nigerian children are malnourished. The averages hide a context that is worse for women and girls. Nearly six million young women and men enter the labour market each year but only 10% are able to secure a job in the formal sector, and just one third of these are women.

This situation has dire consequences for human development and conflict mitigation. This is not a problem of northern Nigeria versus southern Nigeria because the statistics are troubling in all parts of the country. It is a Nigeria wide problem which we all, as government, private sector, civil society and families must tackle. In government for instance we are working to provide early business opportunities to young persons through innovative ideas such as the Youth WIN programme.

No doubt women are Nigeria's hidden resource. Investing in women and girls now will increase productivity in this generation and will promote sustainable growth, peace and better health for the next generation. What happens here to women and girls matters, not least for realisation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

This study is of critical importance because it draws together the literature that references the role of girls and women in Nigeria in one practical and serious document. It distils from that corpus the key issues that need to be addressed to maximise the potential of girls and women. It focuses attention on critical but little known statistics, which paint a clear picture about the seriousness and importance of women's situation.

It is our hope that this report will have wide relevance to all players interested in the future of Nigerian society. We believe it will amplify the issues, hasten development and serve as a resource for a wide and non-specialist readership.

The study would not have been possible without the knowledge, skill and application of a core team working under an intensive schedule. We acknowledge the excellence of the work of:

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Ben Fisher | Director Programmes British Council Nigeria |
| Roy Chikwem | Project Manager British Council Nigeria |
| Sushila Zeitlyn | Lead Consultant |
| Admos Chimhowu | Researcher |
| Omowumi Asubiaro-Dada | Researcher |
| Amina Salihu | Strategic communications |
| Saudatu Shehu Mahdi | Political contributor |
| Nkenchor Neville | Banking sector contributor |
| Caroline Pinder | Peer review |
| Katja Jobes | Senior Gender Adviser DFID |

The impact of this study will not be achieved without the support of a high level panel of change champions who encourage and exhort the state and sections of society to address the inequalities and barriers that face adolescent girls and women in Nigeria. Their support has been crucial and we are grateful to them and feel privileged to be part of that team. They are:

- Amina az-Zubair** Former Special Assistant to the President on the MDGs.
Bilkisu Yusuf Pioneer female Editor, New Nigerian Newspaper, Founding President, FOMWAN.
Maryam Uwais Lawyer, Adviser to Government and founder of the Isa Wali Empowerment Initiative.
Mo Abudu Television presenter and founder of Inspire Africa.
Zainab Maina Honourable Minister, Women Affairs and Social Development.

We encourage all readers to broadcast this study to their peers and other interested parties. The challenges and opportunities discussed in this report call for concerted and sustained action. We must each ask ourselves: what are we doing to provide opportunities for women? Doing so goes beyond gender justice. We will be saving ourselves and investing in our future.

Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala
Minister of Finance and Chair of Panel

Sanusi Lamido Sanusi
Governor, Central Bank of Nigeria and
co-Chair of Panel

This study was funded by the **UK Department for International Development**.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a comprehensive view of gender in Nigeria. It assesses progress in key areas, including: employment and livelihoods, education and health, political representation, and violence. It finds that women and girls suffer systematic disadvantage and discrimination that is magnified for those in the poorest States and sectors of society. It recommends policies to improve the lives of women and girls and identifies priorities for action.



KEY FINDINGS

1. GENDER AND INEQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

The challenge: Nigeria's 80.2 million women and girls have significantly worse life chances than men and also their sisters in comparable societies. Violence compounds and reinforces this disadvantage and exclusion. The opportunity: women are Nigeria's hidden resource. Investing in women and girls now will increase productivity in this generation and will promote sustainable growth, peace and better health for the next generation. What happens here to women and girls matters, not least for realisation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

2. SOUND POLICIES NEED FOLLOW UP AND IMPLEMENTATION

Excellent policies and intentions have not translated into budgets or action to make the changes required if women are to contribute effectively to Nigeria's development. The National Gender Policy has yet to bear fruit, while implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has stalled.

3. JOBLESS GROWTH, INEQUALITY AND POVERTY

54% of Nigerians still live in poverty and the proportion has doubled since 1980 (when about 28% were classified as poor). Nigeria's human development indicators are also worse than those of comparable lower middle-income countries. 42% of Nigerian children are malnourished. The averages hide a context that is worse for women and girls. Nearly six million young women and men enter the labour market each year but only 10% are able to secure a job in the formal sector, and just one third of these are women.

4. RISING INCOME INEQUALITY HITS WOMEN HARDEST

Nigeria is among the thirty most unequal countries in the world with respect to income distribution. The poorest half of the population holds only 10% of national income. Significant rural-urban differences in income distribution impact particularly on women, because 54 million of Nigeria's 80.2 million women live and work in rural areas, where they provide 60-79% of the rural labour force. Inequality harms social cohesion and may exacerbate conflict, especially when some social groups are perceived to be excluded from opportunities. Conflict adversely impacts on women and girls, reducing their mobility and inhibiting participation in social, economic and political life.

5. PRONOUNCED REGIONAL GENDER DISPARITIES

Nigeria is marked by huge geographical disparities. Human development outcomes for girls and women are worse in the North, where poverty levels are sometimes twice as high as parts of the South (72% in the North-East compared with 26% in the South-East and a national average of 54%). Nearly half of all children under five are malnourished in the North-East, compared to 22% in the South-East. Hausa girls, for example, are 35% less likely to go to school than Yoruba boys. The impact of inequality on the lives of girls and women is reflected starkly in health

and education outcomes, nationally and between North and South. Levels of gender violence are also high, notably in the South where inequality is greatest.

6. LIVELIHOODS AND PRODUCTIVE ENTERPRISE: OBSTACLES FOR WOMEN

Economic independence is an essential dimension of women's empowerment. Improving their access to and control over resources increases investment in human capital which in turn improves children's health, nutrition, education and future growth. Business has overtaken subsistence farming and formal employment as the main source of income. Women compose the majority of informal sector workers. Though many women are involved in subsistence agriculture and off farm activities, men are five times more likely than women to own land. Women own 4% of land in the North-East, and just over 10% in the South-East and South-South. Land ownership and land tenure give women security and provide a key to access other resources and opportunities. *Operationalising the Nigeria Land Administration Act could help to expand women's productivity.*

60-79% of the rural work force is women but men are five times more likely to own land.



Without land title, it is hard for women to raise the finance they need to start productive enterprises.

One in every five businesses is run by a woman but they are constrained by lack of capital and have to rely on savings. Despite being better educated than their male peers in the micro-enterprise sector, women are less likely to secure loans. *We recommend that banks expand their services and adapt their products to meet the needs of women from different communities, religions and circumstances.*

Women with dependants pay more tax than men, who are automatically defined as bread winners. If Nigeria is to invest more in human development and address growing inequalities, it needs a progressive and fair tax system. *We recommend that the taxation system is reviewed and amended to be more equitable to women-headed households in accordance with the Government's commitment to gender equity.*

Women in formal employment are paid less than men.

Income inequality in the formal sector has also grown since 1999. Only one in every three employees in the privileged non-agricultural formal sector is a woman. Regardless of their educational qualifications, women earn consistently less than their male counterparts. In some cases they earn less than men with lower qualifications. Women occupy fewer than 30% of all posts in the public sector and only 17% of senior positions. *The public sector could highlight and address this issue by conducting a gender audit to identify where gender equity can be strengthened in recruitment, promotion and pay.*

Nearly five times as many judges and permanent secretaries are men rather than women.

7. GIRLS' EDUCATION

The importance for development of girls' education cannot be overstated. To capitalise on the potential of its people, and ensure healthier, more educated, empowered and productive citizens, Nigeria must invest in educating the mothers of the next generation. The evidence is irrefutable. Educated women are more likely to use health services and to have fewer and better-nourished children, and their children are more likely to survive. Girls who are educated will also contribute to future economic growth. Education policy can influence parental decisions about the age at which daughters marry. Recent research shows that, for many parents, the costs of education appear currently to outweigh the benefits.

Nigeria has 10.5 million children out-of-school the largest number in the world... In 20 years, the number enrolling for secondary school has increased only marginally.

Girls' dropout rates are high. Nigeria has the largest number of out-of-school children in the world. The figures show wide disparities between States and across communities. 70.8% of young women aged 20-29 in the North-West are unable to read or write, compared to 9.7% in the South-East. Several reasons explain this: early marriage, early childbirth, poor sanitation, and the shortage of female teachers. However, two reasons stand out.

"Apart from school fees, we pay for craft and other things [which] costs a lot of money. If we are asked to buy a sieve, it will cost N500 which would be enough to buy one text book. After wasting money for the sieve, one must still look for money to buy the text book."

User fees (DHS, 2008). Girls from the poorest wealth quintile are most likely to be out of school, and parents say that cost is a major reason for withdrawing girls from education. In theory education is free, but in practice parents pay fees, which disproportionately burden the poor. For both girls and boys, there is a strong correlation between income level and school attendance.

"When I was in school, male teachers used to want to sleep with female students... The teachers will trouble you up to the extent that if you do not accept them, you will fail their subjects and at the end of the day you will want to leave the school."

The poor quality of education. Many schools fail to provide a safe environment for adolescent girls, who fear corporal punishment or worse forms of violence, bullying or humiliation. Girls' exam results are falling; the reasons for this need urgent investigation. Poor quality teaching is

one explanation, but this does not fully explain why girls are performing less well than boys. The challenge is how to improve the culture of teaching and learning for all, including girls from the poorest families. Persuading girls and their parents to delay marriage and childbirth will be an uphill task until education is both more attractive and less expensive for parents.

“This school is an eye sore.... We have reported [this] to the government and each time they would come and take statistics. The classroom walls have cracked, the exam hall is nothing to write home about.... For the teachers, there is no staff room for them.... In fact, we have now made the mango tree our staff room.”

8. MATERNAL MORTALITY

Nigeria has one of the highest rates of maternal mortality in the world. One Nigerian woman dies in childbirth every ten minutes. Spending and implementation have not matched policies. Nigeria spends only 6.5% of its budget on health care.

Nationally, the maternal mortality rate is 545 deaths per 100,000 live births, nearly double the global average. In the rural North-East region it is 1,549 – over five times that average.

Poverty. Decisions to seek treatment may be influenced by a woman’s social position in the household, and her economic status, age, and education. Mothers in the poorest quintile are 6.5 times more likely to die than those in the wealthiest quintile. Almost nine in ten women who have higher education and two thirds of women with secondary education give birth in a health facility; one in ten uneducated women do so.

“The cost of care, particularly in the case of obstetric emergency, is one of the most important barriers to healthcare use.” (Report, Federal Ministry of Health)

Access to services. Poor access to safe childbirth services, and lack of adequate and affordable emergency obstetric care (EmOC), are the main reasons for high mortality. Only 36% of women deliver in a health facility or in the presence of a qualified birth attendant. Most of the cost is borne by households. EmOC in particular represents a catastrophic expense for a poor household. Among girls aged 10 to 14, certain groups are both particularly vulnerable and unlikely to access services. They include girls who marry at an early age, girls who are out of school, and girls who live apart from their parents.

Family planning. Family planning plays an essential role in reducing maternal mortality. At 5.7, Nigeria’s overall fertility rate has declined. However, it is higher in the North-West (7.3), where use of contraceptives (3%) is very low. There is a high unmet need for family planning (17%). Addressing this could avert tens of thousands of maternal deaths by 2015. Female education would also increase contraceptive uptake. Table 21 shows that 62% of Nigerian women with higher education have used contraceptives, whereas only 8% of women without education have done so.

47% of Nigerian women are mothers before they reach 20.

Enormous political will and civil society pressure will be required to achieve these changes.

9. WHO MAKES DECISIONS?

Only 9% of those who stood for election in Nigeria’s April 2011 National Assembly elections were women. This is below the global average and well behind South Africa and Rwanda. The lack of women in decision-making positions may be one explanation for Nigeria’s low investment in sectors that are crucial to human development outcomes, such as health and education. Women are under represented in all political decision-making bodies and their representation has not increased since the inception of democratic rule.

Nigeria’s House of Representatives has 360 Members. Of these, 25 are women.

Only about 4% of local government councillors are women.

More women than men register to vote, but women are excluded from decision-making at all levels – by male-dominated patronage networks, the absence of agreed quotas, and a party system that fails to nominate women candidates for electable seats. Fear of violence and restrictions on mobility may also deter women in some instances. Unless women are represented in elected bodies where major spending decisions are taken, it is likely that current patterns of expenditure will continue. Where women are more equally represented in parliament, intrastate armed conflict is less prevalent and social spending is allocated more fairly and efficiently.

10. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Violence against women and girls cannot be ignored. One in three of all women and girls aged 15-24 has been a victim of violence. Women who have never married are more likely to have been attacked than married women. These figures cry out for further analysis. *It is vital to understand the underlying social dynamics and causes of violence.*

Up to one third of Nigerian women report that they have been subjected to some form of violence. One in five has experienced physical violence.

Institutionalised violence. Research has suggested, disturbingly, that violence is endemic in some public institutions, including the police and certain educational bodies, where an “entrenched culture of impunity” protects perpetrators of rape and other violence. These crimes are under-reported and very few cases are brought to court. Fear of violence hinders Nigeria’s development. It not only deters girls from going to school but impacts on almost every aspect of women’s lives as productive and active citizens. The report identifies several areas for research. *We recommend urgent action to tackle violence against women and girls, starting in the education sector.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

Girls and women have the potential to transform Nigeria. Investing in girls today will improve productivity and growth and also lead to a more peaceful, healthy and skilled work force tomorrow.

PROMOTE WOMEN’S LIVELIHOODS

- The importance of women’s contribution to future economic growth needs to be disseminated.
- Government policy should prioritise agriculture and rural development, because 54 million of Nigeria’s 80.2 million women live and work in rural areas where they constitute 60-79% of the rural work force.
- The Nigeria Land Administration Act needs to be implemented and publicised, to expand women’s access and entitlement to land.
- Banks should make their services more accessible to women by designing products and services to meet the needs of women from different religions and wealth groups.
- Organisations such as the Nigerian Women Farmers Association, and women involved in market associations, should be consulted and involved in the design of initiatives to support women entrepreneurs.
- Taxation policies need to be amended to ensure they achieve gender equity, are legitimate, and are consistent with the government’s commitment to gender equity.
- The gender pay gap is growing. The public sector should lead by example and conduct a gender audit to ensure equity in recruitment, promotion and pay.
- The public sector at Federal and State level should consider policies and incentives to ensure that women fill 50% of public sector posts.
- The public sector should identify measures to ensure that women fill at least 30% of posts for judges and permanent secretaries.

KEEP GIRLS IN SCHOOL

- The creation of incentives for all girls to complete primary and secondary education is a priority.
- User fees, levies and “rents” for education and life saving health care should be abolished for girls and women. Making these essential services free would send a powerful message about the value of girls and women to the nation.
- States should allocate 10% of their budgets to education.
- Schools need to provide adequate water and sanitation facilities.
- Civil society groups, the media and communities should monitor the implementation of reforms.
- A programme to identify and reward schools and teachers who facilitate and retain adolescent girls from poorer sectors of society should be piloted.

IMPROVE WOMEN'S HEALTH AND REDUCE MATERNAL MORTALITY

- An increase in the health budget is urgently required. States should spend a minimum of 10% of their budget on primary health care (up from 6.5% on all health at present).
- User fees, levies and “rents” for life-saving health care should be abolished for girls and women. This would send a powerful message about the value of girls and women to the nation.
- Improve access to safe and affordable family planning facilities.
- Ensure that health services reach young married women, and women who cannot leave the home.
- Extend the provision of reproductive health services to vulnerable populations as a priority, including to women aged 15-24 who have specific social and cultural needs.
- Provide free, accessible and safe care during delivery.
- Delay early marriage and early childbirth by creating incentives for all girls to complete secondary school.
- Involve and inform the media on the causes of maternal mortality and the role the media can play.

MAKE POLITICIANS MORE ACCOUNTABLE TO WOMEN

- The President has shown leadership in appointing women to a third of Ministerial positions. Governors should follow suit when making appointments at State level.
- Political parties should promote women's participation more effectively, and should develop accountability mechanisms and seek technical assistance, including from civil society, to meet this objective.
- The Independent National Electoral Commission should conduct a focused drive on female voter registration and run specific voter education campaigns for women during elections.
- Nigerian civil society organisations should lead and promote gender training and orientation for political parties.

- Civil society organisations should help communities to hold politicians to account and make women's votes count.
- Women's organisations should be supported to orient women on their rights as constituents.
- Agencies that fund NGOs and civil society organisations should promote good governance by giving preference to organisations whose constitutions and policies promote accountability and gender equity.
- The National Assembly should domesticate CEDAW and the African Union Protocol of women's rights by passing the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill as soon as possible.
- Ethnographic research should be undertaken to understand how women currently engage with and exercise power.

TACKLE GENDER VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT

- A national campaign should be mounted to tackle gender violence and raise awareness of its detrimental impact on society. The campaign should focus initially on educational institutions, civil society and the media.
- Greater legal protection should be provided to victims of gender violence.
- Government should do more to reduce trafficking of girls and women.
- More analysis of existing data on gender violence is required, to investigate its pattern and dynamics.
- Analyses of Nigeria's political economy should take account of the role that gender plays in the underlying dynamics of violence, and its interaction with ethnicity, religion, and poverty.

CREDITS

Photos: © Giacomo Pirozzi/PANOS, Andrew Esiebo/Majority World,
Leo Erken/PANOS

Design and layout: Plain Sense, Geneva

Printing: Direct signs & print, Johannesburg

