



# Dialogue on Inclusive Growth and Women's Participation

## Event Report

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# Background

Nigeria has had a period of economic growth, overtaking and remaining ahead of South Africa in terms of the size of GDP since 2012. However, through the decade (2006 – 2016), with a growth rate on average of about 7%, Nigeria was unable to harness the benefits of the high growth years to reduce poverty. The dividends of high growth have been found to accrue more to only a small proportion of the population. It is fair to say that Nigeria is not grossly unequal; but using consumption as a proxy for income, the bottom 10% (poorest of the poor) of the population consumed 2.56% of goods and services, while the top 10% (super-rich) consumed 26.59% of all goods and services.

Research by Gonzales and others shows a strong connection between gender inequality and income inequality. By removing gender inequality, income inequality gets reduced by 5%. Also, if gender gaps are closed, \$28 trillion could be added to the global annual GDP by 2025.

It is against this background that PDF II, with support from UK Aid, organised a dialogue on *Inclusive Growth: Women's Participation* to raise awareness about the potential positive impact of women's participation in economic activities, particularly as Nigeria begins a new administration.

## Objectives

- Present findings from a desk review of women's participation in economic activities and economic growth, and gender inequalities (causes and manifestation in Nigeria).
- To set the stage for a candid and robust discussion on achieving inclusive growth with specific focus on women contribution to economic growth.
- To elicit specific commitments from participants on affirmative actions to address the gender gap.

# Introduction

The dialogue started at 9:43 A.M, following the registration of participants. The facilitator, Chioma Agwuegbo, founder of TechHerNG welcomed everyone to the program, having apologized for the delayed start, which resulted from the deferred attendance by participants. The event brought together more than 130 participants comprising of high-level international organizations, corporate organizations, international and national civil society organizations, academia, the media, politicians and other stakeholders from government agencies.

During the dialogue two panellist sessions were held, followed by question and answer sessions, as well as feedback sessions all moderated by the facilitator. Commitments were also made by participants to deliberately take actions that will address the existing gender gap in the nation's economy.

# Opening Remarks

## Department for International Development, Dr. Ifeyinwa Isiekwe

The DFID representative appreciated participants for being present and expressed well wishes from the UK government. He mentioned that Nigeria has barely grown economically, especially as a result of the recent recession experienced by the country. He also informed the participants that the *International Monetary Fund 2018 report, Gender Inequality in*

*Nigeria: Macroeconomic Costs and Future Opportunities* revealed that there is excessive gender inequality in the nation which is costly. The report proves that if gender inequality were reduced, there would be a 1.25% increase in Gross Domestic Product per capita yearly. Also, the provision of necessary infrastructure and combatting violence against women and girls were essential for a further 2% increase in the nation's GDP. The report shows that dealing with the issues that constrain female participation would improve Nigeria's economic situation.

Hence, the need to talk about the removal of these gazing barriers. Dr. Isiekwe highlighted issues of educational opportunities (Nigeria has 10.5 million out-of-school children, and half of them are girls), socio-cultural barriers, access to formal financial resources, and access to land. He further reiterated the need to have conversations about the issues and the need to create an action plan to ensure that necessary policies are made to ensure that women are more involved in economic issues.

In closing, he requested for an honest dialogue, expecting more similar programs even before the year comes to an end.

## Addresses

### Address by the Acting Head of Civil Service of the Federation, Dr. Folashade Yemi-Esan

Deputy Director, Mrs Bosede Olaniyi who represented the Acting Head of Civil Service of the Federation, delivered the address. Having specially recognized the former Honourable member, Mrs. Nnnena Ukeje, she extended greetings from the Acting Head of Service. Sharing her awareness about the strategic position of women and girls in the development of the socio-economy of Nigeria, she stated that efforts were in top gear to ensure gender inclusion in at the highest level.

The Acting Head of Service was delighted to speak at the strategic dialogue organized by the UK Aid's Policy Development Facility Phase II (PDF II). She mentioned that the dialogue was an opportunity for critical stakeholders to come up with action plans that would improve the development of the nation. Also, SDG 8 seeks a higher level of productivity through decent work and encourages the inclusiveness of both men and women to influence sectors of the economy.

Furthermore, the Nigerian government continues to maintain gender inclusiveness in national development, resulting in the formation of gender desks at various MDAs, and the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, which coordinates initiatives targeted at encouraging inclusiveness. Initiatives such as the funding and support of women's businesses through the Central Bank of Nigeria, Bank of Industry, and Bank of Agriculture have reached over 60% of Nigerian women. Also, several women have sat in echelons of the civil service over the last 20 years.

Though Nigeria is yet to attain complete gender equality, good initiatives to ensure contribution to national development have been set up, by removing encumbrances, and providing facilities such as crèches that allow nursing mothers to attend to their children while at work.

The Acting Head of Service specifically hoped that there would be specific recommendations to support the attempts made by the government to close gender gaps and increase access to land, education, and skills by women, at the end of the dialogue.

## Address by Honourable Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning

Mrs Nabila Aguele who represented the Minister of Finance mentioned that interventions were being carried out by the Ministry to empower women. She said that there was a need for collective efforts by civil societies, development partners and the citizenry to come up with sustainable solutions that encourage gender equality and women inclusion; stating the imperativeness of prioritizing women for socio-economic empowerment.

A few challenges hindering gender inclusion were said to be limited access to education and finances. She added that long term approaches that bring women on board to implement policies and programs that remove economic barriers were needed. Hence, CBN champions a financial inclusion strategy, while the Ministry continues to proclaim gender equality, which improves agriculture, trade, and culture.

At the end of her address, the Special Adviser revealed the ministry's willingness to participate in programs like the dialogue, which ensure that women have 'seats at the table'.

# Presentation of Report on Impact of Women's Participation on Nigeria's Macroeconomic Performance

An expert on women and gender issues, Wumi Asubiaro-Dada who conducted the research presented the findings of the desk review. At the start of her presentation, she expressed her excitement that the Honourable Minister of Finance would be championing gender budgeting initiatives, which are critical for inclusive growth. She implored the minister to follow practical guidelines given to Ministries, Departments, and Agencies for the development of budgets. Highlights of the presentation included:

- Nigeria has experienced growth since her recovery from recession in 2017 as GDP growth bounced to 1.4%.
- Though the largest economy in Africa, Nigeria's GDP per capita which measures welfare is low, having overtaken India as the poverty capital of the world.
- A major challenge to Nigeria's economic growth is the non-inclusivity of women and young people in the economic sector.
- With an unequal society where one person is clad in shining shoes and the next person has tattered shoes, there is insecurity, mental illnesses, shorter lives, low performance in education, teenage mothers, infancy deaths are all on the increase.
- Inclusive growth involves the provision of equal opportunities for all and the distribution of growth across society.
- The 2018 Macroeconomic Outlook Report by the Nigerian Economic Summit Group highlights approaches suggested by the World Bank, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the African Development Bank, as well as the Asian Development Banks to ensure inclusive growth.
- The recommendations given include the inclusion of equal opportunities and distribution which if adopted (by including women who make up half of Nigeria's population in the process) would bring higher economic growth.
- Women also constitute half of Nigeria's human resources and so should be used, even if it is for the selfish reason of increasing Nigeria's GDP.
- The research by Gonzales and others shows a strong connection between gender inequality and income inequality. By removing gender inequality, income inequality gets reduced by 5%. Also, if gender gaps are closed, \$28 trillion could be added to the global annual GDP by 2025.
- Missed educational opportunities, limited access to land, assets and financial resources are examples of structural and institutional barriers faced by women.
- Nigerian laws do not allow women to give citizenship to their male spouses. Also, less value is placed on their lives as seen in Section 55(1) of the Penal Code, which restricts the type of work that women can do.
- Socio-cultural barriers such as the absence of women in decision making spaces, refusal to pay them for care work performed, the presence of negative social norms, and gender-based violence which treatment costs 4% of Nigeria's GDP.
- Focus on issues of innovation, promotion of financial literacy, passing of Violence Against Persons Prohibition Bill into an act at the state level, examination of social and cultural barriers, and the creation of more initiatives targeted at women are examples of what can be done to promote women inclusion in the growth of the economy.

The presentation was closed by highlighting the pervasiveness of gender-based exclusion with the example of the membership of the newly constituted Economic Advisory Council (EAC) tasked with the responsibility of shaping Nigeria's economy. Out of eight members only one of them is a woman. This is a clear reflection of the non-inclusiveness of women in economic discourse in Nigeria.

# Panel 1 Discussion: Tackling Structural/Institutional Barriers to Women's Participation in Economic Activities in Nigeria

Moderated by Chioma Agwuegbo, Founder TechHerNG

## Panellists

Hon. Simon Karu, Member House of Representative and Deputy Chairman Committee on Human Rights

Mr Folarin Aluko, Chairman Nigerian Bar Association (Abuja Chapter)

Dr Garba Bala Magaji, Director Convention for Business Integrity

Mr Asishana Okauru, Director General Nigeria Governors' Forum

Hon. Nnnena Ukeje, Former Member House of Representative

Mrs Temitope Iluyemi, Director, Governmental Relationships Africa, Procter & Gamble

The panellists were drawn from the private sectors, non-governmental organizations, legal practice, as well as the political class. This broad selection was to ensure that all angles were covered in the discussing the topic for the panel as well as on issues raised in the report. In turn, panellists answered the questions posed to them by the moderator.

## Panellists perspectives

Mr. Asishana Okauru, Director General Nigeria Governors' Forum

**Moderator: What are the strategies by the Nigerian Governors Forum to tackle the low number of girls in education?** The discussion centred on the existing absolute disparity in education, and how to include more girls in education. Below are highlights of Mr. Asishana's response;

The factors responsible for such gaps are not far-fetched and are manifested in politics, corporate, public and private institutions. Mr. Okauru advised that *"Women must break through these barriers by having conversations with women and men as well, to help in the process"*. He emphasized that women must be willing to participate in politics, for good inclusion in national matters. He agrees that women can transform the Nigerian economy. However, very few women are interested in participating in activities that will change the status quo. Hence the need for rigorous education to change of mindsets.

Mrs. Temitope Iluyemi, Director, Governmental Relationships Africa, Procter & Gamble

**Moderator: What are the provisions in your organization for maternity leave and steps in creating spaces for women in the workplace?**

In responding to the moderator's question on the effect of the systemic failure in the political space on women, the private sector erudite made the following points:

- Deliberate efforts are made by organizations such as Procter & Gamble to ensure the inclusion of women in the organisation, with women making over 50% of management, a concept that should be adopted by both the private and public sectors.
- Myths such as the lack of interest of women in politics and career, absence of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), and not enough capable women in the pipeline need to be debunked, as it is the prevailing culture that prevents full participation by women.
- Women communicate in a unique way, which is usually misunderstood and given negative connotations. The communication language of women needs to be understood to so as to put things in perspective.
- All organizations as suggested must have inclusive work policies, one of which is maternity as well as paternity leave. Such efforts will create more spaces for women in the workplace to feel supported to deliver their best. She added, "*What women are asking for is an equal representation to be part of effective solution providers to the challenges of our country because we are capable*".
- Parents, community leaders and all members of the society are responsible for changing the narrative about the capacity of women and ensure that the new narrative which involves finding out what each person can do to ensure women's inclusion, is promoted. Promotion can be through helping the next girl by increasing inquisitiveness.

Dr. Garba Bala Magaji, Director Convention for Business Integrity

**Moderator: How accessible are financial facilities to Nigerian women? Comment on the issue of rigorous KYC hurdles in rural areas before accessing loans.**

In response, Dr Magaji made the following key points:

- Access to financial facilities is limited by the existing formats, criteria, and guidelines that are not gender friendly.
- Women in rural areas would benefit more from having access to small scale loans available in tens of thousands which are free of collaterals than investments valued in millions.
- Working with women in Kaduna, and members of the Fulani tribe shows that when women are given resources, they get them multiplied in no time, proving that their gender needs to be included in the economy.
- There is a need to work with grants that enable access to finance to women of various trades and locations at various levels.
- Poor financial literacy at the grassroots and the cumbersome nature in accessing loans remain challenges for women. However, efforts have been made in merging grants and loans in such a manner that will enable women access these loans on an incremental basis. Meaning that women could have access to more funds over a period of time.
- Initiatives such as the anchor borrowers' program, grants from donors, and the trending investments for impact are available to solve financial issues.

Hon. Nnenna Ukeje, Former Member House of Representative

**Moderator: There have been discussions around the dwindling number of women in politics despite the increased level of funding. Why?**

Below are highlights of her response:

- There are currently only about eleven women in Nigeria's parliament, even though the previous national elections had the highest number of contesting females.
- Governors who do not see the woman's face as a representation of governance mostly run institutions that drive political parties. According to her "*For as long as the*



*party primaries continue to be run by the Old Boys' Club, women will never come out."*

- Though historical and cultural barriers to inclusion do not apply to Nigeria alone, the existence of stereotypes and violence in Nigeria has militated against the number of women in the political space.
- The Electoral Act, which specifies that violence in politics is prohibited must be signed to encourage more female participation.
- The cultural apathy in Nigeria has played a significant role in preventing the active participation of women in political space. *"Women have been stereotyped in the political space and violence, which has become the norm in the political space has militated against women and discouraged them from active political participation"*. While the gender gap is a global issue, Nigeria has the lowest rate of women in parliament and the number has decreased to 50%. Political parties continue to lack policies and practices to promote women in party leadership or as candidates. She also lamented that in the Electoral Bill that was not assented to, there were provisions about election violence that dis-incentivize resort to violence in the political space.

Mr. Folarin Aluko, Chairman Nigerian Bar Association Abuja Branch

**Moderator: What is the Nigerian Bar Association doing to tackle gender discriminatory laws?**

The Chairman of the Nigerian Bar Association, Abuja chapter was asked to state the kind of conversations needed for the creation of laws that allow women to take part in national economic growth since the current ones are mostly unfavourable. He had the following to say:

- Actual suffrage started in 1979 upon the amendment of the 1962 Electoral Act, which restricted the participation of women in elections.
- Though women are interested in politics and doing well at the grassroots levels, women are hardly able to sit at the helms of affairs.
- The legislature has a lot of work to do in creating a viable environment for women.
- Section 16 and 17 of the 1999 Constitution provides for non-discrimination, with 17(3) specifying the right to earn a living.
- The Abuja chapter of the Nigerian Bar Association is working with a non-governmental organization to examine the laws that discriminate against women.
- Policies of states should be targeted at ensuring that every section of the society enjoys equal rights.

Hon. Simon Karu, Member House of Representative and Deputy Chairman Committee on Human Rights

**Moderator: As Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Human Rights, what actions have you taken to encourage women's participation in economic activities?**

The Deputy Chairman of the Committee on Human Rights, House of Representatives was asked to highlight the actions being taken by his office to include women in the growth of Nigeria's economy. His responses were given based on his experience with civil society:

- The Committee on Human Rights in the House of Representatives has just been inaugurated but conscious effort concerning the rights of women will be taken into cognisance.

- Beyond conferences and events, deliberate actions need to be taken by women. For instance, women should not be merely subsistence driven. They must set business expansion visions.
- The idea of masculinity must change to increase the value of women in society. Changing the idea of masculinity means an education on the equitable contributions of men as well as women to the economy of a nation. This is a way to increase the understanding of the value of women in society.

### Panel Recommendations

- Every individual has the responsibility of changing the narrative by consciously taking deliberate steps in promoting women participation in every sector of the economy- **Mrs. Temitope Iluyemi**
- Build a consensus of women advocates to demand legal requirements for political parties to have a minimum representation of women among candidates and non-compliance be sanctioned with deterrent penalties. This can be achieved by using YIAGA 'not too young to run' strategy- **Hon. Nnenna Ukeje.**
- The need for parents to ensure a reformed idea of gender roles that will be more inclusive and balanced for the girl-child. - **Hon. Simon Karu.**
- Employ the use of technology to collate data of women businesses in informal sectors, register them under one umbrella so they can access loans as a group- **Dr. Garba Bala Magaji.**
- Policies on maternity and paternity leave should be implemented in every organization, public or private- **Mrs. Temitope Iluyemi.**

# Contributions from Audiences/Questions and Responses

## Question from participants

**How do you use your office in the Governors Forum to enhance women's participation in politics amidst political apathy?**

*Response by Mr. Asishana Okauru: The Nigerian Governors Forum has strategic plans in driving their operation by putting together various cross cutting initiatives. There is an open invitation for women to engage in conversations in Nigeria Governors' Forum.*

**What is hindering women from sponsoring other women or getting them together, giving them hints on what it takes to join politics because men do not appear to want to release the power to the women?**

*Response by Hon. Nnnena Ukeje: "The way through the political space is through the political parties. The leadership at the political party is the old boys club. They assign positions such as 'women leader' and sometimes, 'treasurer' to women. Most times after primaries, women are filtered out with the consequence that even if a thousand women indicated interest, you will find out on the day of general elections, less than 20% of that number make it through the rigorous process of the political space. What a lot of women do is, rather than go into the major political parties, they end up with fringe parties that do not have a rigorous political process and of course those fringe parties are given less than half a chance to be there."*

**What is the NBA doing to address the stereotypical and social barriers to women inclusion?**

*Response by Mr. Folarin Aluko: "There are two levels at which the NBA is addressing the issue of women's inclusiveness. The association has set up the NBA women forum to promote women's participation and serve as an avenue for addressing women related issues within the profession and to ensure that more women are included in national conversations. At the branch level, there is a health insurance scheme for lawyers generally and about 75% of subscribers are women. There is a committee that addresses violence against women. We are willing to work with the Deputy Chairman on the committee for human rights to look at laws that need to be reviewed so they have more economic impact."*

**What strategies are taken to reduce the series of protocols in accessing loans?**

*Response by Dr. Garba Bala Magaji: "60% of women businesses are in informal sectors. One strategy is getting them registered under one umbrella. Secondly is the issue of unregistered and untitled lands that could serve as collateral. The CBN is trying to come up with solutions that will help speed up access to finance. On the issue of data, If Women at grassroots can have data on the kind of activities and business they do, this will help ease the complexities associated with accessing loans. We are working on using ICT to have a collation of data on various activities. We are also looking at a mixture of grants and long-term financial aids."*

**Is it a law that women must bring a male guarantor for business loan? Why do some bank demand this?**

Response by *Dr. Garba Bala Magaji*: *There is no law that says a woman must bring a male guarantor before she receives loan. Anyone telling you this is propagating falsehood or stereotypes.*”

### **What efforts are put in place to enhance a sense of unity among women?**

*Response by Hon. Nnenna Ukeje*: *“History influences what people see as ‘normal’. The face of leadership for the longest time has been that of men. Even some women have the same mindsets. This is the time to commend YIAGA Africa. When they wanted to pass the ‘Not Too Young to Run’ Bill, they did everything. They blackmailed parliaments and put government literally on their toes until the law was passed. Women should learn a page from the YIAGA book and get laws that will favour them to be implemented.”*

### **What hinders women from sponsoring other women or getting them together and giving them means to get there?**

*Response by Hon. Nnnena Ukeje*: *There are so many initiatives and mentoring programs by women groups that are concerned with getting women involved in politics. There are also so many development partners who have conversations about encouraging women active participation in politics but at the end of the day, unless and until we have legislation that help women to actually have affirmative action, it will be a waste of time.*

### **Feedback and comments from the audience**

- Government and CSOs should focus on empowering women, who will in return empower the society
- There is need to start having data on women and areas of specializations, which will help reduce some of the stress in accessing loan individually;
- There should be intervention by the government to address the issue of financial literacy at grassroots
- Men should be engaged in the advocacy for women’s participation in economic matters
- Women are asking for equal representations, hence the need to remove all forms of barriers
- Women should advocate for the creation of inclusive work policies concerning maternity and other benefits
- The NBA should ensure the implementation of laws that will address the challenges of single mothers
- The society through culture and social norms conditions women in certain ways. It is time to change those stereotypes and narratives. Women should not be satisfied with being ‘assistants’ and ‘deputies’.
- There is the need to challenge some long-existing customs against women
- Women need to be well prepared at all levels for top positions.

# PANEL 2 Discussion: Socio-cultural Barriers: How deeply entrenched are they? How do we address them?

## Panellists

Samson Itodo, Executive Director YIAGA Africa

Agatha Nnaji, Managing Director, Geometric Power

Nkechi Onyenso, Head Corporate Services, NESG

Vera Ndanusa, Director Nigeria Women Association of Women Entrepreneurs

Ifunanya Nwandu, Lead, Solar Home Systems, Rural Electrification Agency (REA) Nigeria

Saudatu Mahdi, Executive Director, WRAPPA

The panellists focused on socio-cultural barriers to women's participation in formal and informal decision-making and economic policies. In turn, panellists answered the questions posed to them by the moderator.

## Panellists' perspectives

Samson Itodo, Executive Director YIAGA

**Moderator: What are the challenges associated with elections campaign funding for women? How can they raise funds for campaigns?**

In responding, the 'Not Too Young to Run' Campaigner made the following salient points:

- If you look at representation based on the findings of research, across Nigeria today excluding local government elections there are 1558 elective seats. One presidential seat, 469 National Assembly and 991 legislative seats. Women's representation in these seats is about 3.9%. There are only 62 women based on data from INEC in the last elections. If you look at the presidential elections, the turn out for men were about 63% women were 46.3 %. As at the day of dialogue on women's growth, Nigeria is about 1226 days to 2023 elections and realistically, there are only 24 months to run effective campaigns. The reality is, the cost of politics will not reduce.
- It would be effective if women could set up the old/new women club to support women running for elective positions.
- Build a consensus of women that will advocate for laws that advance the right of women to be well represented in every sphere of leadership positions;
- It is expedient to come up with strategies on internally generated revenues for campaigns.
- Women must join major political parties and mobilize resources at the grassroots level.

Mrs Nkechi Onyenso, Head Corporate Services, NESG

**Moderator: How can people in leadership positions open more spaces for women to climb the ladder of leadership?**

Mrs Nkechi's response is summarized below:

- Every country has laws that are discriminating against a segment of its population. 2018 code of corporate governance says boards of companies should be diversified and one of the elements of diversity mentioned is gender. However, there is no codified law in Nigeria, insisting on a percentage of women as members of boards of directors. Hence, the need to explore legal and regulatory ways that leaders could use to bring more women into the conversation.
- We need to look at the legal and regulatory ways leaders can involve more women in the conversation.
- We do come across women that feel they are not enough. There is a need to change the mindset that domestic chores are strictly for women. We need to have more mentorship programs for young women.
- Women are gifted and can perform the roles of very good entrepreneurs, good mothers, good wives and at the same time, good community leaders. But they must be allowed to exercise their rights to a good education. It is also expedient to design interventions where more women participate in training that will increase access.
- We need male champions that talk about issues that relate to women. This will help in changing socio-cultural beliefs.
- Human rights should encapsulate women's rights as well.

Mrs Vera Ndanusa, Director Nigeria Women Association of Women Entrepreneurs

**Moderator: What are the common challenges that women within your network share/what are the solutions that your network has created?**

Mrs Ndanusa shared the following realities faced by women entrepreneurs in Nigeria.

- The cultural and economic policies militating against women limit the amount of loans they can access. Women in most cultures are not permitted to inherit landed properties and large sums of money, which should serve as collateral for accessing loans. There is an urgent need for the government to focus on women entrepreneurs in Nigeria to boost the nation's GDP.
- The facilities with which to move from small to big businesses are not readily available. Most times, women are discriminated against.
- Women still face stiff exclusion in the entrepreneurial space, for instance, a businessman might be given a loan of 100million while a woman can only receive 10 million. There is the mindset that she might not be able to pay back huge loans.

Nneka Egbuna representing Mrs Agatha Nnaji, MD Geometric Power

**Moderator: How best can negative stereotypes about women be unlearned?**

In response to the question by the moderator on how best to unlearn negative stereotypes about women, Nneka a campaigner of women's rights focused on strategies she had adopted in her line of work, which can be adopted by other organizations as well. Some of them are:

- Have innovative practices that include women in development at the community level from the conceptualization phase to implementation.
- Addressing the needs of women who have been excluded in mainstream projects by ensuring women are involved in the design of local projects on skills acquisition. All through such project cycles, women are involved.

- They try to address issues around change of mindset at community levels to sensitize people on the importance of women in community development.
- They also influence laws at community levels to have quotas for women to be able to make decisions on women's development and land inheritance.
- They raise male champions who advocate for women. The issue of gender equality is not a competition. It should be properly explained so it is not misunderstood.

Hajiya Saudatu Mahdi

**Moderator: How can we tackle the issue of Gender-Based Violence?**

The women's rights activist, who due to unavoidable circumstance could not be present at the event, made her contributions via phone call. She gave a passionate scenario of gender-based violence, which is fast becoming a norm in Nigeria. A practice that affects the psychological state of mind and confidence of the victim, thereby limiting them from pursuing their dreams. She pleaded with government and NGOs alike to establish communication between abused women and organisations that provide programming content towards psychosocial and other relevant supports for sexual and gender-based violence survivors.

Ifunanya Nwandu Dozie

**Moderator: What are the challenges of women owning the space in solar energy and rural electrification?**

In her response, Ifunanya stated that women are hardly represented in the solar energy space. To bridge that gap, REA designs interventions where women have access to trainings and facilities on solar projects e.g. the Energising Education Project.

On steps to addressing deficits women face, Ifunanya stated that REA receives funding from the World Bank, which is used to implement projects across federal universities and university teaching hospitals. Within all projects, they ensure gender targets are set.

Panel Recommendations

- It would be effective if women could set up the old/new women club to support women running for elective positions-**Samson Itodo**.
- A consensus should be built among women to advocate for laws that advance the right to women in every sphere of the society - **Mrs. Nkechi Onyenso**
- Laws should be influenced at community levels so that quotas are reserved for women. This will better position women to make decisions on women's development and land inheritance - **Nneka Egbuna**
- Gender equality is not a competition. It should be properly explained so it is not misunderstood. Advocacy should be positive and productive
- Engage with the National Orientation Agency for effective orientation that women have the capability to equally participate in the economic, political and social space of Nigeria-**Mrs. Nkechi Onyenso**
- The battle for women's inclusiveness in economic growth is an age-long battle that must continue **Mrs. Vera Ndanusa**
- Have a community of practices for women on gender matters in collaboration with government. NGOs should take the lead on initiating this process- **Nneka Egbuna**
- We need more women involved in strategic mobilization and development. An example is how women strategically mobilized for the Big Brother Nigeria 2019 producing the first ever female winner of the BB Nigeria Show-**Samson Itodo**



# Contributions from Audiences/Questions and Responses

## Question from participants

### What can be done to reduce the rate of Gender-based violence?

*Response by Saudatu Mahdi: "It will take a whole range of stakeholders to curb the issue of Gender-based violence (GBV) but let me focus on the government. The first action is to work with the National Assembly, Local Government Areas and institutions on Gender-based violence, to ensure an appropriation that will finance the establishment of systems and facilities, which will enhance a connection with survivors and prosecutors of these crimes. Secondly is to connect with response institutions such as hospitals, and the provision of investigative and forensic facilities. The first task would be for the government to show an understanding of GBV through their annual budget to appropriate and finance the establishment of credible and good investigation facilities. Another solution is to build capacity so as to produce properly educated human rights activists who will help in the profiling of gender-based violence survivors.*

*The second thing that the government can do is to repeal or amend obnoxious provisions in our laws which allow people to escape punishment. For example, when you come to the penal code, men justify that it is ok to rape their wives. Or the definition of offenses where one is a felony and the other a misdemeanour. So, we need to amend sections of the penal and criminal code. We also need to see how this negatively affects accountability and encourages impunity. The government needs to enforce judgments that have been given in courts.*

*We need to ensure sustained training that is government-led. The judicial institutions at the state and federal level will not permit certain trainings without approval or their partner are with them. Graduating lawyers also need to be trained so they are aware. We need to sustain education and capacity building so that we understand how to interface with the survivors of Gender-Based Violence."*

### What possible carrots and sticks could be applied in reducing child marriages?

*Response by Hajiya Saudatu Mahdi: "I believe we should first talk about the issue of balancing the challenge of unpaid work without jeopardizing future generations.*

*It is just a game of balancing nature and the future. What I think we must do in that regard is to avoid a situation where we play down the unpaid work because we want to gain more. Women need to know how to balance between what are their natural or perceived natural roles. As career women who want to consolidate the future of our daughters, we must spend quality time with our family. We also need to strengthen our support systems. Neighbours and colleagues are good support systems. Women should be able to preserve their rights to their careers and also discharge their responsibilities as quality mothers, wives and members of their society.*

*In response to carrots and sticks for reducing early marriages, we need to understand what informs early marriage. It is mostly based on poverty but there has been lots of push back in terms of understanding the jurisprudence that allows for it. It is expedient to also understand the perceptions around it and put down the fact that the right to choose and the right to a quality life are both constitutional and faith-based. We need to look at the nexus between*



*what is the practice for the common good and social order and how it affects progress in society. Looking at the carrots and sticks situation. The carrot situation is about what we can do to encourage people to stop the practice. We also need to look at regulation. WRAPA has been working in the last twelve years to get regulations around early marriage. The first carrot is to encourage dialogue. Let us dialogue with knowledgeable persons who can suggest the basics and the solutions. In the past, if the practice was acceptable as productive, is it tenable today? If it is not tenable, why? Again in the area of education and reduction of poverty. Girls should have access to education and delay marriage. schools should not discourage them from going to classes when they are on their menstrual cycles. We should also look at a carrot situation where there are incentives that recognize parents who encourage girl-child education. Community participation is also another carrot. The legislation is one way but it could be counterproductive. We should also be able to enforce the salient points of the Child Rights Act and the Gender-based violence legislation. We also need to encourage male gender champions who are discouraging early marriage.*

**Is there anything that can be done to use the legislation to address the issue of educating the girl child?**

*Response by Mrs. Nkechi Onyenso: "That is what the Nigeria Economic Summit Group wants to do. We have a community of practice for gender matters. Although not an NGO, we intend to bring in various NGOs, CSOs, and organizations that deal with women related issues. We will articulate these issues and come up with policy documents then collaborate with the senate, business associations, the NBA to come up with policy recommendations that will address issues pertaining to with women. We are hoping to look at the issue of female education and empowerment by working with TET FUND to improve education generally."*

**What factors have been put in place to address the challenges faced by women in the entrepreneurial space?**

*Response by Mrs. Vera Ndanusa: "We have encouraged a lot of women to be technologically empowered so they can advertise their businesses online via social media. We have also networked with the government to reduce the cumbersome nature of accessing micro-credit. We have also ensured that financial institutions no longer require landed properties as collaterals. We are currently in the process of establishing a federation of old women entrepreneurs in Nigeria for easy interfacing with the government and financial institutions. We have also made NAFDAC reduce the cost of product registration."*

**Will the formation of old boys'/girls' clubs have positive impacts?**

*Response by Samson Itodo: Such associations exist, for instance, the Nigeria Women Trust Fund and Women in Politics Forum. These are platforms that are grooming women to be involved in strategic development. There is also the need to translate it into real support for women who want to run for political offices. The lesson from the Big Brother Africa reality TV show, where women collectively campaigned and voted for a fellow woman to emerge, as the winner is an example. Women can to collectively influence policies in Nigeria if this model is adopted.*

**Feedback and comments from the audience**

- There is the need to go back to the grass root using radio jingles in native languages, to change the narrative and let the world know that women are not weak.
- To have a community of practices for women on gender matters in collaboration with government, private organizations, and NGOs.
- Organizations to collaborate with the National Orientation Agency to change negative narratives about women.

- Women should join political parties, not just as members but aspire to hold substantive leadership positions in the parties.
- Women need to start speaking the right language and talking to the right people. At the end of the day, politics determines everything and where there is no political power, there is a limit to what can be achieved.
- Women need to be within the right strategic walls. There should be more women in male-dominated agencies and industries.

### Key Issues and Lessons From Panel – Discussions/Conclusion

In conclusion, Dr Titilola Akindeinde gave a recap of the issues and lessons learned from the panel discussions. These issues were

- Gender-based violence
- Access to land
- Girl child education
- Access to finance
- Negative stereotypes
- Access to solar electrification

She stated *“if Nigeria is to develop and become the Nigeria of our dream then we need to include every single member of our economy. That means those with disabilities, youth, and women”* She announced that this is the first of the series of Inclusive Growth Dialogues organised by PDF II with more to come in the near future.

She encouraged participants to intelligently begin to positively advocate for women inclusive governance. Women's inclusiveness in economic activities will enhance economic growth and development. If more women are added to the workplace, contributing their quota, children will have better outcomes health-wise and in other human development indices. Where the family income is augmented, cultural and religious barriers can be surmounted.

She concluded by appealing to participants to think about what they can do to change the narrative and policies about women by first making a commitment using the commitment forms designed by PDF II.

The event ended at 1:30 pm.