



## **POLICY BRIEF:**

# **Advancing Gender Equality In Nigeria Through The Women's Voice And Leadership-nigeria Project**

The WVL-N project is implemented by ActionAid with funding by Global Affairs Canada. This policy brief provides a comprehensive overview of the project's achievements and offers actionable recommendations for continued progress in Gender Equality in Nigeria.



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# Executive Summary

The Women's Voice and Leadership Nigeria (WVL - Nigeria) project is a five-year project funded by Global Affairs Canada. The project is aimed at tackling the barriers to gender equality and supporting the empowerment of women and girls through provision of financial and technical resources to local feminist/women's rights organizations in Nigeria. This intervention is designed to respond to the challenges faced by these organizations in their efforts to eliminate discrimination and rights violations in policy and legislation and the provision of services, as well as harmful social beliefs and practices.

Through this project, ActionAid Nigeria has provided demonstrable evidence of its capability to effectively manage sub-granting initiatives. This is being done through the provision of multiple layers of funding and tailored capacity building support to these organizations.

The Women's Voice and Leadership-Nigeria (WVL-N) project has been pivotal in addressing gender inequality and empowering women and girls across Nigeria.

Over the past five years, WVL-N has provided critical financial and technical support to over 100 Local Women's Rights Organizations (LWROs), Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), networks and movements across six states:

- Bauchi,
- Cross River,
- Enugu,
- Kebbi,
- Kwara
- Lagos
- and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT)

This policy brief highlights the key advocacy achievements of the WVL-N project and offers recommendations for sustaining and advancing gender equality in Nigeria.





# Description Of The Problem

Despite marginal progress, gender inequality remains a significant challenge in Nigeria. Women and girls face various forms of discrimination, violence, barriers to political participation, restricted economic opportunities, as well as sexual and reproductive health issues. Harmful social norms and systemic barriers further exacerbate these issues.

WVL-N, through its extensive network of partners, has initiated and influenced several policies aimed at advancing gender equality focusing on the issues along the project's thematic areas:



## **Women's Economic Empowerment:**

Economic empowerment remains a significant hurdle for Nigerian women. Despite their critical role in the economy, they are often relegated to low-paying, informal jobs without social protection. Across the nation, women have limited access to education, skills training, resources, financial services, and markets, resulting in higher rates of poverty compared to men.



## **Gender-based violence:**

In Nigeria, women and girls are the primary victims of violence, both in public and private spaces. GBV manifests in various forms including domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape and harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage. This not only violates their human rights but also has profound physical, psychological, and economic impacts on survivors, which limits them from participating fully in society.



## **Women's political participation and leadership:**

Women are still under-represented in political and leadership positions in Nigeria. Cultural norms, lack of supportive legislation, and political violence discourage women from participating in politics. The low number of women in decision-making positions further hinders the advancement of gender-sensitive policies and legislation.



## **Sexual and reproductive health rights:**

Women face significant barriers in accessing sexual and reproductive health services in Nigeria. Limited access to healthcare, lack of comprehensive sexual education, and restrictive laws on reproductive rights contribute to poor health outcomes for women and girls. These barriers are compounded by cultural and religious beliefs that stigmatize sexual and reproductive health issues.



## **Socio-inclusion of the elderly:**

Elderly women in Nigeria face social and economic exclusion, with limited access to healthcare, social services, and economic opportunities. As caregivers and heads of households, many of them often bear significant responsibilities but receive minimal support, making their inclusion in social and economic programs crucial for their well-being.

The WVL-Nigeria project was intentional about addressing these multifaceted issues of gender inequality from a policy perspective.



# Policy Actions And Achievements Of The WVL-N

Through its partners, the WVL-N project has advocated for a range of policies aimed at eliminating discrimination and promoting women's rights. These include the Violence against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Law, Child Rights Law, Disability Rights Law, gender policies for universities and political parties, and various action plans addressing women, peace, and security. These have been listed below, under the respective states and the FCT.

## Key Achievements by State

### 1: Bauchi State

- Passage of the VAPP Bill and Child Rights Act into law.

### 2: Enugu State

- Provision of increased publicity for the VAPP Law to improve awareness
- Training on the VAPP Law for law enforcement and prosecutors.

### 3: Cross River State

- Drafting and submission of the VAPP Law.
- Establishment of a Taxation and Levy policy to support grassroots market women.
- Development of Disability Rights Law and
- Development of the state Gender Policy and Strategic Framework.

### 4. Federal Capital Territory (FCT)

- Advocacy to the National Assembly on Gender Equal Opportunity Bills.
- Support for 35% Affirmative Action for women in party administration and political appointments.
- Development of Gender Policies for five universities.
- Technical support for the implementation of gender and disability policies in schools.
- Support for the passage of the Electoral Bill Act, update of the INEC Gender Policy and the development of gender-friendly constitution for political parties.
- Support for the implementation of the National Gender Policy on Agriculture, land rights act; and advocacy for cattle damage insurance policy for farmers, including women.

### 5. Kebbi State:

- Establishment of committees to develop GBV safeguarding strategies for schools.
- Translation of the State Penal Code into Hausa, and dissemination of same across 170 communities.
- Passage of the VAPP Bill into law.
- Campaign for the implementation of the HIV/AIDS acts in public places



## 5: Kwara State

- Passage of the Violence against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Law.
- Enactment of the Child Rights Law.
- Development and implementation of the State Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (UNSCR 1325).
- Submission of the Gender Equality Bill.

## 6. Lagos State

- Advocacy for five gender bills, including 35% Affirmative Action for women in party administration and political appointments, equal citizenship rights, indigeneship bills
- Domestication of the Maputo Protocol on women's rights in Africa.
- Implementation of the Lagos State Health Insurance Scheme (Ilera Eko) benefiting the elderly.





# Key Policy Recommendation for the Future

The following recommendations will further build on the achievements of the WVL-N project and ensure sustainable progress:

## 01

### **Strengthening Legal Frameworks:**

- Continue advocating for the passage and implementation of gender equality bills at the state and federal levels.
- Ensure rigorous enforcement of existing laws such as the VAPP Law and Child Rights Law.
- Promote the domestication of international protocols like the Maputo Protocol.

## 02

### **Enhancing Women's Political Participation:**

- Promote the implementation of 35% Affirmative Action in political parties and public offices.
- Support capacity-building initiatives for women leaders and political aspirants.

## 03

### **Economic Empowerment:**

- Advocate for policies that provide financial inclusion and economic opportunities for women, including access to credit and land rights.
- Support initiatives that enhance market access for women entrepreneurs.
- Expand VSLA schemes and skills acquisition programs to more communities.

## 04

### **Combating Gender-Based Violence:**

- Expand awareness campaigns and training programs for law enforcement and judiciary on GBV laws.
- Strengthen support services for GBV survivors, including legal aid, healthcare, and psychosocial support.
- Enhance community-based GBV prevention and response mechanisms.

## 05

### **Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights**

- Advocate for comprehensive sexual education and accessible reproductive health services, especially in rural areas.
- Implement policies that ensure women's autonomy over their reproductive choices.

## 06

### **Socio-Inclusion of the Elderly:**

- Promote policies that provide social protection and healthcare services for elderly women.
- Ensure the inclusion of elderly women in social and economic programs.



# Conclusion

With the support of the Women's Voice and Leadership-Nigeria project, feminist and women's rights organisations have made significant strides in advocating for gender equality for women and girls in Nigeria. However, continued efforts and sustained advocacy are essential to build on these achievements and create a more equitable society.

With intentionality and focus in implementing the recommended policies, Nigeria can advance the rights and well-being of women and girls, ensuring their full participation in all aspects of society.







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