

Religions and Development Research Programme

Engagements of Women's Movements with Religion: Legal Reform in Anambra State, Nigeria

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Research Programme

The Religions and Development Research Programme Consortium is an international research partnership that is exploring the relationships between several major world religions, development in low-income countries and poverty reduction. The programme is comprised of a series of comparative research projects that are addressing the following questions:

- How do religious values and beliefs drive the actions and interactions of individuals and faith-based organisations?
- How do religious values and beliefs and religious organisations influence the relationships between states and societies?
- In what ways do faith communities interact with development actors and what are the outcomes with respect to the achievement of development goals?

The research aims to provide knowledge and tools to enable dialogue between development partners and contribute to the achievement of development goals. We believe that our role as researchers is not to make judgements about the truth or desirability of particular values or beliefs, nor is it to urge a greater or lesser role for religion in achieving development objectives. Instead, our aim is to produce systematic and reliable knowledge and better understanding of the social world.

The research focuses on four countries (India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Tanzania), enabling the research team to study most of the major world religions: Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and African traditional belief systems. The research projects will compare two or more of the focus countries, regions within the countries, different religious traditions and selected development activities and policies.

The consortium consists of six research partner organisations, each of which is working with other researchers in the four focus countries:

- University of Birmingham, UK: International Development Department, Department of Theology and Religion, Centre for West African Studies, Centre for the Study of Global Ethics.
- University of Bath, UK: Centre for Development Studies.
- Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi.
- Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, Ibadan.
- University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
- Lahore University of Management Sciences, Pakistan.

In addition to the research partners, links have been forged with non-academic and non-government bodies, including Islamic Relief.

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Key words: religion, Christian, widows, women's rights, custom

List of acronyms

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CENGOS	Coalition of Eastern NGOs
CIRDDOC	Civil Resource Development and Documentation Centre
CRA	Child Rights Act
CWO	Catholic Women's Organization
FBO	Faith-based organization
FIDA	Federation of International Women Lawyers
IDEA	Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
MU	Mothers' Union
NAWOJ	National Association of Women Journalists
NAWOPEG	National Women Peace Group
NCWS	National Council for Women's Societies
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIPS	Nigerian Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies
NISER	Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research
NUJ	Nigerian Union of Journalists
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WACA	Women's Action Committee
WACOL	Women's Aid Collective
WIN	Women in Nigeria
WODOF	Women for Development

Summary

Campaigning by the women's movement in Anambra State was instrumental to the introduction of a new law in 2005 designed to prevent the maltreatment of widows. Religion is often implicated in gender inequality and discrimination against women, but religious leaders and organizations played key roles in this campaign. The case study enabled the researchers to address the questions of when, why and how religious actors facilitate rather than obstruct legal reform intended to realize women's rights.

Many of the rituals and practices with which widows in largely Igbo Anambra State have traditionally been expected to comply are both incompatible with Nigeria's 1999 Constitution and today regarded as inhumane and degrading. Widows are also discriminated against by Igbo inheritance rules, which prescribe that property is inherited through the male line. Women are not entitled to inherit land from their fathers and widows are not entitled to any share in the property of their deceased husband, even property acquired during the marriage. Many of the rituals and practices are associated with traditional religious beliefs. They and the inheritance rules are enforced by the male and female relatives of the deceased man, sometimes quite brutally. They are humiliating and can reduce widows and their children to destitution.

Protests against widowhood practices started in the late 1980s but were uncoordinated. In the 2000s, the campaign for legal reform was spearheaded and organized by CENGOS (Coalition of Eastern NGOs), an umbrella organization of over 100 NGOs in the nine states of the old Eastern Region, including Anambra. The assistance of professional associations of women lawyers and journalists and religious organizations was vital. Growing concern over the maltreatment of widows, including their own members, by women's organizations associated with the dominant Catholic and Anglican denominations in this majority Christian state led to them becoming involved with the campaign. The initiative was taken by the Catholic Women's Organization, which brought in the Mothers' Union and the Women's Guild, both associated with the Anglican Communion.

- They initiated and led on the community level campaign, seeking from the outset to obtain support from their own members, religious leaders, and traditional organizations and leaders, especially men, justifying the campaign in terms of religious language and beliefs, for example, the incompatibility between traditional and Christian funeral rites. Community level support both increased the legitimacy of the State level campaign and led to local pressure for changes in practices.

- Although secular NGOs and professional associations led on the campaign to persuade the State House of Assembly to pass the bill that became the *Anambra State Malpractices against Widows and Widowers (Prohibition) Law No. 2005*, the FBOs' role in lobbying Assembly members and obtaining the support of religious leaders was vital. Churches provided a platform for campaigners to spread their message, including to people in the State House of Assembly. They and religious leaders provided credibility and legitimacy for the campaign, pastoral support, prayer and material resources. Tactical compromises, for example, including widowers as well as widows in the law, reduced opposition from men.
- The 2005 law prohibits and penalizes the maltreatment of widows and widowers. Pressure for effective implementation has been maintained, with an emphasis on educating women about their rights and providing support to women seeking redress through mediation or the courts. Informants reported increased awareness of the law and their rights, and a decline in (though not elimination of) harmful traditional practices.
- However, it has proved particularly difficult to implement the provisions on inheritance included in the 2005 law, because of the entrenched nature and complexity of issues related to land and property. In addition, the campaigning momentum on this issue has been lost, as organizations have moved on to other issues.

Some implications of the successful campaign for legal reform in Anambra State for the women's movement more widely are that

- Church involvement helped to bridge the elite-grassroots divide that has weakened the Nigerian women's movement – the faith-based women's organizations' ability to generate grassroots support strengthened the campaign, has increased ordinary women's knowledge of their rights and is resulting in changes in local practices.
- The support of FBOs was forthcoming because widows in general and their members in particular are harmed by traditional practices and there is scriptural justification for the campaign.
- Tactics to avoid alienating key groups were vital to the success of the campaign, including obtaining the support of (male) religious and traditional leaders and compromises on the content of the law.
- A women's movement is a diverse fluid network of organizations and individuals. Within it, coalitions can form for a limited period to around a shared cause and goal. Successful coalitions contain actors who

1 Introduction

Women activists in Nigeria have adopted two approaches when engaging with religion for the purposes of social change. The first involves the promotion of women's rights within the ambit of religion through forming or joining faith-based organizations. The second involves the formation of secular women's organizations that engage directly or indirectly with religion to challenge the violation of women's human rights. Whatever approach is adopted, women may face a tension between their identification with a faith/ethno-religious community, on the one hand, and their experience of gender-based discrimination and desire for change, on the other. This tension has brought women's groups together to form coalitions across ethnic, religious, and class divisions and to advocate for a shared cause. In doing so, engaging with religion is inevitable because of its dominance in the private and public lives of Nigerians, especially women. In spite of the pervasiveness of religious faith and its very evident relevance in personal lives and social interaction, the nature, extent and impact of women's engagement with religion in relation to their collective action is under-researched. How and to what extent does religion and religious organizations influence, promote and/or oppose women's campaigns for their rights?

This question is important because the relationship between religion and women's struggle for rights has been described as ambiguous (Walker, 1999). On the one hand, as a result of men's appropriation of religious texts, religion is described as a major vehicle for the reproduction of gender ideologies that oppress women and assert the superiority of men (Mama, 1996; Sweetman, 1999). According to Sweetman (1999, p 2), "custom and tradition, often justified on religious grounds, ensure women's conformity to conventional gender roles, which can be the source of powerlessness and pain...at the same time [as] constraining people from seeking change." On the other hand, Sweetman (1999, p 4) points out that "oppressive interpretations of religious texts promoted by male-dominated religious institutions can be challenged by alternative interpretations of religious writings." According to this perspective, religion is a resource and vehicle for women's struggle against gender inequality in many societies.

As a result of this ambiguity, some women's social movement agendas do not enjoy the support of mainstream religious institutions, while others do, enabling the actors involved to actively invoke religious ideology and use religious institutions and leadership in support of their goals.

Notwithstanding the complexity of women's engagement with religion, it is possible to identify clear

areas in which women mobilize within, across and beyond religious boundaries to promote social change and also the extent of the support or obstacles they face from religion. To understand the complexity, a legal reform agenda pursued by the Coalition of Eastern Non-Government Organizations (CENGOS)¹ was studied. The coalition consists of a group of secular and religious organizations that campaigned for the passage of laws against harmful cultural widowhood practices in largely Christian Anambra State. The coalition and others were able to successfully surmount traditional and religious barriers to secure a new law on the protection of widowhood rights called the *Anambra State Malpractices against Widows and Widowers (Prohibition) Law No. 2005* (Government of Anambra State, 2005). This prohibits and penalises the maltreatment of widows and widowers, in order to uphold and preserve the dignity of the human person as entrenched in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution.

What is the nature of the campaign? Who are the key actors and what roles have they played? What resources and strategies did they use to get the law passed and what challenges did they face? In what ways and how did religion influence the campaign, both positively and negatively? The focus of this research, therefore, is to study the nature and dynamics of the campaign for the protection of widows' rights in terms of the actors, strategies and resources employed. Central to the research is an investigation into how religion facilitated or obstructed the campaign.

The overall aim of the study is to examine the nature of women's engagements with religion in the campaigns for legal reform to protect widowhood rights in Anambra State, with a view to exploring the ways and extent to which religion facilitates or obstructs the attainment of women's rights.

The specific objectives are:

- i. To investigate who were/are the key actors (individuals, groups and coalitions) in the campaign for widowhood rights in Anambra State and the nature of their role in the social change process.
- ii. To discover what tactics/strategy and resources (political, social and religious) the campaign adopted to bring about legal reform.
- iii. To examine whether and how much religion influenced the nature and/or outcomes of the campaign. This entails examining the ways in which faith based communities promoted and acted as allies or hindered and acted as obstacles in the campaign. A series of questions were posed:

- a. In what ways do the attitudes, pronouncements and behaviours of religious institutions/leaders impact on the nature, strategies and outcomes of the campaigns for legal reform?
- b. To what extent do critical actors engaged in the campaign perceive religion as a barrier to or supporter of campaign to promote widowhood rights?
- c. In what ways did/do women involved in the Anambra State coalitions for legal reform, collectively or individually, draw on religious ideology to promote their social change agendas?

Before we discuss the findings from this research, the following section of this report aims to familiarize readers with debates about the nature of women's organizing in Nigeria. In particular, an introduction is provided to the issues around 'harmful widowhood practices' and the emergence of social action against them. In Section 3, the research methodology is outlined and then in Section 4 the findings of the research are discussed.

2 The women's movement in Nigeria and the emergence of the campaign against harmful widowhood practices

2.1 Background on Nigeria and Anambra State

Nigeria became an independent nation on the 1st October 1960, as a federation of three regions – the Northern, Eastern and Western Regions. The country started with a parliamentary system of governance and became a republic in 1963. The first military coup, which occurred on the 15th of January 1966, brought an end to civilian rule. Since then, and until 1999, the military ruled the country in various periods through an era of coups and counter-coups for a total of thirteen years. In 1979, there was a return to civilian rule, and a change to a presidential system of governance. However, in 1983 Nigeria experienced another military coup and until 1999 the country witnessed a series of attempts to return to civilian rule. Although a presidential election was held on the 12th June 1993, the results were annulled and an interim government led by a civilian constituted. The interim government was cut short by another military coup on the 17th November 1993. Again, there was a return to civilian rule on the 29th May 1999 and since then the country has been under civil rule.

During the periods of military rule, Nigeria witnessed a number of religious tensions, including controversy over an attempt to make Nigeria a member of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) and visits by a number of foreign Christian evangelists to Kano, the most populous Muslim-dominated state. Throughout the period since independence, religion and ethnicity have influenced the fabric of Nigerian politics (Kalu, 2003; Kukah, 1993). This is partly manifested in the formation of political parties in the 1960s, whose membership was based on ethnic and, to a lesser extent, religious loyalties, despite the constitutional ban on religious political parties. Subsequently, the country's north-south division has provided the main context within which ethno-religious regional identities have been forged (Edozie, 2006) and religion has continued to play a key role in politics.

Nigeria operates a federal system of government with States and Local Government Authorities. Anambra State is situated in the South East zone of the country. According to the 2006 National Population Census, it has a population of 4.2 million, with females constituting 48 per cent (National Population Commission, 2006). Its population is predominantly Igbo and Christian, with more than 70 per cent² of the people identifying themselves as Christians, though some are Muslim and some remain adherents of traditional religion. The state has a history of commercial leadership, with towns

like Onitsha and Nnewi being major centres for entrepreneurial activities. However, the incidence of poverty remains high.³

As in other parts of the country, children and women are among the principal victims of economic, social and political deprivation. For instance, infant mortality and under five mortality, which were 69/1000 and 126/1000 respectively in 1999, are believed to have worsened over the years to 73 and 138/1000 respectively in 2004 (Anambra State, 2005, p 8). The state had a maternal mortality rate of 280 per 100,000 in 1999 (National Population Commission, 2000). Furthermore, the patriarchal and patrilineal nature of society in the state permits a man's absolute control over his family and the passing of power and possessions to his sons. Consequently, among Igbos, the male child is regarded as being superior to the female child, especially in terms of inheritance. For this reason, girls often grow up with the impression that they are inferior to boys. Women are disproportionately denied the right to inherit their father's property, intimidated by harmful traditional and cultural practices, and denied access to land ownership and credit facilities. Some communities in the rural parts of the state also still practise early marriage (Anambra State, 2005). This ultimately limits the opportunities for women to advance in educational attainment or develop meaningful livelihood skills.

2.2 The history of women's organizing in Nigeria

The history of women's organizing pre-dates the modern day Nigerian state. Before independence in 1960, women organized themselves to protest or to mobilize other women against oppression and discrimination in many Nigerian societies. Reflecting on this history of women's struggle, Aina (1998) argues that gender domination and oppression are inherent in African culture and were also imbibed through African women's experiences under slavery, colonialism and imperialism.

However, the extent to which organizing by women in the pre-colonial and colonial periods can be likened to contemporary feminism has been questioned. According to Mba (1992) and Aina (1998), during the pre-colonial period, there was no major or widespread feminist agitation to change the African traditional structure, which was overwhelmingly patriarchal, even in matrilineal societies. Inherent contradictions in traditional Igbo social systems gave rise to a paradoxical situation in which women enjoyed a measure of political space, due to the existence of dual-sex systems of authority,⁴ but also endured oppressive cultural practices (Amadiume, 1987; Okonjo 1976). Female resistance to

the patriarchal establishment was usually costly, resulting in social ridicule, ostracism, or even death. Amadiume (1995) writes that on rare occasions, gender tensions arising from the contradictions led women to emigrate en masse from villages to form alternative communities such as Idemili, a riverine community centred on goddess worship. Similarly, Para-Mallam (2007, p 77) notes that “women waged a double war against specific aspects of colonial rule and against traditional and colonial patriarchy”, while at the same time often evoking cultural traditions in support of female power and resistance to oppression.

In post-colonial Nigeria, women’s organizing has been dominated by the activities of non-governmental development organizations and governmental organizations, such as Ministries for Women Affairs and the projects of the so-called ‘First Ladies’. For instance, Chukukere (1998) traces the genesis of the Nigerian women’s movement to the inception of the Better Life Programme (BLP) in 1987, the pet project of the then First Lady Maryam Babangida, and the subsequent proliferation of NGOs as initiatives of other First Ladies at the State level. From the mid-1980s until the early 2000s, women’s activism was dominated by ‘First Lady’ state-sponsored projects under various military regimes. These projects were inspired by international and regional agendas on women, such as the International Decade for Women, International Women’s Day and the United Nations women’s conferences. During these events, Nigerian military rulers signed international declarations and treaties, such as the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Backed by such treaties, the wives of the military heads of state launched various programmes for women and children. Mama (1996) contends that these programmes regimes did not challenge conservative anti-female ideologies nor did they have the effect of enhancing gender equality. However, Chukukere (1998) believes that such an assessment does not capture the whole picture. She points out that the Better Life Programme and other First Lady projects sensitized women about their rights to a better life. They provided a platform for women to make claims on the state and thereby served a catalytic role in promoting the formation of new NGOs and drawing national attention to the issue of women’s empowerment.

2.3 Is there a women’s movement in Nigeria?

In order to establish whether or not there is a women’s movement in Nigeria, we first need to define ‘social movement’. According to Kirmani (2008, p 1), the term social movement encompasses:

...a wide variety of groups with varying and often conflicting concerns. These groups come from a range of ideological positions, social locations and contexts and can take a number of organizational forms — from very loose and flexible to highly organized and bureaucratized.

The incoherence of many social movements, Kirmani argues, is often a function of their unstable, shifting and fragmented nature. However, despite the diversity of backgrounds and orientations inherent in any social movement, it is often formed around a common issue and has the intention of effecting social change. Similarly, Castells (1997) defines social movements as “purposive collective actions whose outcome, in victory as in defeat, transforms the values and institutions of society” (cited in Kirmani, 2008, p 2).

If these are defining features of social movements, is there a women's social movement in Nigeria? Three positions can be identified in the literature: the first agrees on the existence of a women's movement; the second argues that, although women's organizations exist, taken together these do not constitute a social movement, since they are closely tied to the state and do not challenge the structural inequalities that maintain gender discrimination; and the third identifies women's movements but regards them as part of a broader quest for social change.

The first perspective posits that a women's movement exists as long as there is some form of women's organizing for collective action along gender lines and gender issues. Thus, for Adeleye-Fayemi (2007, p 1):

While several divisive issues still remain unresolved, there is a Nigerian women's movement....insofar as there has been a collective, if somewhat pocketed response to the needs of women in the country. There is usually consensus on issues which are considered to be priorities, [and] which affect the lives of Nigerian women such as poverty, illiteracy, health and reproductive rights, political participation and peace. However, there are clear ideological differences, which influence opinions and strategies within the movement. We can therefore talk more comfortably about different positions and strands within the movement [than]...about the existence of [a] women's movement.

Adeleye-Fayemi (2007, p 1) recognizes that “trying to define what a women's movement is in Nigeria is still a work in progress”, partly because of the fluidity of women's organizing and also because of a lack of consensus on the definition of a women's movement, although she nevertheless asserts that

Through activities ranging from income generation, forming cooperatives, capacity building, consciousness raising, social and legislative advocacy and campaigns, to research and analysis, they [women's rights activists] have contributed to what is referred to here as a movement- a movement for social justice, equality and empowerment for the society in general, and for the rights and dignity of women in particular (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2007, p 1).

According to this view, women's NGOs that come together to form a coalition or activism aimed at bringing about incremental improvements to women's lives in any sphere qualify as a women's movement.

However, there are some scholars and activists who hold the view that the existence of women's NGOs or groups is inadequate to claim the existence of women's movement. For such women's groups or NGOs to qualify as being part of a women's movement, they suggest that it must be possible to identify a shared feminist emancipatory agenda that is linked to broader processes of social change, including the promotion and realization of human rights for all citizens (Aina, 1998; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1995). Aina (1998) cites writers such as Mba (1982) and Ogundipe-Leslie (1995), who equate a women's movement with a feminist emancipatory project that is both political and ideological in nature and is aimed at bringing about freedom from oppression for women through the promotion of their human rights and the creation of an equitable and just socioeconomic order. Proponents of this position argue that most of the existing women's groups, NGOs and associations have tended to be close to the state and other establishment bodies and have shown little interest in challenging the existing patriarchal status quo, even though they are dominated by feminist activists. In their view, these groups cannot challenge the status quo partly because they depend on funding from the state and other establishment bodies and thus cannot be regarded as a 'women's movement'.

Those that hold this view often cite Women in Nigeria (WIN) as the only effort that can be considered a women's movement, at least since independence. WIN was established in 1982 as a revolutionary movement founded on a convergence of Marxist and feminist principles and aimed at a radical transformation of gender roles and relations (Ibrahim, 2007). Ibrahim (2007) argues that WIN embodied the pluralistic nature of women's realities, which are rooted in both gender- and class-based oppression. However, by 1997 WIN had split into two factions owing to the class tensions between grassroots and elite female members, internal conflicts and co-optation into the NGO establishment

through the lure of donor funding.⁵ Ibrahim (2007) argues that it is important to distinguish between 'a women's movement' in this sense and the supposedly corrupting influence of 'NGO-ism.' Ibrahim argues that the blurring of this distinction heralded the demise of WIN as a single, effective Marxist feminist movement, thereby threatening any future notion of a popular women's movement. For Ibrahim and Salihu (2007), the sum of the majority of women's organizations cannot be called 'a movement', because these organizations simply aim at helping women improve their lives and do not necessarily envision a reversal in female subordination through the transformation of unjust societal structures. These authors argue that most of the people involved in such NGOs hold a conservative view of women's roles in society and, although many make sweeping claims in their rhetoric, they achieve little in terms of action.

The third position argues that although women mobilize in Nigeria, these activities should be regarded as being part of wider historical movements for social change. This class of scholars often base their arguments on the involvement of women in wider socio-economic and political struggles in pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial times. Aina (1998) and Chukukere (1998), for example, assert that there are women's movements in Nigeria that have emerged to champion certain women's issues but argue that these struggles are not limited to women's issues. Instead, they are broad-based, covering such issues as resistance to social, cultural, political and economic oppression under traditional patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism, partly because links are made between these broader issues and the concerns women face in their lives (Mba, 1982; Okonjo, 1976).

Similarly, with reference to the contemporary period, Chukukere (1998), Salihu (2007) and Ya'u (2007) assert that the engagement of women's organizations with the overall human rights and democratic movements in Nigeria that ended military rule has provided legitimacy to the struggle for women's rights within the broader context of the struggle for human rights and democracy. According to Ya'u (2007) and Ibrahim (2007), the collaboration between feminist activists and human rights/civil liberties groups in the 1990s has allowed them to argue that unless the struggle for women's rights is integrated within the overall human rights struggle, it is not likely to receive the serious attention it deserves. For this reason, scholars have questioned attempts to conceptualize a social movement exclusively concerned with women's rights that is isolated from wider struggles for social change,

such as the nationalist, pro-democracy, environmental, and peace movements (see also Okome, 2000).

If these are the conceptions of the women's movement in Nigeria by scholars and activists, what are the features and challenges of women's social movement activity?

2.4 The nature of women's organizing

Whatever the debate about the existence of a women's movement in Nigeria, it is indisputable that different forms of women's organizing have occurred. Hassim (2005, p 4) defines the types of women's organizing as "a broad umbrella encompassing diverse organisations and occupying a variety of spaces". Using this broad definition, Hassim identifies three types of women's organizations operating in Africa. The first are those engaged with national policy advocacy. This group of organizations emerged in response to the need for NGOs to act as advocacy agents, particularly in relation to such issues as increasing the involvement of women in leadership positions and other women's empowerment schemes. These organizations have the expertise to act as technical advisers and are therefore actively engaged in public debate about governance systems, making them easily accessible to both state actors and the donor community. However, women's organizations operating at this level have been accused of being distant from their female constituencies and deploying tactics that do not rely on mass mobilization or confrontation with the state, sometimes with the result that "tactics, demand and rhetoric might be moderated to fit the discourses of the state in order to make incremental gains and retain hard won openings into the state" (Hassim, 2005, p 4). Consequently, they are accused of lacking a transformative agenda (Aina, 1998; Pereira, 2002; Imam, 1993; Ya'u 2007).

The second form of women's organizing is what Hassim (2005) terms "transformatory feminism", which is more likely to be conducted in alliance with other social movements aimed at structural transformation. Organizations in this category may contest state policies, because they are likely to demand that the state pays attention to issues that it has been reluctant to address, such as regulating and mitigating men's power in the private sphere (Hassim, 2005). As Aina notes, only organizations that operate with some detachment from the government can be resourceful in confronting patriarchy, because they are less likely to be financially dependent on the government and

are therefore at liberty to take up issues that challenge the status quo. Another characteristic of this form of women's organizations is that they tend to be elitist and urban-based. Like the first category, this second type is attacked for having a membership dominated by the highly-educated few. Indeed, the agendas of both advocacy and transformatory types of women's organizing have often been championed by the female educated elite, the majority of whom are either in academia or involved in gender advocacy through participating in government affairs and/or the formation of women's NGOs.

The third form is considered the most common category of women's groupings. Hassim (2005) refers to these as 'community-based organizations', implying that they are weakly tied to the state or national networks and that they are most likely to address women's practical needs and other welfare-related issues. Although the most vibrant and creative forms of collective solidarity emerge at this level of women's organizing, such organizations and their members do not have the time, expertise or resources to address decision-makers and nor do they yet appreciate the need for gender analysis in the conceptualization of their struggles (Hassim, 2005, p 6).

The gap in terms of scope, focus and interest between the first two types of organizing around women's rights, which are dominated by a handful of educated elite women and the third, which is dominated by women at the grassroots level, has been identified as a major barrier to the formation of a politically active women's movement in pursuit of a common agenda that has widespread support from ordinary women. According to Aina (1998, p 77), the failure of African feminist movements to emerge as political movements supported by broad groups of women is very much linked to the historical development of feminism in Africa. She argues that women's movements in Africa generally lack both political consciousness and a large political base, two ingredients needed for structural change in gender relations. The situation is aggravated by a general lack of trust between grassroots women and educated, elite women, with the former seeing the latter as privileged and opportunistic. The gap between the lived realities of elite women and the vast majority of women living in Nigeria aggravates the lack of trust between them. The implication of this division is a lack of cohesion and focus in the women's movement, as noted by Pereira (2002, p 8):

The gap between urban and rural women, between the 'formal' and 'informal' sectors, and between the 'elite' and the 'masses' is very wide. Urban, educated middle-class women have the national leadership potential but not the mass support needed for effective political action. Besides, the majority of such women insist on the

depoliticisation of 'women's issues' and operate within the framework of voluntary associations which cannot enforce sanctions on their members. Urban market women and rural community-based women have the potential for mass mobilization and can enforce effective sanctions, but they lack the national leadership and political objectives.

The second factor that affects the development of a strong women's movement is the influence of women's multiple social identities. According to Adeleye-Fayemi (2007) and Ogundipe-Leslie (1995), the women's movement in Nigeria is politically and ideologically diverse, demonstrating serious divisions and competition for resources that reflect those in the Nigerian state. Women, as a heterogeneous group, are subject to the manipulation of identities based on ethnicity, language, ideology, age, class, marital status, religion and geographical differences for self or group interest, which can prevent them uniting in the pursuit of gender-related interests. Omololu (1997) notes also that religious considerations have often prevented the emergence of a coherent ideological framework for women's groups in Nigeria.⁶ Furthermore, Awe (1989) argues that Nigerian women's associations have been so fragmented and divided that they do not constitute an effective force for demanding improvements in the female condition. Because of the heterogeneity amongst women, attempts to build alliances around common issues have been fraught with difficulty and contradictions.⁷ It is this backdrop of compromise, lack of consensus and heterogeneity that explains the diffuse, disjointed and seemingly uncoordinated nature of the Nigerian women's movement.

Despite the disjointed and contradictory nature of women's organizing, it is accepted that different forms of women's groups and coalitions exist in Nigeria that have mobilized women for collective action and promoting desired change. In the next section, the literature on one such example of women's organizing, that is, women's groups forming a coalition to campaign for legal reform against harmful widowhood practices, will be reviewed.

2.5 The women's movement for widow's rights in South East Nigeria

Women in the South East of Nigeria, where Anambra State is located, have a history of mobilization, exemplified in the 1929 Aba riots that women themselves called the 'women's war'. The riots were primarily a movement of women to protect their economic and political interests, which were endangered by taxation, economic crisis and the warrant chiefs⁸ (Ilika and Ilika, 2005; Mba, 1992, p 86). Typically in Igboland, of which Anambra State forms a part, community-based groups, like local

town unions and village meetings, age-grades,⁹ and men's and women's groups, are strong platforms for initiating self-help development activities, instilling discipline, maintaining law and order, and ensuring the transmission of culture. Several women's organizations operate within the state. They are located both in the state capital and in urban and rural communities in the local government areas. Many of these women's organizations function as age grades and cultural organizations (*Umuada/Umuokpu*¹⁰). Some are faith-based organizations (e.g. the Catholic Women's Organization (CWO), the Mothers' Union (MU) and the Women's Guild), while others are secular and function as women's cooperative societies. Each has specific areas of interest, usually geared towards the welfare and economic empowerment of women and their families, but also community development. Their activities include thrift (savings) and credit, marketing, arts and crafts, industry, and processing foods such as cassava, palm oil, rice and flour. Other activity areas include women's political emancipation, widowhood rights, campaigning against harmful traditional and cultural practices, women's economic empowerment (including the acquisition of vocational skills) and providing counselling services on social, legal and health matters. Many of these women's organizations are affiliated to the National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS), which is an umbrella body for different women's associations (Abambra State, 2005, p 93).

As previously mentioned, one of the approaches adopted by women's groups in the struggle for the promotion and protection of the rights of women in the state was agitation for legal reform against harmful traditions practices that discriminate against widows. At the forefront of this struggle are the Coalition of Eastern NGOs (CENGOS), which is an umbrella organization of over 100 NGOs in the nine states of the old Eastern Region (Anambra, Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross-River, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo and Rivers), with a mandate to promote and protect the human rights of Nigerian citizens and build the capacity of civil society and FBOs, such as the Catholic Women's Organization. In 2003, CENGOS organized a workshop on Human Rights and Gender for the traditional leaders who are regarded as the custodians of culture and tradition.¹¹ Other NGOs involved in the campaign are the Civil Resource Development and Documentation Centre (CIRDDOC) and the Women's Action Committee (WACA).

CENGOS sought to reform inheritance laws that prohibit a wife from inheriting her husband's property (Mba, 1992, pp 75-77). In addition, women were not entitled to a share of their fathers' estates. Thus

in *Ugboma v. Ibineme* (1967) FNLRL (Federation of Nigeria Law Reports) 251, the court held that, in accordance with general Igbo custom, which is also the custom of Awkuzu (Anambra State), women are not entitled to inherit land from their fathers (Candide-Johnson, 2005). However, in *Ukeje v. Ukeje* (2001) 27 WRN (Weekly Reports of Nigeria) 14, the Court of Appeal held that Igbo Native Law and Custom, which disentitles a female (regardless of the circumstances of her birth) to a share of her deceased father's estate is void, as it conflicts with Section 42(1) & (2) of the 1999 Constitution (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999), which states that:

- (1) A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person:- (a) be subjected either expressly by, or in the practical application of, any law in force in Nigeria or any executive or administrative action of the government, to disabilities or restrictions to which citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religions or political opinions are not made subject; or (b) be accorded either expressly by, or in the practical application of, any law in force in Nigeria or any such executive or administrative action, any privilege or advantage that is not accorded to citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religions or political opinions.
- (2) No citizen of Nigeria shall be subjected to any disability or deprivation merely by reason of the circumstances of his [sic] birth.

Candide-Johnson (2005) argues that the latter court ruling provided hope for future judgements in favour of women, especially in a context in which the law is rarely interpreted in support of women's rights.

At one of the rallies conducted by CIRDDOC, the issue of inheritance and the myths surrounding it was raised, when one of the male opinion leaders said that "denial of inheritance rights to girls and women arose from the fact that it would be unfair for women to inherit twice - at their maiden family and their marital family - while men will only inherit once" (CIRDDOC, 2005). Women's groups quickly responded that "women do not have inheritance rights in their marital homes unless they have male children. They were made to understand that even then, giving a male child a share in an inheritance does not translate into a share for his mother. The point was also made that a woman who does not have male issue is not entitled to any part of her husband's estate and argued that this is unjust" (CIRDDOC, 2005). At the end of the rally, there were commitments from both the women themselves

and traditional rulers and opinion leaders to put a stop to some of the practices that amount to violence against women (CIRDDOC, 2005).

Of all the struggles by women's groups in South East Nigeria to promote and protect women's rights, what stands out is their struggle against harmful traditional practices, particularly widowhood rites, through legal reform. According to Candide-Johnson (2005, p 7),

...most Nigerian tribal/cultural groupings still practice (and actively protect as inviolable tradition) what can best be described as barbaric attitudes and treatment towards widows who ordinarily should be treated with sympathy, care and tender affection in their most vulnerable moments of loss, grief and despair

The atrocities of widowhood rites in traditional Igbo society seem to be unrivalled in Nigeria.

BAOBAB reported some of these practices:

The Igbo widow must sit confined to either a part of the husband's house or just a corner of it till the mourning period is over. She must not go out at all. She must not have any physical contact with anybody. Any gifts or money brought for her must be dropped in front of her. Nobody must touch her (as if she is the plague itself). ... In Igbo culture, she is expected to be mostly naked. The widow sits holding a knife (*mma ekwu*), which she must not drop. In other words, sleeping would be rather difficult. Shaving of hair of some parts of the body especially the head is also required. Her female in-laws called '*umuada*' surround her... They may beat her up for not wailing loudly enough since loud and continuous wailing is seen as a sign of respect for her late husband. Depending on their temperament, they may drag her out during the funeral ceremony to be beaten by masqueraders¹² that usually carry deadly charms and poison. In some instances, the widow is not even allowed to pay her husband the last respects (BAOBAB, 2003, p 44).

BAOBAB (2003, pp 44-45) further reported that:

In a community like Nanka in Anambra State, the widow must not see her husband's corpse. She must leave home as soon as he dies. She may only come back for the funeral and mourning rites. Before she gets back, the man's relations would have taken everything they want. The widow can keep whatever she finds on return, which is usually very little... Despite these degrading treatments, women still opt for it for fear of their sons being disinherited. These widowhood rites do not hold for widowers.

Other degrading features of widowhood practice in Igbo land, reported by Fasoranti and Aruna (2003) in their study of widowhood practices among Igbos and Yorubas in the South East and South West of Nigeria respectively, include the mourning of a husband's death for a period of between a week and a year, with a series of activities. These included the wearing of mourning cloth and wailing at least three times a day. During the mourning period, reported Fasoranti and Aruna (2003), a woman's hair is shaved and the widow sits by the corpse of her husband. According to them, the widow is put in a cage where she can sit on a mat but not sleep. She is expected to be clad in black attire for seven months and another cloth for the remaining five months of her one year of mourning. Another of feature of widowhood practice is the denial of a widow's right to inherit the property of her husband. This is linked to the successor norms among Igbos, which demand that the property of a dead man is passed to his siblings rather than to his wife and children. This practice works on the principle that property is not the private ownership of individuals but the collective ownership of the family, which is to be entrusted to the elders of the family. To balance the situation, the family rather than the mother is expected to bear the responsibility of looking after the children of the deceased member, although often they do not fulfil this responsibility in practice. They write that:

It was revealed by majority of the Igbo respondents that at death of a woman's husband, she would be expected to surrender all the man's properties, including bank account to the relations for appropriation. She would, in some communities, be expected to take an oath that she had not concealed anything from the family members (Fasoranti and Aruna, 2003, p 69).

As a first step towards preventing a widow claiming her husband's property and morally legitimizing siblings' claims to the property of the deceased, the widow is often accused of engineering the death of her husband. All kinds of anecdotal 'evidence' may be given to justify such an accusation. According to Fasoranti and Aruna (2003, p 69),

In some communities, the woman would be accused of masterminding the husband's death even where it is very apparent that he died a natural or accidental death. Hence, the widowhood rites would begin by making the woman to pass through "acid" test such as "drinking bitter water", swearing in a shrine, drinking the water used to birth the husband's corpse or going to a "T junction" to bath, returning home naked by 2.00am. It is believed that if she survives any or a combination of these, then she is free from the guilt of causing her husband's death.

Despite the degrading nature of the widowhood practices explained above, they have persisted for centuries because they are compatible with Igbo cultural gender norms. As reported by BAOBAB (2003, p 45),

...in September 1993, *The Champion* newspaper carried the story of a protest by women from Enugu-Agidi in Njikoka LGA of Anambra State. They numbered about 2000. They protested against the traditions that humiliate women in the area. Some of the placards they carried read, 'don't debase womanhood in the name of culture', 'let's have freedom of worship', and 'don't drag us into idol worship'.

Among other things, they protested against the practice of taking widows to a shrine for purification. As Igbo women became exposed to contemporary discourses about human rights and are increasingly employed in the formal sector, conflict between traditional culture and the formal legal system is inevitable. This is particularly so in a society where women are now demanding their rights, as noted by an FBO officer, who observed that:

May I say that it is now that women realize they have rights. Initially it was whatever the man says that goes. But presently our women are more knowledgeable. Most of us are graduates so we can stand out to speak for our rights (Principal Actor, public servant, FBO activist, Mothers Union, August 14, 2009).

In a context in which women did not inherit any property and were expected to undergo a series of dehumanizing rituals, conflict was likely to manifest itself (as presented in Box 1). According to Ilika and Ilika (2005), between January and June 2000, four incidents precipitated the Catholic Women's Organization's interest in and action on widowhood practices. As indicated in case two, it is impossible for a woman working in a private commercial organisation such as a bank cannot be released for a year to be confined, as the widowhood rites dictate. Some compromises may be made if a widow is employed in the public sector or government service, where there might be some sympathy for the traditional system of widowhood rites, but not in a private sector business. In these cases, it was glaring that injustices were done, and were also clearly seen to be done. They were considered unjust and unfair and a negation of basic human rights by the CWO.

Box 1: Cases that triggered women's groups interest in widowhood practices

Case one

A widow was alleged to have maltreated her husband and had not taken good care of him when he was on his sick bed. The *umuada* (the daughters' group) accused her of being responsible for her husband's death, and ruled that, if the woman was protesting against the allegation, she should prove her innocence by drinking the water used for washing her husband's corpse. If she refused to drink, she should be ostracized and dragged along the streets to her father's house. This is an accepted traditional practice (*igu mmiri ozu*). Another option was for her to crawl over her husband's corpse (*ige ukseu ozu*). The women relations of the widow and some members of the CWO who were attending the funeral resisted this and conflict ensued.

Case two

Another case involved a young widow working in a bank in Lagos. She was required to restrict her movements and not go to work for six months. She was to be in the village, confined to the compound and wearing mourning dress. The widow explained that she would lose her job and disrupt her children's schooling in Lagos. The community sanctioned her for breaking the traditional norm of not mourning her husband for the customary duration (*ilu uju*). The *umuada* fined her the sum of ₦10,000.00 and compelled her to stay at her father's house for one month as a punishment.

Case three

In the third event, the *umuada* refused to shave the head of a widow because they alleged that she did not show enough sorrow that her husband had died. They alleged that she was conversing freely and even smiled with sympathizers, although it is taboo for a widow to laugh or look cheerful before her husband has been buried. The widow was appropriately fined for the misdemeanour. Not shaving one's hair on a husband's death is considered to be a sign that the widow is not mourning him. It is feared that the failure to shave one's head will attract wrath of the dead husband on the widow and other members of the family.

Case four

The fourth event was that of a widow who died six months after her husband's death. The Christian community gathered for her burial and funeral, but other members of her village resisted, insisting that the woman should be thrown into the evil forest without any mourning, since she had committed an abomination by dying before the end of the traditional mourning period.

Extracted from Ilika and Ilika, 2005, pp 67-68.

These cases and others across different towns and villages in Anambra State and other Igbo-dominated states triggered women's response and mobilized them for action. One such action was the campaign for legal reform that aimed to protect widows against degrading widowhood rites and practices, which as noted above, culminated in legislation called the *Anambra State Malpractices against Widows and Widowers (Prohibition) Law No. 2005*. The law prohibits and penalizes the maltreatment of widows and widowers in order to uphold and preserve the dignity of the human person as entrenched in the Constitution, Section 3 of which provides that the fundamental human rights enshrined in the Constitution are inalienable and accrue to every widow or widower.

3 Data collection methodology

The first stage of the research involved a review of literature on the women's movement in Nigeria, supplemented by nine interviews with key informants (see Adamu et al, 2010). Material on the campaign against degrading widowhood practices in Anambra State during the first stage was supplemented by an additional literature review in this stage. These reviews have been summarized above. They were followed by primary data collection using qualitative research methods to examine and describe the nature of the women's campaigns for legal reform in Anambra State and to examine how religious teachings, leaders and institutions impacted on the ways in which women articulated and pursued their social change agendas in the secular political system.

Information for this study was derived from three sources:

- i. *The Coalition of Eastern NGOs (CENGOS)*, which comprises numerous NGOs spread all over the South East and South South geopolitical zones. However, for the purpose of this research, the fieldwork focussed on Anambra State. The key coordinating organizations within the coalition were selected as the primary data source, because they were the most likely to possess institutional memories, relevant documents and important contacts/networks, and to employ or have access to key informants who are/were critical actors in the social change process. This involved visits to the offices of: the Civil Resource Development and Documentation Centre (CIRDDOC) (though based in Enugu, the Awka office was visited), the Women's Action Committee (WACA), the Catholic Women's Organization (CWO), the Mothers' Union (MU), and the Women's Guild (all in Anambra State). The Programme (or coordinating) Officers from the participating organizations (WACA, CWO and MU), who had been in charge of the campaign prior to 2005, as well as current post-holders who may be responsible for activities relating to implementation of the law (if any) were interviewed (see Appendix 1).¹³ They were asked to share their personal and organizational experiences related to the campaign, as well as the engagement of the campaign with the religious establishment and leadership (both positive and negative). The officers were relied upon to identify other principal actors. The coalition officers were also asked to identify the religious leaders/organizations that had supported or opposed the campaign.
- ii. *Religious leaders and organizations that supported or opposed the campaigns.* Initially it was intended to interview Christian and Muslim religious leaders, as well as the leaders of any organizations associated with either of the religions that supported or opposed the campaign. In the event, no Muslim leaders or heads of Muslim organizations were interviewed because very few people indigenous to the State are Muslim, Muslims constitute a minority in the State's population and none of the principal actors mentioned Muslim leaders or organizations. In addition, no religious leader that opposed the campaign

was mentioned by the respondents. The plan was to interview leaders aware of or involved in the campaign from the Catholic, Anglican and Pentecostal Churches, but most of the leaders were not available during the period of fieldwork, and so only a Catholic priest was interviewed. Leaders and staff members of the four organizations most centrally involved with the campaign, which in practice were also members of CENGOS, were interviewed: these were the Catholic Women's Organization (CWO), and three organizations associated with the Anglican Church, the Mothers' Union (MU), Women's Guild and Society for Equity Justice and Peace – Anglican Communion.

iii. Cases reported as part of the implementation of the law. In order to assess the effectiveness of the widowhood campaign, attempts were made to access and review some court cases related to the implementation of the widowhood law. The High Court and the Magistrates' Court Registries were visited, as well as the chambers of some lawyers, in order to collect cases from between 2000 and 2008, but none of those visited were prepared to make case records available to the researchers.

It was possible to identify the coordinating organizations and their Programme Officers (or other key actors) in advance due to their high profile in the campaign. Thereafter, snowball sampling was used to identify further respondents associated with the coalition, as well as to select some religious leaders and leaders of other Christian organizations. However, as noted above, it was not possible to secure interviews with religious leaders (with one exception) and other organizations.

An examination of the list of cases at the High Court revealed that none of them had dealt with widowhood, which is considered to be a customary matter and thus the business of the magistrates' courts. Anambra State, like every state in the country, is divided into three senatorial districts. First a list of all the magistrates' courts within each senatorial district was collected from the Chief Registrar of the state. Thereafter, two magistrates' courts from each district were selected at random, giving a total of six courts. However, even after several visits, the courts were unwilling to release details of relevant cases, suggesting instead that examples could be obtained from the Legal Aid Council and NGOs participating in the campaign. Several examples were provided by the latter.

In order to find answers to the research questions, different types of data were collected, including published and unpublished official documents related to the issue being investigated, such as information brochures stating the vision, mission, activities etc., of each organization, as well as reports, newsletters, edited books and monographs. We also collected interview data from the

leadership of the coalition and different FBOs, which gave detailed information on the profile of the actors, the processes, and the strategies that the organizations adopted in their engagement with Christianity in the course of the campaign. Finally, a religious leader was interviewed about his church's written and verbal doctrinal statements.

The study employed three research tools:

- i. Eight key informant interviews were conducted with key actors in the campaign in July and August 2009, including Programme Officers and principal actors within the coordinating organizations and leaders of religious/faith-based establishments, to obtain information about their strategies and resources and the challenges the various organizations faced in the course of the campaigns, particularly their experiences with religion and religious institutions. Because the key informants with whom interviews were sought were very busy people, several visits had to be made before an appointment could be secured. Some interviews entailed more than one visit to suit the convenience of the respondent. All except one took place in Awka, the capital of Anambra State. As noted above, it was not possible to secure interviews with all the planned informants during the period of the fieldwork.
- ii. Participant observation at religious rallies, programme/project sites, conferences, seminars, workshops or meetings - especially those dealing with gender equality and legal reform - to study how such issues are presented, discussed and negotiated in group settings. In practice, the researcher was able to observe a meeting of a network of women's NGOs held in the office of the Federation of International Women Lawyers (FIDA), in which representatives from 17 of the 21 Local Government Areas in Anambra State were present.¹⁴
- iii. In addition, a few court cases obtained from NGOs were reviewed to assess the effectiveness of the laws in promoting women's rights for social change.

The interviews conducted were transcribed and analysed using OPENCODE qualitative analysis software. The data were processed using a coding technique to identify relevant themes, including the profile of the organizations involved, the actors in the campaign, processes and strategies, resources (human, materials and social), positive and negative engagement with religion, the extent of a person's or organization's engagement with the campaign, and respondents' views on the effect of the campaign and the legislation in bringing change to the lives of women in Anambra State. The content of the findings was analysed from the above thematic perspectives. Responses have been

anonymized. Quotations from the interviews are acknowledged as follows: type of respondent (e.g. Principal Actor in the campaign, Programme Officer – with denomination), type of organization (e.g. NGO, FBO) (name of organization), date of interview. Three of the six cases reviewed are summarized in Boxes 2-4.

4 Findings

As stated above, the objectives of the study were to investigate the nature and dynamics of the campaign for widows' rights by looking at the actors, the resources and strategies employed, and the influence of religion on the campaign.

There have been two main campaigns aimed at legal reforms affecting women in Anambra State: the campaign around widows' rights and a campaign in support of an 'Equal Opportunity Bill' or 'Affirmative Action Bill' meant to assist women to gain access to leadership positions in the state. Much effort was put into both campaigns, but only one resulted in the promulgation of a law, namely that concerned with widows' rights in 2005. Apparently, the success with the widowhood campaign emboldened campaigners to take up a campaign for an affirmative action bill. However, although much campaigning was done to support the affirmative action or equal opportunities bill, which was submitted to and passed by the Anambra State House of Assembly in 2007, the governor's assent could not be obtained before the 2007 election resulted in a change in the membership of the House of Assembly.¹⁵ In practice, if a bill passed by the State House of Assembly is not assented to by the Governor (or the Governor's veto is not over-turned by a two-thirds majority of members), then such a bill dies and has to be introduced as a new bill.

Our research focused on the successful widowhood campaign. First, the reasons for the campaign and the motivations of the participants are discussed, followed by an analysis of who was involved in the campaign and the different roles they played. Third an overview of the strategies the actors employed during the course of the campaign is provided.

4.1 The reasons for the widowhood campaign

The violation of women's human rights over history and across cultures has been perpetuated in different forms and using different means or resources to justify and legitimize it. Some of the most common means have included religion and cultural traditions. As discussed above, widowhood practices are one example of harmful practices applied to women in the name of tradition and culture. As noted by Fasoranti and Aruna (2003), bereavement is a social fact of life that has no cultural boundaries, but the rites and practices vary from one culture to another. In Anambra State and other states in Igboland of South East Nigeria, where the practice is more pronounced than in the South West or North West, women's NGOs have campaigned for legal reform against widowhood practices

which require a widow to undergo a series of rites in order to demonstrate the level of her bereavement and extricate her from the blame of killing her husband. One of the principal actors in the campaign asserted that the practices in Igboland are more extreme than those practised among other Nigerian ethnic groups:

In Anambra State the widowhood situation is terrible. I don't think it is anything compared with what you find among Yorubas or even Hausas. When you talk of obnoxious cultural practices, the widowhood practice in this part of Nigeria is very terrible (Principal Actor, Programme Coordinator, NGO (WODOF), July 29, 2009).

As a result, a woman who loses her husband is dehumanized and her rights to dignity, respect and inheritance are violated and denied. Some of the practices previously associated with widowhood rites in Anambra State are captured in the offences section of the *Anambra State Malpractices against Widows and Widowers (Prohibition) Law of 2005* pages 3-5, for example that no persons shall compel a widow (or widower):

- i. To vacate her home on the ground that she does not have a male child or a child at all.
- ii. To drink the water used in washing the corpse of her late husband in order to establish her innocence with respect to causing the death of her late husband.
- iii. To be locked alone in the same room as the corpse of her late husband.
- iv. To sit on the bare floor or be naked during any period of the husband's burial rites.
- v. To be remarried to a relative of the late husband.
- vi. To shave her hair or any other part of her body.
- vii. To put ashes on her head.
- viii. To be prohibited from seeing the corpse of her late husband.
- ix. To perform any act which contravenes the fundamental human rights provisions entrenched in the constitution.
- x. To visit any shrine and/or perform any other rituals.
- xi. To give up custody of her children.
- xii. To be forcefully dispossessed of any property acquired or used by the couple during the lifetime of the deceased husband.

In addition to the above, many of our respondents described other dehumanizing practices to which a widow is exposed following the death of her husband. For example, one of those involved in the

campaign described 'ceremonial rape' "*where in some occasion a filthy medicine man rapes a widow as part of the ceremony of cleansing*" (Principal Actor, Programme Coordinator, NGO (WODOF), July 29, 2009).

The discrimination against widows includes

...taking everything the woman has worked for throughout her life and leaving her with children and with nothing to take care of them...It is not just the woman the practice affects; it affects her children too. It changes the status of the family completely. A man dies, maybe in Calabar, or in Port Harcourt or in Abuja; his children are going to school; his children are vibrant young people, they've got all the world before them and the man dies; before you know it the children are in the village and they turn to begging (Principal Actor, Programme Coordinator, NGO (WODOF) July 29, 2009).

The impact of the disinheritance of widows is thus not restricted to the women themselves but also affects their children.

Those involved in the campaign were therefore motivated by both the inhumane and unjust nature of widowhood practices and also by their effects on both widows and their children – the new law is "meant to prohibit and penalise all the maltreatment of widows in order to uphold and preserve the dignity of their persons as entrenched in the constitution" (*Anambra State Malpractices against Widows and Widowers (Prohibition) Law of 2005:7*).

4.2 Actors involved in the campaign

Various actors were involved in the campaign for the enactment of laws against widowhood rites and practices, including women's organizations in the CENGOS coalition, Christian organizations and powerful individual women. They can be broadly classified into two groups. The first group were secular in nature and were members of NGOs or professional bodies, such as lawyers, or individual members of the Anambra State legislative assembly. The second category was members of religious establishments or traditions. We begin with the secular group of actors.

4.2.1 Secular NGOs and individual actors

The majority of the secular NGO actors involved in the campaign operated either under the umbrella of the CENGOS¹⁶ coalition or were associated with certain professional associations. Members of the

coalition include WACA, Women for Development (WODOF), the National Women Peace Group (NAWOPEG) and the National Council for Women's Societies (NCWS). The major professional groups involved in the campaign were lawyers, through the Federation of International Women Lawyers (FIDA), and journalists, through National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ). In addition to the secular NGOs and professional associations, there were also highly positioned individual actors who used their role and status to promote the cause of the campaign. They appear to have greatly influenced the outcome. According to one of our interviewees:

Some of these widows come together, they begin to share their experiences, but they were not strong enough to make an impact until such women like Mrs Cathy Eze¹⁷ and Mrs Ngozi Obasi [got involved]. This Mrs Obasi is a well educated woman, a lawyer, and it is when women like them started coming out that we started making some impacts. By having women like Mrs Eze on board, people began to be aware of what these widows suffer (Principal Actor, FBO (Catholic Women's Organization - CWO), August 11, 2009, Onitsha)

To appreciate and demonstrate the central role of such powerful individual actors, it is necessary to look at the history of the bill. It was first initiated and submitted to the State House of Assembly by the new Chairperson of NAWOJ in 1999. The return to democratic rule after military dictatorship in that year witnessed similar agitations across the South Eastern states of Nigeria, mostly aimed at legal reform in the area of widowhood practice. While one of the South Eastern states, Enugu, succeeded in getting a bill passed during the first term of the Enugu State Assembly, the Anambra bill was dismissed at the committee hearing and was, therefore, not tabled during the first term of Anambra State House of Assembly between 1999 and 2003.

However, after the 2003 elections and the inauguration of the house for a second term, it was re-submitted to the Chairperson of the Committee for Women's Affairs. Many of our respondents highlighted the contribution of this Committee and its members to getting the law passed. For example, one of the focal persons during the campaign, who represented the Catholic Women's Organization, noted the central role played by the Chairperson of the Committee, explaining that she was "one of those who fought against maltreatment of widows. She presented the bill to Anambra State House of Assembly" (Principal Actor, CWO, August 11, 2009, Onitsha). The Chairperson had a legal background and was in contact with FIDA, which she persuaded to work on the bill prior to its

resubmission to the House. A series of negotiations followed, especially with her male colleagues in the House. This history was summarized by one of the key informants:

The history started in 1999 when I became the NAWOJ Chairperson. In 1999 we sent the widowhood malpractices bill to the House. This bill couldn't sail through, it died at committee level. However...after the appointment of a barrister as the Chairperson of [the] House Committee on Women Affairs and Social Development, we quickly went to her and re-presented the bill under NAWOPEG [National Women Peace Group] (Journalist, NGO activist, NGO (NAWOPEG), July 30, 2009).

This history of the bill, to which two professional bodies contributed in different ways and at different times, has resulted in some rivalry between the Nigerian Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) and FIDA over who should take credit for the achievement. Nonetheless, those who provided leadership to the campaign were united by virtue of the fact that they were all highly educated, urban-based (resident in Awka, the capital city of the state) and had diverse professional expertise, including lawyers, university lecturers and senior civil servants. For example, the leaders of WACA and WODOF are university professors of psychology and sociology respectively. The leadership and membership of FIDA are all lawyers in the private and public sectors. So the calibre of the actors and the reputation they built for themselves as capable women of integrity helped in getting the bill passed:

Usually if you have women from rural areas coming with placards and saying we want the government to change this thing, it will probably take a longer time, even for them to get the people to listen to them. The fact is that it's women who are here in Awka, who are also in the civil service, and who are also in the academia. So they knew what we were talking about and that got [assembly members] listening faster than it would be if it were the other way round. We are also known for fighting for the generality of the people (Principal Actor, Programme Coordinator, NGO (WODOF), July 29 2009).

4.2.2 Faith-based actors

The second group of actors were members of the Christian organizations that were prominent in the CENGOS coalition, representing the two dominant denominations: the Catholic Women's Organization, the Mother's Union¹⁸ and the Women's Guild¹⁹, the latter two associated with the Anglican Church. While these Christian religious organizations and leaders of various denominations supported the campaign against widowhood practices in different ways, the support of Muslim organizations and leaders was not reported by any of the actors. This can be partly attributed to the small number of Muslims in the state. Muslim organizations such as FOMWAN and individual Muslims

may either not be bold enough or may not prioritize the need to take part in campaigns on sensitive issues that challenge the traditional system.

The FBOs mobilized the support of the churches with which they are associated and their leaders, the latter being particularly crucial. All the respondents, whether they belong to a religious organization or not, reported that no religious leader opposed the campaign and many saw this as a crucial factor in mobilizing support for the reform. According to one of the FBO actors:

I don't think in [the] Anglican communion [that] any religious leader opposed it, not in [the] Anglican communion, not even in [the] Roman Catholic church, nobody, nobody, because as I told you earlier, we all read the Bible. Why should any religious leader oppose making widows happy? They can't oppose it, they can't. Like in the Anglican [Church], the major supporter was our Archbishop and [also the] Bishop. The Archbishop of the Niger and the Bishop of Awka Most Rev. Maxwell Anekwema, then our Archdeacon[s] - we have six Archdeacons in Awka, Awka Diocese (Principal Actor, leader, FBO (Women's Guild - Anglican), August 13, 2009).

A principal actor from the Mothers Union confirmed this view:

In Anambra State, honestly religious leaders were solidly behind us. We have the ArchBishop Most Right Revd. Anekwema (Anglican Community), we have our Archdeacons, we have our priests, and we have our canons, all of them. They were very, very supportive. Our religious leaders, they are very supportive (Principal Actor, FBO activist (Mothers Union - Anglican), August 14, 2009).

Obtaining support from both the main churches was also seen to have been important. As another respondent noted:

Had it been that the Anglicans didn't support it, their women could not have been there. Had it been Catholics said no to that bill, you will not see any of them there, you know how [the] church works. No, no here we did not see one religious leader that says 'the bill is bad' (Principal Actor, NGO (NAWOPEG), July 30, 2009).

The religious leaders interviewed were asked why they supported the campaign. Their responses referred to the fact that the issues are in tandem with the tenets of the Christian faith. The responses of a Catholic religious leader is noted below:

I can guess that most religious leaders are properly informed because, biblically, leaders are enforced to take care of widows. And if we are sincere as religious leaders, we must follow the instructions, we must follow the stipulations in the scriptures. So in principle, all

religious leaders are obliged to accomplish these requirements in spearheading restoration of the dignity and rights of a widow within the rank and file of a Christian and civic community.The Christian religion, especially Catholic religion, is against this traditional practice that is contrary to the issue of the dignity of human persons. If you talk about [the] Catholic Christian religion, it is not a barrier [to the proposed changes], rather it promotes the issues and rights of women, especially that of widowhood or widows in the context of our own culture (Religious Leader (Catholic Priest), August 12, 2009).

He also reported that traditional widowhood practices are contrary to the injunctions of the Christian faith, noting that:

Within the African traditional religion or within Igbo traditional religion these issues of widowhood came up and we are responding to it as members of the Christian religion. The Catholic religion especially is against this traditional practice that is contrary to the issue of the dignity of human persons (Religious Leader (Catholic Priest), August 12, 2009).

Another respondent said:

The Catholic Church is against maltreating people unfairly [sic]. People should be treated well whether the husband is alive or not, we are all children of God (Principal Actor, FBO, (CWO), August 11, 2009).

Informants were asked how the religious leaders had contributed. Mention was made of their role in giving the campaign legitimacy and credibility, generating wider support from members of their churches and the public, providing scriptural references, prayer, and provision of material support.

It was noted that the legitimacy and credibility provided by the support of religious leaders was useful in gaining the support of members of the State House of Assembly, as well as members of the public. With the support of the Christian establishment and leaders – who “*make announcements in the Church and when there are rallies*” (Principal Actor, Programme Coordinator, NGO (WACA) July 27, 2009). The possibility that the campaign might have been branded as Western and anti-African was removed. The FBOs thus flaunted their religious identity to give the proposed legislation legitimacy. Unlike the secular organizations, whose membership and activities are mostly urban-based, the Christian organizations and churches operate at community, state and national levels. Their presence beyond the state capital provided an opportunity for community level mobilization in support of the

campaign (see below) and the involvement of religious leaders was reported to have earned support from the general public.

Many of the FBO actors mentioned that religious leaders supported them by drawing their attention to relevant portions of the scriptures that they could use in the campaign. For example, a Programme Officer from the Mothers Union noted that Anglican leaders

...know exactly what the Bible says. They knew we are quoting the correct thing, so they were even assisting us because when we go to them, this is the problem, could you give us passages and they give us passages and I am sure the same thing happened with the Roman Catholic because we all use just one Bible that we are using. It is the same Bible so the content is the same (Principal Actor, FBO (Mothers Union), August 14, 2009).

Another FBO programme officer who played central role in the campaign emphasized the importance of Biblical references when soliciting wider support for the campaign:

We used the Bible a lot because the Bible in so many instances said that you shouldn't ill-treat widows and orphans. So any good Christian knew that what we were saying was correct. It is in the Bible. We didn't write the Bible so we had no problems with that. We had no problems since we were quoting the Bible (Principal Actor, FBO (Women's Guild), August 13, 2009).

The use of prayer in churches to seek God's blessing to get the bill passed and also to protect widows against being charmed by traditionalists were reported. In addition, respondents reported that some religious leaders provided material support for the campaign. For example, one programme officer reported that religious leaders were very happy with the campaign, helping the campaigners "*through their pronouncements, through their philanthropic aid*" (Principal Actor, FBO (Mothers' Union), August 14, 2009).

Our FBO respondents also considered that the core of the bill was reflective of Christian teachings and that this supported their reasons for being involved. For instance, one told us that: "*in the leadership [of the various NGOs and the coalition] some of us are Christians and we believe that what is in the bill is the right thing and it is also Christianly for us not to maltreat a widow.*" (Principal Actor, NGO (NAWOPEG), July 30, 2009) Another interviewee stated that: the "*Christian religion will want to*

help widows, they don't want widows to suffer" (Principal Actor, NGO (WODOF), July 29, 2009). A religious leader narrated that:

I was born within the Catholic Church and I follow the teachings of the church with every amount of interest and commitment. So I followed the principles and values from the time my mother and my parents have been taking me to the Church to date and that is what I am doing now in the Church. The challenges of my office as a pastor is to reach and to restore social justice and in our Catholic community. We have [a] series [of] landmark documents on issues related to justice, on issues related to social decisions of the Church because this is the angle in which the issues of the widowhood right comes in (Religious Leader, Catholic priest, August 12, 2009).

Although the FBO actors considered the campaign to be part of their religious obligation, they were not involved solely to benefit members of their own churches. As one informant told us "a widow is always a widow, either a Christian, a Muslim or pagan" (Programme Officer, FBO (CWO), August 11, 2009, Onitsha).

NGO actors were also asked about the role of religion in the campaign, in terms of the relevance of religion to the issue and the support or opposition of religious actors and organizations. While the members of FBOs and religious leaders who we interviewed were unequivocal about their religious motivation for supporting and participating in the campaign, the NGO actors and members of the professional organizations discussed above denied any religious motives behind it. They acknowledged that the campaign had been supported by religious leaders and the churches. For example, "There is no religious organization that I know who was in the coalition or outside of it that was against it" (Principal Actor, NGO (WODOF), July 29, 2009). However, they also stated that religion was not used to frame the problem or in the tactics they employed. Instead, many of the NGO actors reiterated that they regard the issue of widowhood practices as a development issue, that is, a struggle aimed at protecting and promoting widow's rights. One told us that

... we did not quote Bible, we did not quote verses of scripture, no, we were just saying this is a clear social developmental situation for the good of the country... when you go to the House you are not seeing anything religious, you are just seeing human beings that you talk to, you articulate your points and they listen to you. Even as we were talking with people, I didn't really see a lot of religion coming to it (Principal Actor, NGO (WODOF), July 29, 2009)

In addition, some NGO informants were critical of religious actors for failing to support wider campaigns for women's rights:

There is a tendency for the religious people to confront traditions, especially when it has to do with the subservience of women to men. Christian religion will want to help widows, they don't want widows to suffer, but the Christian religion does not come forward and say we want women to have their rights (Principal Actor, NGO (WODOF), July 29, 2009).

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the religious actors, members of professional organizations and the NGOs had different reasons for participating in the campaign. While the religious organizations saw the campaign as part of their religious obligation to abolish traditional practices that are repugnant to Christian values and teachings, especially when they affect their own members, for the secular NGOs and the professional organizations religion is not a consideration.

4.3 Strategies and resources employed in the campaign

Different approaches were adopted in the campaign against the violation of widows' rights and the passage and utilization of legislation to protect such rights. According to the different actors involved, three approaches can be distinguished: 1) the community level campaign; 2) the campaign to get the bill passed, and 3) the post-enactment campaign. The community level campaign and the campaign for the passage of the bill took place simultaneously, but were championed by different actors. Community and grass-roots mobilization was championed by FBOs, particularly the CWO, while the campaign at the government level was championed by secular NGOs, supported by FBOs and community-based organizations (CBOs). The Christian organizations, especially the Catholic Women's Organization, worked on all three aspects of the campaign, including post-law enactment. Moreover, different strategies were employed in each.

4.3.1 The community level campaign

Although the campaign against widowhood practices began in the late 1980s, at that stage the protests were uncoordinated and lacked a clear strategy. However, the situation changed following several reports of the violation of widows' rights (Ilika and Ilika, 2005). Such cases were not only seen as an affront to the rights of the women but also as being incompatible with Christian funeral rites. Subsequently, the Catholic Women's Organization, supported by the Mothers' Union, collaborated with

NGOs under the CENGOS umbrella to campaign against widowhood practices. According to Ilika and Ilika (2005), the involvement of FBOs in the campaign was initiated by the central executive of the CWO.

The CWO held six consultations with widows and women's groups from the different zones constituting the Ozubulu Local Government Area to mobilize women to take action against widowhood practices. During the consultations, nine demands were agreed upon (Ilika and Ilika 2005, pp 70-71):

- i. Reduction of the mourning period to six months.
- ii. Reduction in the confinement to home to one month.
- iii. Widows should have the option of wearing black or white as a mourning dress, for not more than six months. Widows should, however, not wear necklaces, earrings or coloured dresses.
- iv. Laws stipulating that widows are not permitted to take baths and also ritual bathing should be abolished.
- v. On no account should widows drink water used to wash their dead husband's corpse.
- vi. Widows who die within the customary mourning period should be accorded full burial rights.
- vii. Rather than allowing the *umuada*²⁰ to shave a widow's head, Christian women of every zone should shave her as soon as her husband is buried, to prevent the *umuada* from victimizing the widow or imposing fines on her.
- viii. Widows should comport themselves well and avoid sexual activities that could make them pregnant while mourning their husbands.
- ix. Zones of the LGA that go against these recommendations should be penalized.

With this resolution reached, the CWO set out to win support for its implementation. They sought and received the support and blessings of the parish priests and parish councils, town union leaders and the *Obi*²¹-in-Council (the town warrant chief and his cabinet). Other strategies adopted by the CWO included inviting and networking with women's groups from other Christian denominations, namely the Mothers' Guild and the Women's Union. In order to reach women traditionalists, they also sought collaboration with the women's wing of the Ozubulu Development Union (ODU), using the rhetoric of 'women's solidarity'. In order to overcome resistance from the *umuada* and other 'traditional' women, they argued that widowhood practices amount to 'women punishing women'. Ilika and Ilika (2005, p 70) write that:

The women reasoned that *umuada* are not faceless people but members of the [wider groups of] women..., and an *umuada* in her father's village could one day be a widow in

another village. It is therefore women fighting women and, therefore, they must collectively stop the practice for the benefit of every woman.

Another strategy adopted before the CWO resolution was made public was to elect selected vocal male traditional leaders as patrons of the organization. This was meant to forestall possible opposition and lure support for the campaign. In addition to addressing possible opposition, the Catholic women's group had to make some compromises to push the agenda forward, such as exempting elderly women who insist on observing the traditional rites, as well as dropping the issue of inheritance from their key demands. According to Ilika and Ilika (2005, p 70):

The executive body of CWO wanted all the identified practices, except loss of right of inheritance and wife inheritance, to be eliminated. They reasoned that taking up these two issues would jeopardize their chances of achieving others, since they are core cultural practices that touch on customary law. They agreed that these two issues could be tackled later if they succeeded with the first initiative.

Another area of compromise was over the issue of a widow getting pregnant while still mourning her husband. There is a strong demand that, if a widow becomes pregnant during the mourning period, she must go through traditional cleansing rites. Ilika and Ilika (2005, p 71) suggest that because this is a rare situation and also "it is morally wrong both traditionally and in the Christian religion for a widow to get pregnant outside marriage", the group agreed to accept this practice.

Apart from confronting the opposition and making compromises over certain issues, the Catholic Women's Organization's promotion of their agenda to existing traditional institutions and systems, such as town unions and chiefs, dampened the resistance of the traditional authorities who are the custodians of widowhood rites. In addition, they were able to use religious means to counteract some of the fears generated in widows by traditional beliefs. For example, the fear and superstition of a widow that the spirit of her dead husband would hover around and want to continue to associate with his widow if she did not undergo the traditional rites was tackled through prayers and "by keeping widows company to strengthen and encourage them and by educating them that most often all the beliefs are superstitious" (Ilika and Ilika, 2005, p 70). Another example is the prohibition on a widow being allowed to see the corpse of her deceased husband or performing the dust-to-dust rites.²² The latter prohibition is based on a belief that the spirit of the deceased continues to have conjugal relationships with a widow in her dreams, even after death, and is supported by some men (Ilika and

Ilika, 2005). The church as an institution responded to this and it is no longer practised, as the following quotation suggests:

Let me give you an example, in Awka Diocese there is a town where they said a widow should not see the husband's corpse. It led to the death of two people. The church says you must see your dead husband, after all you are husband and wife. But they said no, [and] when her husband died they took the widow away and denied her seeing her husband's corpse. The church was against it and the church supported the widow and said she must see the corpse of her husband. That led to conflict. It is [also] very common in Awka diocese to find people who would not allow widows to throw dust inside the grave when their husbands died. They say that when you throw the dust, the man can no longer come for you for sexual intercourse. So the men are against it. So it was a very big issue but gradually we don't have that kind of thing (Programme Officer, FBO (CWO), August 11, 2009, Onitsha)

This grass-roots mobilization took place in 2000 and was expected to provide support to the state-level campaign aimed at getting the bill passed. However, as noted earlier, the first attempt did not culminate in the passage of the bill. When it was rejected, the NGOs and FBOs re-strategized and submitted it to the State House of Assembly again in 2003. The CWO continued to support the campaign until the law was passed in 2005 and beyond.

4.3.2 The campaign for the passage of the bill

As noted above, the community and grass-roots level mobilization against widowhood practices was championed by FBOs, particularly the CWO, while the campaign at the government level to establish legal protection against the violation of widow's rights was championed by secular NGOs, professional associations and supported by FBOs and CBOs. A series of consultations with government stakeholders were used as a mobilization strategy and to obtain the backing of those in positions of power. According to one of the Principal Actors, a representative of WODOF, the main strategy comprised:

Mainly getting those on top political positions to get along with us. That was paying advocacies to the people who were in the House [House of Assembly]. They were very cooperative, I must say, they were very cooperative. The Speaker normally is known for his being forward going, so he didn't give us too much of a tough time. Like I said, the main thing was getting them to listen to what we were saying in the first place (Principal Actor, NGO (WODOF), July 29, 2009).

In addition, the cooperation of the Ministry of Women's Affairs was also sought and obtained. This Ministry is strategically important in that it is the organ of government responsible for women's affairs and its support for the campaign contributed to its success.

Another strategy used by the campaigners was to lobby their constituency representatives in the house to vote for the bill. The same actor from WODOF told us that every member of the CENGOS coalition was requested to visit her constituency assembly member to explain the bill and lobby for his/her vote on the floor of the house. Advocacy and lobbying was also extended to traditional authorities to combat their potential opposition to the bill and solicit their support. Some actors mentioned campaigning from house-to-house and community-to-community and meeting their *Igwes* (local traditional rulers). Asked to summarize the strategies they employed, an NGO actor mentioned "networking, collaboration, then lobbying, then mobilization, media sensitization. These are some of the strategies we adopted. We also used other methods such as letter writing. It was effective" (Principal Actor, NGO (WODOF), July 29, 2009).

In view of the sensitivity of the issue at hand, and the fact that there are many who benefit from the existing order, several compromises had to be made to get the bill passed. One major compromise was the inclusion of widowers in the bill, even though men are obviously not victims of widowhood practices:

When we sent that bill, Chairperson, Women Affairs Committee looked at the bill and called me and said that these men are really aggressive. She wants a situation where the bill will be widow and widower, and I told her our men have no problems, why should we do widow and widower. She now said no, that she had already asked FIDA to make inputs. So what we did was pray, then do a lot of leg work and contacts and lobbying (Principal Actor, NGO (NAWOPEG), July 30, 2009).

The above quotation leaves no doubt that the campaigners and even women legislators were willing to compromise to ensure that the bill was passed, by including widowers to counter possible opposition from men within and outside the assembly. It removed any possibility that the bill might be seen as targeted at men, although it is difficult to assess whether it would have been passed without such a compromise.

The strength of the opposition was probably less because of the community mobilization, discussed above, as well as the use of the media to promote the campaigners' views. The central role of the media in getting the bill passed was fully acknowledged by one of the principal actors when she said that they:

...worked with Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ). This was to enable us get information out. For whatever we are doing, if it is not communicated it will not be effective. You need to disseminate information, you need to tell the world what you are doing,...if people do not hear it they will not support you (Principal Actor, NGO (WACA), July 27, 2009).

Apart from utilizing the power of the media, having NAWOJ and NUJ as members of the coalition meant that the strengths of other members were fully used. Overall, the diversity of actors involved was important, giving credibility to the campaign, especially during advocacy visits:

If you are doing advocacy you cannot go alone, so when you are many from different organizations it gives credence to what you are doing, because they will see that it is a collection of people, this is part of giving it strength and credence (Principal Actor, NGO (WACA), July 27, 2009).

Our interviewees also gave the impression that diversity was accompanied by a clear division of labour within the coalition, in which different organizations played to their specialisms. For instance, an FBO actor (the Director of CWO, Onitsha Archdiocese) told us in an interview on August 11, 2009 that, whereas FIDA was able to reach the government directly, the CWO was able to reach the Church and then powerful government officials, of whom the majority are church-goers, through the Church. Both the FBO and NGO actors highlighted the way in which the different Christian denominations made the structures and resources of the churches available to the campaigners. They made the campaigners feel comfortable and gave them different platforms from which to pass on the campaign message. For example, an NGO actor shared her experience of support from the Anglican Communion, where the church gave the campaigners an opportunity to address a diocesan synod:

I remember when we went to Niger Diocese Anglican Communion at the Anglican women's conference, the Bishop promised us that he is going to allow us to speak in the synod and that he would also like the men to hear the bill because it is the men that will take decision, since majority of the assembly members are men. Which means it is important that they buy the idea (Principal Actor, NGO (NAWOPEG), July 30, 2009).

Using the opportunities provided by the churches and other religious fora, those involved in the campaign took advantage of the fact that the majority of people in government or the State House of Assembly are Christians and attend church services and programmes to reach out to them. Their ability to do so had many implications, in particular, it is an indication of the churches' endorsement and support of the campaign, which gives it credibility and legitimacy, and also, government officials cannot afford to be seen to oppose an issue that is endorsed and supported by their churches. To maintain their social and personal standing within both the church and the wider society, government officials had little choice but to support the campaign.

Another central role in the campaign was obtaining funding. CIRDDOC, a well established and reputable secular organization that can access funding from development partners, was utilized to secure funds for the campaign. The funding was secured from the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), and was used for transport costs incurred by the actors in the course of the campaigns and training of participants to enhance their communications and advocacy capacity, as well as their knowledge of human rights and how to know when they are being impinged upon. Additional sources of funding included membership dues and donations from rich women and members of the coalition. The faith-based organizations relied solely on the assets and goodwill of the churches. In the words of a programme officer in one of the faith-based organizations for practical assistance, "*in the church there is no problem because we have vehicles that can take us from one spot to the other*" (Programme Officer, FBO (Women's Guild), August 13, 2009). Faith-based organizations relied exclusively on church resources for the campaign. Activities such as meetings, workshops, advocacy to influential people and door-to-door visits were organized using the resources and assets of the churches.

4.3.3 The post-enactment campaign

The new law was passed in 2005. Clearly, implementation is essential for any new legislation to have the intended results, and implementation is more likely if those involved in campaigning for a law keep up the pressure on relevant government agencies. However, in the post-enactment phase, it is important not only to rely on the law. The success of any legal reform must also be seen in terms of the willingness and ability of communities to utilize the law and use the opportunities provided by a legal reform to transform their practices. Action since the passage of the bill in 2005 has therefore

focused on providing women with knowledge of their rights under the widowhood law and the content of the legal provisions. Other actions taken were providing support to some widows who have sought legal support. These are discussed briefly below, before reviewing feedback from informants on the extent and outcomes of implementation of the new law. Also discussed is the role of churches and FBOs in informing people about the new law and helping them to seek their rights within it.

The FBOs involved in the campaign reported that they had also been involved in the post-enactment campaign through organizing workshops and meetings for women. As one FBO actor stated “*we organize workshops. Presently, we are having women general meeting in the entire Anglican Communion.... So in these meetings we address problems being faced by women. At times in these meetings we empower widows, we give them aids, foodstuffs, money*” (Principal Actor, FBO (Mothers’ Union), August 14, 2009).

Also as part of the involvement of churches and FBOs, widows in some denominations have been mobilized into groups:

...in our parishes we have St Rita Widowhood Association as part of CWO (Catholic Women Organization), so they are funded by the organization. We help them because they are part of our organization. St Rita Widowhood Association was formally inaugurated in November 2007 by the Archbishop at the diocesan level. It was in parishes before. It was a very big celebration - the widows all came together, were inaugurated and they were very happy. A seminar was held where they were told that the death of the husband is not the end of the world; they can still put themselves together and then plan their life. It was a big celebration and actually it was very interesting for the widows (Programme Officer, FBO (CWO), August 11, 2009, Onitsha).

Thus, after the enactment of the *Anambra State Malpractices against Widows and Widowers (Prohibition) Law of 2005*, the actors continued with the campaign to ensure utilization of the bill and its enforcement. First, they embarked on an awareness-raising campaign to inform widows about the availability and content of the law. As a result, widows are now said to be aware and knowledgeable about their rights as enshrined in the law. As one FBO actor argued:

The benefit is that the women now know their rights. And when you want to infringe on them, they will tell you no, especially the educated ones, but it is permeating now even among the illiterates, the people are telling them, look it is your rights, demand it even if your husband’s people are saying do this, tell them no, that the government says it is not that way, you are protected (Programme Officer, FBO (CWO), August 11, 2009, Onitsha).

Through this third phase of the campaign, women have not only become more aware of their rights but have also been provided with information on what practices are prohibited and where and how they can seek redress when their rights are infringed upon. One of the respondents reported that they told the women *“to report to us, go to police, go to court, or go to FIDA who go to courts”* (Principal Actor, NGO (NAWOPEG), July 30, 2009). She reported that many widows have taken their cases to NGOs for mediation and according to her *“so many of them have petitioned to us and by God’s grace we have handled so many of the cases.”* (For examples. see Boxes 2 and 3).

As a result, there is a general view that there has been a reduction in obnoxious widowhood practices, such as the elongated period of mourning and the wearing of mourning clothes. For example, widows now have the choice of mourning their husband in either white or black clothing. In the words of an FBO programme officer, *“We no longer have widows walking about in tattered mourning cloth and things like that”* (Principal Actor, FBO (Women’s Guild), August 13, 2009). A similar claim was made regarding the number of mourning days. According to one NGO actor, *“the number of mourning days which women observed has drastically come down to three to four days, no more one year and above, the bottom line is that those obnoxious practices are fast disappearing* (Principal Actor, NGO (WACA), July 27, 2009).

The widowhood campaign is also said to have reduced the hostility widows experience from men and their sister-in-laws (*umuada*), who, in the words of an NGO actor, *“are becoming more careful, even though some of them are still engaged in their activities”*(Principal Actor, NGO (WACA), July 27, 2009). The practice of preventing a widow from participating in the funeral of her deceased husband, which often provides an opportunity for her to be disinherited of the properties and assets of the deceased, is also lessening. Most often, relations of the husband present huge bills for the cost of the funeral ceremonies, often resulting in the properties of the deceased being taken in lieu of payment. Consequently, perhaps the most important impact of the law has been the opportunity it provides for widows to demand their rights to inherit their deceased husband’s property. An NGO Actor reported that, since the passing of the law, *“the deprivation of the widow’s rights to inherit her husband’s properties is now lessening. The impounding of [a] brother’s material wealth and physical properties and the rest of it all is going down, but it still exists. Then exclusion, high exclusion of widows from participating fully in the arrangement of [her] husband’s burial is reducing”* (Principal Actor, NGO

(WACA), July 27, 2009). Another informant also made reference to the use of the legal reform by widows to secure their inheritance. She observed that;

One interesting outcome of that bill was making sure that people don't remove properties belonging to widows and if they do, they will be prosecuted. I think that was the major outcome of that bill... the ill-treatment of widows has been eradicated. At least widows in Anambra State now know that if their husband has ten thousand naira in the bank that it will be there for them [and] when they are ready they will go and get it. They will just go to the probate and they will get it. No more husband's brother is coming to say 'he is my brother. I am supposed to get some of it'. So we are very happy (Principal Actor, FBO (Women's Guild), August 13, 2009).

Box 2: Limited access to the legal system penalizes widows and their families

Mrs V.N.E. lost her husband in 2003. In the months after his death, his brothers and sisters and her mother-in-law chased her and her children from the compound, and also damaged and snatched her property. They even tried to kill her, at one point knocking her down so that she injured her head on a stone. She took her case to court on 28th April 2004. However, because she did not have the funds to pay lawyers, the court did not review her case. Eventually, she asked NAWOPEG for help. However, while registering with NAWOPEG, she died, leaving the case unresolved and several children roaming the streets with no father or mother and no support from the government, NGOs or their families.

Source: NAWOPEG.

Even if relatively few widows have the knowledge and resources to use the formal legal process, as illustrated by the case summarized in Box 2, knowledge of their improved inheritance rights is itself considered to be empowering for widows in particular and women more generally. Members of both faith-based and secular organizations agreed on this. For example, a religious leader noted that:

There is progress that has been achieved in terms of the effort of the widows themselves to take their own future and fortune into their hands. The widows now [understand that] the properties of their husbands is their right and not even that of the first son (Religious Leader (Catholic Priest), August, 2009)

The benefits, they are everything and everywhere, if we are talking in terms of the widows, then it's like it's lifting women out from prison that is the whole idea. It is freeing

women from a lot of the constraints they have had (Principal Actor, NGO (WODOF), July 2009).

I am very happy about the change and I even want more, women should be liberated, they should be liberated and have their own rights. They don't do these things to men, it is the women (Principal Actor, FBO (CWO), August, 2009).

Sometimes, legal reform and the possibility of seeking redress in the courts is sufficient to enable traditional practices to be used to resolve a conflict, sometimes with assistance of an organization like NAWOPEG, as illustrated in the two case summarized in Box 3.

Box 3: Mediation to resolve conflicts over inheritance

Mrs A is a widow from U village, in a town in Nnewi South Local Government Area. A piece of land belonging to her late husband was taken away from her forcefully by Mr. B. O. (a relation of her deceased husband) of AI village, who started building on the land. She approached NAWOPEG for assistance. They arranged for some police officers and lawyers to meet Mr B. O., who denied taking Mrs A's land. Later, NAWOPEG arranged a reconciliation meeting, which was held at the palace of the Igwe (traditional leader) on May 23 2009.

Mrs R. N is a widow of the late Hon B. N.. She made a complaint to NAWOPEG that land given to her late husband by his late mother-in-law in 1971, when she was alive, was being taken from her and her son by her late husband's brother Mr. A. N. She accused Mr A. N. of planting items used in traditional medicine in the land and around the compound, with a view to killing her and her son. Mr. A.N. told her that he had no heir to the land and that she should bring her son for him to see him. However, he then claimed that her son was very weak. NAWOPEG tried to make peace and recover the land, but to no avail. Mr A. N. then offered Mrs R. N. ₦200,000 for the land. NAWOPEG pleaded with Mrs R. N. to take the money, suggesting that she could even use it to take the case to court. They also advised her that she should never take her son to the late husband's brother in case he was planning to take the son's life. Mrs R. N. felt that she had no choice but to accept the cash offer, even though she felt that she and her son had been cheated of their rights.

Source: NAWOPEG.

Despite the above achievements, it is obvious that it has not been an easy journey for the campaigners. Certain practices are still resistant to change, such as inheritance of land. It was reported by many of the NGO actors that land-related issues are extremely complex and difficult to handle (as shown, for example, in Boxes 3 and 4). Many traditional rulers are still of the opinion that women should not even be talking about land. Despite legal reform that now protects widows, the traditional beliefs that land-related issues are not the realm of women, and that land disputes should be handled and mediated by men, are still entrenched in the minds of people, including traditional authority figures. This is a serious drawback for the women who were involved in the campaign. It has limited the ability of women's groups to respond to challenges emerging from the enforcement of the law and has implications for the ability of women to inherit land and property. The current situation requires more advocacy, engagement and consultation with traditional authority figures to address such inhibitions, which, in the absence of political will to address the problem, limit the ability of the law to handle land inheritance. Unfortunately further campaigning on this issue appears to be unlikely, because, as is common in many social movements, the coalition has dispersed and the interest of many coalition members has shifted to different issues. However, all hope is not lost, because it is envisaged that the proposed review of the 1978 Land Use Act, currently before the National Assembly, will incorporate the issue of land ownership and inheritance by women. However, it seemed unlikely at the time of writing (2009) that the Land Use Bill could be reviewed and passed into law before elections scheduled for early 2011.

5 Conclusion

The actors involved in the campaign for legal reform ranged from people who served in their individual capacities to programme officers or managers of various organizations, including non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations and community based organizations. They employed various strategies, such as networking, advocacy, lobbying, and enlightenment seminars/workshops. The fact that the issues involved in the campaign for legal reforms to establish rights for widows are in tandem with the tenets of the Christian religion helps to explain why Christian religious leaders, irrespective of denomination, supported the campaign. Similarly, many of the faith-based actors drew on religious sources and resources to promote their social change agenda. As was previously discussed, the campaign to mobilize communities for consensus-building and action against widowhood practices was championed by Christian organizations using church structures and resources. Religion permeates the everyday lives of most Nigerians and has a profound influence on political life. In such an environment, confirmation of a campaign's legitimacy by religious teachings and figures is key to getting wider public support from both the elite and ordinary people.

Many lessons can be learnt from this campaign. Firstly, it demonstrated that women, despite their ideological differences and varying social positions, can come together for a shared cause and have the capacity and ability to mobilize diverse resources. The strengths of both individuals and group actors were extensively and intensively utilized for the campaign. Perhaps even more important is the relevance of community participation in any campaign. The way in which women and men at the grassroots were mobilized as stakeholders provides an important lesson for the women's movement. Such awareness-raising and mobilization is expensive in both time and energy, but reaching out and mobilizing all stakeholders is crucial for any reform agenda. Another equally important conclusion is that for a campaign to gain the support of a wide range of stakeholders, some compromises may be required, to douse potential resistance and increase the legitimacy of the campaign.

Another equally important conclusion relates to the potential role of religion in the success of any campaign aimed at changing gender relations and promoting women's rights. Without engaging religion and seeking the support of the religious establishments, it is doubtful if any legal reform can pass through the national and state assemblies. In particular, if a proposal is against the wishes of the religious establishment, there is little chance of it being agreed. Does this mean that women cannot raise an issue or pursue a change agenda that is not aligned to religion or that does not have the

blessing of the religious establishment and leadership? The study of the CEDAW campaign (Par-Mallam et al, 2011) clearly demonstrates that the Nigerian women's movement can and does engage and pursue issues that are perceived to be against religion. However, that campaign failed, and the legislation was not embodied in national law, demonstrating that such engagement is more costly, and requires much investment of resources to guard against unwanted opposition that would mar the legitimacy of the campaign, let alone to convince the religious establishment and leadership of the merit of the proposed change. That example shows that the capacity of the women's movement to engage with the religious establishment and leadership on issues that are not aligned to religious teachings appear to be weak. It is not clear whether the difficulty of tackling interpretations of religious teachings that disadvantage women is related to the weak knowledge base of women on religious matters or the gender ideology that marginalizes women from gaining religious leadership positions and the authority to represent religion. Over the years, Nigerian women have made progress towards improving their religious knowledge base and this has given them some access to the religious establishment and the authority associated with religious leaders, even if it is still limited. To what extent the progress made to date is sufficient to challenge religious dogmatism is still not clear.

Another important conclusion relates to the strengths and weaknesses of legal reform as a means for promoting women's rights and social change agendas. Legal reform has provided a legitimate platform for women activists to negotiate a better deal for widows and, in limited cases, to take action against those who violate the widowhood law. However, the campaign also reveals the limitations of adopting a legal reform strategy to reform a traditional system and practices that are engrained and entrenched in the culture of the people. In this instance, although there is evidence of women's growing knowledge of the law and many prohibited widowhood practices are declining, the law in itself is insufficient to deal with women's right to inherit land.

Appendix 1

List of interviews

Principal Actor, NGO Programme Coordinator, university lecturer and activist (27/07/2009).

Religious leader, Catholic Cleric, university lecturer (12/08/2009).

Principal Actor, NGO Programme Coordinator, WODOF, university lecturer and social activist (29/07/2009).

Principal Actor, Director, Catholic Women Organization, Onitsha Archdiocese, retired school principal (11/08/2009).

FBO activist, General Manager, Society for Equity Justice and Peace – Anglican Communion (30/07/2009).

Principal Actor, Journalist, Focal Point for NAWOPEG, NGO activist, former Chairperson NAWOJ (Anambra Chapter) (30/07/2009).

Principal Actor, Retired Chief Magistrate, Former President, Awka Town Anglican Women Association, Leader Women's Guild (13/08/2009).

Principal Actor, Public servant, FBO activist, Mothers Union (14/08/2009).

Appendix 2

Interview guides

INDEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE Religious Leaders ANAMBRA LEGAL REFORMS

Introduction: Self introduction, name and general affiliation

Purpose of Interview

We are aware that Anambra State is one of the few states in Nigeria that have enacted some legal reforms at eliminating discriminatory and harmful practices against women. The reforms resulted from series of campaigns by different individuals and groups. We are interested in knowing your views about this campaign and how it was managed. It will be appreciated if we could spend some time together to discuss this issue.

INDIVIDUAL PROFILE

- i. Age [as at last birthday]
- ii. Sex
- iii. Marital status
- iv. Occupational Status
- v. Religion/Denomination
- vi. Level of education
- vii. Area of specialization
- viii. Experience with women's rights issues
- ix. Duration of involvement with Women's movements

Religious Influence on the nature and/or outcomes of the campaign

1. Membership of organisations
2. What was your role in the campaign for the affirmative action/widowhood rights in Anambra State in the course of the campaigns? (*Probe for instances of the roles*)
3. What were the motivation for the roles you played?
4. Describe the challenges you faced during the period of the campaign? What have been the achievements of the campaign? Do you think your participation in the campaign was worth it?

5. There are some religious leaders that have different views from yours. What do you think are the reasons for their views? What were their attitudes, actions and pronouncements? What are your response to such?
6. To what extent does religious teachings and values influence your position? (*ASK for evidences and cases from the religious teachings and values*)
7. To what extent do you perceive religion as a barrier to or supporter of campaigns to promote affirmative action/widowhood rights? (*Probe for instances that religion could be seen as a barrier to enforce affirmative action/widowhood rights; Probe for changes over time*).

Perceived Impact of the Legal Reforms

8. What in your view have been the effects of the Anambra campaign on legal reforms on women's access to opportunities (affirmative action) and the rights of widows? (*Probe for changes that have resulted since the enactment, if there are no changes, ask for reasons why there has not been changes*)
9. What are the lessons that could be learnt from the Anambra legal reforms campaign? (*Probe for lessons that could be adopted in the case of other scenarios/situations*)

Wrap-Up

The interview should be concluded by thanking the respondent and allowing a few minutes for free discussion.

Once the interview is formally completed, the interviewer should:

Go over his/her field notes quickly to make any on-the-spot corrections and seek necessary clarifications before leaving. More complete notes can be made at a later time. If a tape recorder was used, check and label tapes before departing the interview site. A new tape should be used for each interview.

INDEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

Programme officers/Principal Actors

ANAMBRA LEGAL REFORMS

Introduction: Self introduction, name and general affiliation

Purpose of Interview

We are aware that Anambra State is one of the few states in Nigeria that have enacted some legal reforms at eliminating discriminatory and harmful practices against women. The reforms resulted from series of campaigns by different individuals and groups. We are interested in knowing your views about this campaign and how it was managed. It will be appreciated if we could spend some time together to discuss this issue.

INDIVIDUAL PROFILE

- x. Age [as at last birthday]
- xi. Sex
- xii. Marital status
- xiii. Occupational Status
- xiv. Religion
- xv. Ethnic background
- xvi. Level of education
- xvii. Area of specialization
- xviii. Experience with women's rights issues
- xix. Duration of involvement with Women's movements
- xx. Names of women's organization/movement to which respondent is actively involved

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE (ask for documentation – brochures, manuals etc)

- i. List of organizations in the coalition
- ii. Date of formation of coalition/organization
- iii. Leadership structure (How is the position of coalition[organization] shared among constituents[members])

- iv. Aims and objectives of the coalition/organization
- v. Achievements of the coalition/organization to date on women's rights
- vi. Challenges of the coalition/organization on women's rights

Actors involved in the campaign

10. Who are/were the key actors involved in the campaigns for affirmative action/widowhood rights in Anambra State? (*Probe for individuals, groups, and coalitions; what are the factors that led to the involvement of these actors in the campaign; PROBE: where the PO was not involved with key actors – ASK **why the organization was/is involved?***) PROBE For AFFIRMATIVE ACTION and WIDOWHOOD Rights
11. What is/were the roles of the key actors involved in the campaign for affirmative action/widowhood rights in Anambra State? (*Probe for individuals, groups, and coalitions –*) PROBE For AFFIRMATIVE ACTION and WIDOWHOOD Rights
12. How was/were the coalitions/organization formed and when? (*Probe for events and activities before the enactment of the legal reforms, and what is happening to the coalition after the enactment*) PROBE For AFFIRMATIVE ACTION and WIDOWHOOD Rights
13. What were the challenges the coalition/organization faced? (Probe for Internal [managerial, financial and human] and external challenges [traditional views, religious views, judiciary, etc. PROBE For AFFIRMATIVE ACTION and WIDOWHOOD Rights

Strategy/tactics and Resources

14. What strategies did/ the organization/coalition employ/mobilize to pursue their quest in the campaign for affirmative action/widowhood rights in Anambra State? (*Probe for political[use of legislature, political appointees]; getting the principal actors to be involved , human[manpower, champions], social[individual actors' positions and influence, their spouses] and religious[use of religious arguments as a resource] strategies adopted by Individuals, groups and coalitions*) PROBE For AFFIRMATIVE ACTION and WIDOWOOD Rights
15. What resources did the organization/coalition) employ/mobilize to pursue their quest in the campaign for affirmative action/widowhood rights in Anambra State? (*Probe for how the resources were generated by Individuals, groups and coalitions*) PROBE For AFFIRMATIVE ACTION and WIDOWOOD Rights
16. What was responsible for the delay in having the legal reforms (affirmative action/widowhood rights) in Anambra State? (*Probe for factors dependent on individuals, groups and coalitions; why was it not enacted in the military era?*) PROBE For AFFIRMATIVE ACTION and WIDOWOOD Rights

Religious Influence on the nature and/or outcomes of the campaign

17. How did you or your organization/coalition relate with the religion of Christianity and Islam and the leadership of these religions in the course of the campaigns? (*Probe for positive and negative relationship*)
18. In what ways did the religious teachings/messages influence the campaign? (Probe for aspects of the religion that permits or discourages the enforcement of affirmative action/widowhood rights)
19. In what ways do the attitudes, pronouncements and behaviours of religious leaders impact on the nature, strategies and outcomes of the legal reforms (affirmative action/widowhood rights) campaigns in Anambra State? (i) *Probe for a description of the attitudes of religious leaders ASK for **examples of the attitudes, pronouncements and behaviours*** (ii) *Probe for the experiences of the actors involved in the campaign for the legal reforms with religious leadership and establishment, either in their personal capacity or as a representative of their organization –(probe for changes over time) ASK for EXAMPLES*
20. In what ways do the attitudes, pronouncements and actions of religious institutions impact on the nature, strategies and outcomes of the legal reforms (affirmative action/widowhood rights) campaigns in Anambra State? ASK for EXAMPLES
21. To what extent do critical actors engaged in the campaigns perceive religion as a barrier to or supporter of campaigns to promote affirmative action/widowhood rights? (*Probe for instances that religion could be seen as a barrier or a promoter to enforce women's rights; Probe for changes over time*)
22. In what ways did/do women involved in Anambra State coalitions for legal reforms (affirmative action/widowhood rights) collectively or individually, draw on religious ideology to promote their quest for the legal reforms? (*Probe for examples of religious ideology employed*)
23. Who were the religious leaders who supported or opposed the legal reforms (affirmative action/widowhood rights)? ASK for CONTACTS

Perceived Impact of the Legal Reforms

24. What in your view have been the effects [benefits, change of attitudes on affirmative action/widowhood rights, change on women's conditions/situation based on the enacted laws] of the Anambra campaign on legal reforms on women's access to opportunities (affirmative action) and the rights of widows? (*Probe for changes that have resulted since the enactment, if there are no changes, ask for reasons why there has not been changes*) ASK FOR EXAMPLES

25. What are the lessons that could be learnt from the Anambra legal reforms campaign? (*Probe for lessons that could be adopted in the case of the campaign for the domestication of CEDAW and other scenarios/situations*)

Wrap-Up

The interview should be concluded by thanking the respondent and allowing a few minutes for free discussion.

Once the interview is formally completed, the interviewer should:

Go over his/her field notes quickly to make any on-the-spot corrections and seek necessary clarifications before leaving. More complete notes can be made at a later time. If a tape recorder was used, check and label tapes before departing the interview site. A new tape should be used for each interview.

Notes

- ¹ CENGOS is a coalition of NGOs drawn from states making up the old Eastern Region (Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi, Imo, Abia, Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Rivers and Bayelsa)
- ² Anambra State, 2005, p 14.
- ³ The incidence of poverty was estimated at 32 per cent in 1996, increasing to 54 per cent in 2002 (Anambra State, 2005, p 4).
- ⁴ A dual-sex system of authority refers to a situation where women have parallel social and political power structures and where gender roles tend to be fluid and, in certain circumstances, interchangeable (see Amadiume, 1987).
- ⁵ To Salihu (2007), the decline of WIN did not necessarily represent its death; it only signalled a potential for rejuvenation based on clearly worked out priorities and constitutional guidelines. Indeed, several members of WIN went on to set up their own organizations and there are still a few state chapters in existence.
- ⁶ Effah (1995) and Dipo-Salami (2002) make the important point that the character of women's collective resistance to undesirable conditions does not depend solely on class or gender, but is also closely associated with the nature and degree of their cultural and religious identity.
- ⁷ Para-Mallam's (2007) survey of 45 NGOs reveals that women's organizing in Nigeria is characterized by internal antagonisms due to conflicts of interest between elite and grassroots women and liberal/radical feminist agendas.
- ⁸ Warrant chiefs were men appointed by the colonial administrators and given warrants to act as representatives of the colonial masters in their areas.
- ⁹ These are members of a community who are in the same age group and discuss general issues of communal development.
- ¹⁰ Literally meaning 'daughters of a common male ancestor' or 'daughters of the soil'. This is a cultural women's group whose members are drawn from daughters of the village or clan (but not wives, who in patrilocal societies move to their husbands' villages). Culturally, they have many functions to perform, including making sure that a deceased male member of her clan is properly mourned.
- ¹¹ Briefs about CENGOS. Retrieved on July 23 2008 from http://www.cengos.org/about_us.htm
- ¹² Igbo masquerades are traditional performances acted out by exclusive secret societies of adult males within a community. The main function of these societies is to celebrate the harvest and to entertain the village people. The members, also known as masqueraders, wear masks to hide their identity from the rest of the village and to resemble the spirit of a dead community member. By wearing the mask, a masquerader is thought to represent the dead, who live between the earthly world and the spiritual world, and occasionally return to the earthly world to offer spiritual advice. Masquerades may be for entertainment or to inspire fear in non-members of a society.
- ¹³ The selection of CWO and MU was useful, as both are faith-based organizations, which provided insight into religious discourses surrounding the campaigns from the Catholic and Protestant perspectives respectively.
- ¹⁴ Some of the people who attended this meeting attempted to assist the researcher to book appointments with religious leaders.
- ¹⁵ The passing of a bill is the first step in the enactment of a law. The Act only comes into effect after it has been assented to by the Executive Governor or, if the Governor refuses to assent, two-thirds of the members of the State House of Assembly decide to overrule the Governor's veto. Although both Assembly Members and the Governor have four year terms, the beginning and end of their tenure differs. In Anambra State the governor had been elected in 2006.
- ¹⁶ This is a forum for the various NGOs to come together to articulate a common position on issues
- ¹⁷ Names have been changed to hide the true identity of the people referred to in the interview

- ¹⁸ The Mothers' Union is a world-wide organization associated with the Anglican Communion. It was founded by Mrs. Mary Sumner in 1876 in the UK and introduced into Nigeria in 1908. It aims to strengthen and preserve marriage and family life, based on Christian teachings, including helping those whose family life has met with adversity. Membership is open to all baptized, confirmed and married women whose marriages are blessed in church.
- ¹⁹ The Women's Guild is an arm of the women and girls' organization of the Anglican Communion. It is for baptized female members of the Anglican Church aged 25 or more. It aims to raise women who will be good Christian mothers and raise good children.
- ²⁰ Daughters of a common male ancestor or 'daughters of the soil'.
- ²¹ The traditional ruler of the community.
- ²² This principle is also regarded as "from dust you come and to dust you will return". It has its roots in the Holy Bible - Genesis 3:19. It is often said at a burial service when the coffin is lowered into the grave. It is also meant to remind those alive of their origin and where all will end.

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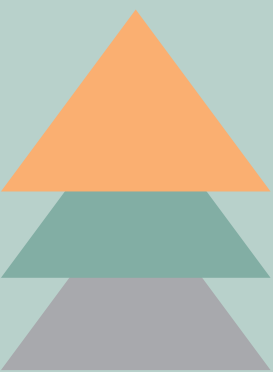
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