



**INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF
WOMEN LAWYERS (FIDA)**

**FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DES FEMMES JURISTES
FEDERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE ABOGADAS**



REPORT *of* **AFRICA REGIONAL CONGRESS 2023 ABUJA, NIGERIA**

**THEME: MAPUTO PROTOCOL AND WOMEN IN AFRICA:
DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AS A VITAL TOOL FOR ACCELERATION**

**Edited by Joy Ejim, Ezinwa Okoroafor, Chigoziri Ojiaka,
Chimdimdu Onyedim-Etuwewe, & Laura Nyirinkindi.**

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**AFRICA REGIONAL CONGRESS
2023 ABUJA, NIGERIA**

FIDA REGIONAL CONGRESS 2023 ABUJA, NIGERIA

THEME: MAPUTO PROTOCOL AND WOMEN IN AFRICA: DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AS A VITAL TOOL FOR ACCELERATION.

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PART 1

OPENING CEREMONY

MAPUTO PROTOCOL @ 20: THE JOURNEY SO FAR

**GENDER JUSTICE AND RULE OF LAW –
THE PLACE OF TECHNOLOGY & INCLUSION**

ICT & DIGITAL EDUCATION: THE WAY FORWARD

**PROMOTING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT
THROUGH TECHNOLOGY, INFORMATION & FINANCE**

HEALTH IS WEALTH

FIRESIDE CHAT

CLOSING

FOREWORD

I am delighted and feel greatly honoured at the invitation extended to me by the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Africa Region, to write the foreword to this book chronicling the proceedings of the 2023 FIDA Africa Regional Congress with the theme: **Maputo Protocol and Women in Africa: Digital Technology as a Vital Tool for Acceleration.**

The plight of women and children in Africa is worrisome and gender equality remains elusive as women continue to fall behind in socio-economic advancement. The International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) has proven to be an ardent campaigner/contributor towards ensuring that women and girls are rescued from gender-based violence, cultural inhibitions, societal and institutional discrimination, poverty and other vices that plague our societies. This it has done on a national, regional and international levels.

As lawyers, FIDA employs the law as a veritable tool towards the protection of women's human rights; promoting their socio-economic, political, and technological advancement, as well as improving their participation in the digital space.

The book is divided into two parts. Part 1 is divided into eight chapters comprising the keynote speech; the presentations and discussions on the effectiveness of the Maputo Protocol and enforcement of rights within the African Courts, including the ECOWAS courts and other regional courts; the impact of technology in accelerating gender equality and economic rights; the role of African institutions in making the benefits of both the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) and Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa (AFAWA) a reality for Africa's women and girls. Part 2 contains the Country Reports of the various country branches, highlighting their activities and achievements.

The book proffers solutions to the challenges confronting women in Africa, including gender-based violence, digital illiteracy, poverty, and lack of access to technology and finance tools. It also contains some elegantly structured outcome documents that are very informative and quite enlightening. This is a clear demonstration of the determination by all FIDA Country Branches in Africa to build a strong network of partnership, cooperation, and collaboration.

I recommend the adopted strategies and recommendations to all development institutions, policymakers, researchers, and African leaders, as a working document towards the actualisation of gender parity that will foster social change and economic advancement.

Yakubu Chonoko Maikyau, OON, SAN

President, Nigerian Bar Association
2022 – 2024



ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We wish to express our profound gratitude to all those who contributed to the success of the triennial FIDA Africa Regional Congress held in Abuja, Nigeria between 24th - 27th August, 2023, with the theme, **"Maputo Protocol And Women In Africa: Digital Technology As A Vital Tool For Acceleration."**

First and foremost, we extend our heartfelt thanks to our esteemed Keynote Speaker, Her Excellency Erelu Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi (Co-Founder, African Women's Development Fund and Former First Lady Ekiti State, Nigeria), whose inspiring address set the tone for our discussions and motivated us to explore the critical role of digital technology in advancing women's rights across Africa.

We are also incredibly grateful to Chief (Mrs.) Victoria Awomolo SAN, who graciously accepted to stand in for the Chairperson Ms. Beatrice Eyong, UN Women Resident Representative to Nigeria and ECOWAS who was unavoidably absent due to certain exigencies, and to the other dignitaries, including:

Mrs. Ezinwa Okoroafor, International Director FIDA, representing the International President of FIDA, Carolina Rios Villota, Honourable Inime Aguma, FIDA UN Rep., Mrs. Gladys Mbuya FIDA Historian/CVP FIDA Cameroun, Ms. Grace Orshio Esq., representing ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, Ms Farida Kaita, representing His Excellency Ambassador Nuhu Sani, Nigeria's Permanent Representative to the ECOWAS, the President of the Nigerian Bar Association, Mr. Yakubu C. Maikyau SAN, Past International Officers and Regional Vice Presidents of FIDA Mrs. Mercy Agbamuche, Madam Stella Omiyi, Hon. Justice Elsie Thompson, Mrs. Roseline Nwosu, and Hajia Laraba Shua'ibu, as well as Heads of Delegations/Country Vice Presidents of FIDA Nigeria Mrs. Amina Agbaje, Uganda Eunice Musiime, Cote D'Ivoire Ms. Francine Aka Anghui, Ethiopia Ms Lensa Biyena Geleta, South Africa Ms. Nomaswazi Shabangu-Mndawe and Zanzibar Jamila Juma, Hajia Fatima Kwaku FIDA Nigeria BoT Member, Dr. Rosemary Chikwendu and Mrs. Meg Nwagbo, both Council Members of the Institute of Chartered Mediators and Conciliators, Mr. Bayo Akinlade, Secretary, Nigerian Law Society, and Rev. (Mrs.) Gracefilled Uche, who all graced the opening ceremony with their esteemed presence. Your support and encouragement provided invaluable recognition to our efforts and underscored the importance of our theme.

We deeply appreciate the Host Country Branch, FIDA Nigeria, the indefatigable Congress Planning Committee headed by Mrs. Eliana Martins FIDA Nigeria National Secretary with Mrs. Rekia Andrew Adejo as Alternate Chair, FIDA Nigeria National Secretariat Staff and Support Team Members, for their tireless dedication and meticulous organization in bringing this event to fruition.

Also, the Coordinators, Dr. Chigoziri Ojiaka (Past National Secretary FIDA Nigeria), Mrs. Rhoda Tyoden (Immediate Past Country Vice President FIDA Nigeria), Mrs. Evelyn Asimea (Deputy Country Vice President FIDA Nigeria), Prof. Felicia Anyogu (Past Chairperson FIDA Nigeria, Enugu State Branch) Ms. Chibuzo Nwosu (Chairperson FIDA Nigeria, FCT, Abuja Branch), Mrs. Lizzy Akah (Former Vice Chairperson FIDA Lagos), Ms. Gertrude Onyewuche (Former Fin. Secretary FIDA Lagos), and Mrs. Adejoke Layi-Babatunde (FIDA Int'l Editorial Board Member), are highly appreciated for efficiently coordinating the various segments of the Congress. The depth of devotion exhibited was very inspiring.

A special thank you goes to all the distinguished speakers including Hon. Justice (Prof.) Elizabeth Ama Oji, Mfon Usoro Esq., Mr. Ayodeji Adelokun, Prof. Chukwudi Odoeme representing Dr. Monday Ubani, SAN and Abimo Toyosi Esq., together with the esteemed moderators, who shared their insights and expertise throughout the Congress. Your contributions greatly enriched our sessions and fostered meaningful dialogue on key issues affecting women and technology in our region.

To all the over 500 respectable participants amongst whom were very senior members of our association, thank you for your active engagement and enthusiasm. Your willingness to share your experiences and knowledge significantly shaped the success of the Congress. Together, we have created a vibrant forum for learning and collaboration.

We would also like to express our deepest gratitude to our supporters especially our gold, platinum and diamond, corporate and individual sponsors like GZ Industries Limited, Jardin Nig. Ltd., CEO Lawbreed Limited, Competition and Consumer Protection Tribunal, Chief R. A. Lawal-Rabana SAN, Hon. Inime Aguma, Mazi Afam Osigwe SAN, HRM Olori Funmi Oluyede, Hon. Jerry Alagbaoso, Rev. Pastor Ejikeme Ejim, Mrs. Funke Agbor SAN, Mr. Chukwuka Ikwuazom SAN, Mrs. Titi Akilawon SAN, Chief Emmanuel Osuala Nwagbara, Hon. Ralph Nwosu, Sir Adejo Andrew, and others too numerous to mention, whose generous support made the gathering possible. Your commitment to promoting women's rights and advancing gender equality in Africa is commendable and instrumental in driving the agenda forward.

The Chairman of the closing dinner/award night and FIDA Patron, Asiwaju Adegboyega S. Awomolo SAN is reverently acknowledged for his sterling leadership and guidance, which brought our Congress to a celebratory conclusion. His words of encouragement inspired us all to stay committed to our mission.

A heartfelt thank you is also owed to the media and publicity team of Mrs. Abiola Laseinde, Mrs. Lilian Okenwa and Mrs. Chioma Onyenucheya-Uko, for their exceptional work in capturing and promoting our event, ensuring that our message reached a wider audience and that the importance of our work is broadcasted effectively.

Our sincere appreciation extends to the rapporteurs led by Mrs. Chimdindu Onyedim-Etuwewe (Secretary Congress Planning Committee), Dr. Princess Chukwuani, Mrs. Ogechi Abu, Mrs Ngozi Onyia, Mrs. Ngozi Ajogwu, Mrs. Dorcas Abah, Mrs. Uche Ogwu, Ms. Charity Ibezim, Ms. Chisom Ihekweba, Mrs. Mojirayo Ogunlana-Nkanga, Ms. Rita Lasoku and Ms. Love Obiezu, who meticulously documented our discussions, resolutions and commitments, ensuring that the lessons shared during the event are preserved for future reference and action.

We must not fail to appreciate Mr. Oladotun Adeogun Managing Director of Hallmark Insurance HMO Health Services Limited, for providing free health checks to the participants, the Management of Gwarimpa General Hospital for facilitating our visit to the FIDA adopted maternity ward of the hospital and Mr. Daniel Tehgow the Aerobics Instructor who ensured that the delegates engaged in physical exercises to keep fit.

Dr. Musa Olaofe the Chief Imam of Ansarudeen Central Mosque, Wuse, Abuja and Rev. Chinedu Muodebe the Minister in charge of Assemblies of God National Worship Center, Abuja, are deeply appreciated for conducting Jummat Service for Muslim participants and the Thanksgiving Church Service for the Christian delegates respectively, all aimed at the spiritual upliftment of the delegates.

The Editorial Team comprising Joy Ejim, Ezinwa Okoroafor, Chigoziri Ojiaka, Chimdindu Onyedim Etuwewe and Laura Nyirinkindi, with Chidinma Adanma Onuoha and Austin Oseh contributing, as well as Paul Ezeani the design artist, deserves special mention for painstakingly compiling and vetting the entire report.

Finally, our greatest and most profound gratitude rests with our families (husbands, children, parents, siblings and other members of our households) whose tremendous support we do not take for granted. We wholeheartedly acknowledge that their support is an enabling factor that contributes effectively to our service to humanity.

As we continue to strive for a future where the rights of women in Africa are recognised and respected, we look forward to harnessing the power of digital technology to accelerate progress and achieve their rights as enshrined in the Maputo Protocol.

We thank you all for being part of this significant journey.

Mrs. Joy C. Ejim
RVP Africa (North & West)

FACULTY LEADS



Carolina Rios Villota
FIDA International President



Mrs. Joy C. Ejim (Formerly Ezeigbo)
FIDA Africa Regional Vice President
(North & West)
Host



Laura Nyirinkindi
FIDA Africa Regional Vice President
(East & Southern Region)
Co-Host



Chief (Mrs.) Victoria Awomolo
Senior Advocate Of Nigeria
Chairperson, Congress Opening Ceremony



Her Excellency Erelu Bisi Fayemi
Former First Lady, Ekiti State
- Keynote Speaker



Asiwaju Adegboyega Awomolo
Senior Advocate Of Nigeria
FIDA Patron & Chairman FIDA Africa Regional
Congress 2023 Closing Dinner

FIDA ANTHEM

Verse 1.

FIDA serves to bring Liberation
To all men in Contemplation
To enhance our world together
Is our noble goal for a richer life.

Verse 2.

We bring light, through Education
To dislodge deeds of ignorance
With the tools of right Conviction
By the Law and Equity combined

Verse 3.

FIDA Stands for all the Children
FIDA Stands for equal Justice
FIDA Stands for all our Women
Who will rise to have their best for all
Who will rise to have their best for all
Who will rise..... to have their
best..... for..... all.....

WOMEN'S ANTHEM

1. All Across the Nation
All Around the World
Women are longing to be free
No longer in the Shadows
Forced to stay behind
But side by side in true Equality

2. Women can't be silent
When around the world
People hurt and hungry children cry
We'll sing out now for Justice and
Development And hold the
Rights of all the People High

Refrain

So, sing a song for Women
everywhere Let it ring around the
world and never, never cease,
So sing a song for Women
everywhere, Equality,
Development and Peace

Refrain

3. Women now are working
to build a better world
Where the love of Peace
can rest on every shore
Where men lay down their
weapons
and learn to love and share
And People work to bring an end to
War

Refrain

Chapter One
OPENING CEREMONY

1.1. INTRODUCTION - ABOUT FIDA

We are the International Federation of Women Lawyers, FIDA.

FIDA is the acronym for “Federación Internacional de Abogadas” which is the Spanish version of our organization’s name. FIDA was founded in 1944 in Mexico by a group of seven women lawyers from Cuba, El Salvador, Mexico, Puerto Rico and United States of America and has expanded to over seventy countries in all the regions of the world, Africa inclusive. FIDA is a Non-Governmental, Non-Profit Organization made up of women called to the practice of Law in various jurisdictions across the world. At the global level, FIDA has a consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) while FIDA Africa has an Observer Status with the African Union, at the continental level.

MISSION: FIDA’s mission is primarily the promotion, protection, preservation and enhancement of the rights, interests and well-being of women and children through the employment of legal frameworks, advocacy, rights awareness creation, sensitization campaigns and lobbying etc., to ensure that vulnerable groups especially women and children live free from all forms of discrimination, violence, and abuse in the society.

VISION: FIDA envisages a just, peaceful, equitable and egalitarian society where women and children’s rights and interests are guaranteed, and they have the freedom to choose and live their own future.

FIDA’s Objectives Include the following:

1. To enhance and champion the welfare of women and children, realising that the happiness of the home and strength of the society are dependent on the well-being of women and
2. To promote the principles and aims of the United Nations in their legal and social
3. To establish friendly international relations based on equality and mutual respect for all
4. To promote the study of comparative law.
5. To proffer advice to the government in all cases of neglect relating to women and
6. To advance the opportunities available to women and children in civic life, politics, education, industry, business, and the professions particularly the legal
7. To organize women lawyers nationally, regionally, and internationally to mobilize them for an effective strategy towards achieving set

Main Activities:

FIDA actively pursues, promotes, and organizes projects and programmes revolving around the following priority themes:

- Women & Children's Rights, Equality, Development, Education.
- Eradication of Prostitution & Human Trafficking, Sexual & Gender-based
- Abolition of Harmful Traditional Practices including Widowhood
- Promotion of Peace & Security and Economic Empowerment of

In order to actualize her mission and achieve her objectives, FIDA identifies, networks, cooperates and partners with other non-governmental organizations with similar ideals. We also collaborate with governmental agencies and institutions in our engagement.

Some of the Agencies and Government Institutions which FIDA Africa has partnered with in the various countries where FIDA has presence include The UN Women, World Bank, African Union, ECOWAS Secretariat, DFID, Commonwealth Secretariat, Ford Foundation, S. Embassy, Australian Embassy, Japanese Embassy, French Embassy, European Union, Mc Arthur Foundation, Ministries/Departments/Agencies of Governments & IPAS etc.

On 24th - 27th August, 2023, the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) held her African Regional Congress in commemoration of the Maputo Protocol at 20 with the theme; "MAPUTO PROTOCOL AND WOMEN IN AFRICA: DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AS A VITAL TOOL FOR ACCELERATION"

The event which brought together, Female Lawyers, Professionals and Key Stakeholders from Nigeria, Uganda, Cameroun, Cote D'Ivoire, Ethiopia, South Africa and Zanzibar, was an opportunity for participants to dialogue, air their views/vision on the interplay between the rights guaranteed in the Maputo Protocol and how they can be enhanced using digital technology.

The Congress showcased a vibrant agenda aimed at fostering empowerment and collaboration. The programme began with a welcome cocktail, setting a warm tone for the opening ceremony that followed. The attendees participated in five engaging plenary sessions, where discussions centered on critical legal and social issues facing women in Africa. The Congress also featured a cultural night celebration, along with a formal dinner and an awards night honouring distinguished supporters and partners. To promote health and wellness, participants enjoyed aerobic exercise sessions and had access to free health checks.

The agenda also featured a visit to the FIDA-adopted maternity ward at Gwarimpa General Hospital, Abuja. That visit allowed participants to engage directly with healthcare providers and new mothers, providing a unique opportunity to understand the challenges faced in maternal health care. The delegates were able to donate some items apart from financial support, share knowledge, and discuss legal rights related to maternal health. Additionally, the programme included an economic empowerment initiative targeting indigent women, along with enriching spiritual activities such as Jumat Prayer and Church Services for Moslem and Christian participants, respectively.

The Congress was concluded with a robust conversation on **“THE FIDA AFRICA OF OUR DREAMS,”** during which the Regional Vice Presidents, alongside other panellists expressed their shared vision for a more united and formidable platform to amplify their voices at the regional level.

This multi-faceted event not only emphasized the importance of leveraging digital technology to advance legal advocacy and improve access to justice, but also re-enforced the commitment to uplift and empower women across the continent.

1.2. WELCOME TO 2023 FIDA AFRICA REGIONAL CONGRESS!!!

**Distinguished Personalities, Colleagues,
Friends & Supporters of Women,**



Mrs. Joy C. Ejim (Formerly Ezeigbo)
Regional Vice President Africa (North & West)

I consider it a great honour and privilege to welcome this distinguished audience to the 2023 International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Africa Regional Congress, holding here in Abuja, Nigeria. The Africa Regional Congress is a triennial event which usually offers a significant opportunity for us FIDA members to converge, interact, exchange information, and share lessons. We also get to learn new strategies that will help us in actualizing our mission and continue with our campaigns as well as various activities geared towards improving the status and overall well-being of women and children in the Continent.

It is pertinent to state that FIDA Africa under the auspices of FIDA International exists to connect, collaborate, support, encourage and engage FIDA members across Africa to focus on FIDA's mission. This is to promote, protect, and preserve the rights, interests and well-being of women and children in our societies through the instrumentality of the law. By building a strong and vibrant platform that speaks to issues at the regional or continental levels and collaborating across divides to promote regional cooperation and deepen continental integration, FIDA Africa strives to meet this need.

Women and girls have lagged behind in terms of rights recognition and socio-economic advancement. Undoubtedly, the Covid-19 pandemic worsened their plight, particularly in the poorer regions of the world. This situation therefore highlights the need to promote their socio-economic and legal rights as a means of enhancing overall societal wellbeing. In many regions plagued by inadequate resources, the use of digital tools minimized the challenges associated with providing social services to the citizens. Indeed, it is observed that digital technology usage is intensifying, and proactive governments and institutions are building the capacity of their workforces to become more technology savvy in order to address the gaps in social welfare. FIDA Africa is not left out as it is also prioritizing the needs of women and girls who continue to be impacted heavily by the pandemic and other issues .

The theme of the Africa Regional Congress, **“MAPUTO PROTOCOL AND WOMEN IN AFRICA: DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AS A VITAL TOOL FOR ACCELERATION”** has been carefully chosen to reflect the mood of the moment. The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, better known as the Maputo Protocol, was adopted by the African Union in July 2003. It is considered to be one of the most progressive instruments internationally in terms of providing for and protecting the human rights of women and girls. As the Protocol hits the 20-year mark, the Congress is an appropriate forum to deliberate on “Maputo Protocol @ 20: An Assessment of the Past, Present and Future”. In recognition of the vital role of technology in advancing the interests of women and girls in Africa in today’s world, the Congress will focus on the interplay between the rights guaranteed in the Protocol and how they can be enhanced using digital technology. We will consequently, also deliberate on other interesting topical subjects including but not limited to the following:

- **Gender Justice & the Rule of Law: The Place of Inclusion and Digital Technology.**
- **Promoting Gender Equality & Women’s Empowerment Through Digital Technology; Information and Finance Strategies.**
- **ICT & Digital Education: The Way Forward;**
- **Education, Using Cutting-Edge Technology: A Sine Qua Non for Gender Equality in Africa;**
- **Violence Against Women: Is Digitalization Accelerating Prevention and Protection?;**
- **Engaging Men & Women Towards Gender Equity, Equality & Inclusion in the Public Space;**
- **Unlocking the Power of Digital Branding, Building Online Presence & Strategies for Protection Against Cyber-Bullying/Digital Pornography;**
- **Understanding the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA).**
- **Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa (AFAWA).**

Improving women’s rights is a precursor to their overall advancement in socio-economic and political spheres. The rise in technology tools offers a glaring opportunity to accelerate the robust empowerment of women and girls in Africa.

Thus, FIDA appreciates the need to leverage digital tools to improve women’s participation. Indeed, FIDA is already making giant strides in this regard, to enhance cooperation with various actors in the continent, including regional/national/local FIDA chapters, national governments, civil society organisations, the private sector and international and local donor agencies.

We can only get better as we engage through the instrumentality of fora such as this Congress.

As we participate in the 2023 Africa Regional Congress therefore, let us reflect on the trajectory of FIDA Africa's journey. Let us consider how we as individuals or corporate bodies can intentionally be at the frontiers of accelerating the empowerment of African women and girls and ultimately, the world at large.

We have come a long way both literally and figuratively. As lawyers who are charged with the premium responsibility of promoting the welfare of the vulnerable amongst us, we have a duty to our beliefs, passion and ethos as well as our profession, to take decisive action.

The time to do so is now!

Welcome to the 2023 FIDA Africa Regional Congress.
Long live the Women and Girls of Africa! Long Live FIDA Africa!



1.2. A WORD FROM THE CO-HOST



Laura Nyirinkindi,
Fida Regional Vice President Africa
(East & Southern Region)

Dear Distinguished Guests & Deligates,

July 11, 2023 marked the 20th anniversary of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, popularly referred to as the Maputo Protocol. The Maputo Protocol is a landmark treaty on the African continent that was passed by African Heads of States and Governments with high participation from women's civil society organisations and women's groups. The result was one of the most comprehensive treaties on women's rights globally, as it incorporates women's rights to peace, the prohibition on harmful practices like Female Genital Mutilation, women's reproductive rights, a healthy environment and the rights of widows.

It is against the background of the commemoration of the Maputo Protocol 20th anniversary that FIDA Africa under the auspices of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA International) is convening the Africa Regional Conference in Abuja, Nigeria. We are excited to host women lawyers from our country FIDA chapters to attend this conference.

Our membership comprises of women lawyers from diverse backgrounds in the Government, NGO and Corporate Sector and will provide rich insights into how the Maputo Protocol can and has advanced women's rights in Africa, tying this to the value returns of ditigal advancements that have accelerated or elevated their work in the different spheres. We say to you, Ndewo, Barka da zuwa, Kaabo, Akwaba, Wamukelekile, Karibu, Bienvenue, Bem-vindo and Welcome!

1.3. CHAIRPERSON'S SPEECH AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN LAWYERS (FIDA) AFRICA REGIONAL CONGRESS, ABUJA, NIGERIA 25TH AUGUST, 2023.



Chief (Mrs.) Victoria Awomolo
Senior Advocate Of Nigeria.
Chairperson, Congress Opening Ceremony

THEME: MAPUTO PROTOCOL AND WOMEN IN AFRICA DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AS A VITAL TOOL FOR ACCELERATION.

Protocols.

It is with great pleasure that I accept to be the Chairperson of this opening Ceremonies. Thanks to the RVPs and members.

The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People Rights on the rights of women in Africa, also known as the Maputo Protocol on women's Rights provides comprehensive rights for women and girls in Africa.

The protocol (2003) guarantees extensive rights to women, including the right to take part in political processes, to social and political equality with men, improved autonomy in their reproductive rights and decisions, an end to harmful traditional practices and so on. The Protocol is considered as one of the most comprehensive and progressive human rights instruments globally. As at June 2023, 44 out of 55 African union members' States had ratified the Protocol as we mark the 20th anniversary.

The theme of this Congress 'Maputo Protocol and Women in Africa Digital Technology as a vital Tool for Acceleration' recognizes the importance of the rights of women and girls as encapsulated in the Protocol and seeks to accelerate impact through digital technology, which is a developmental tool in this modern age and time.

The use of technology cannot be over emphasized as we move to sincerely appropriate the provision of the Protocol. Women and girls all over Africa must be computer literate and sensitized in the use of computers, social media platforms and so be economically, socially alert. Online businesses and visibility are essential now; otherwise the focal point of the Protocol will be left not actualized, or sustainable.

Women in Africa remain largely vulnerable, omitted in decision making at all levels of government and even privately, due to cultural influences and religion. With sufficient technology experience, information can be obtained freely, rights known, and the desired impact / effect sustained, especially all forms of violence against women and girls, harmful social and health practices, barriers to quality education, economic empowerment, gender equality and work place recognition of some skills and qualification will be a thing of the past.

Without pre-empting the discussion, let me safely conclude this opening remarks by saying that FIDA at all levels and in particular in Africa needs to increase the tempo of the work we are doing so as to get more desirable results for African women and girls. They must be equipped technologically so as to be at par with the rest of their peers all over the world.

Congratulations again to the Regional Vice Presidents Africa, (North & West) Mrs. Joy C. Ejim and (East & Southern Region) Ms. Laura Nyirinkindi.

Your Excellencies and members, more grease to your elbows.

Thanks for listening.

**Chief (Mrs.) Victoria O. Awomolo, SAN, FNCI Arb, FICMC, JP
(Former RVP Africa (North & West) 2017-2020)**

1.4. GOODWILL MESSAGES



"In Consultative Status with the United Nations"

www.fidafederation.org

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN LAWYERS

FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DES FEMMES JURISTES

FEDERACIÓN INTERNACIONAL DE ABOGODAS (FIDA)

GOODWILL MESSAGE BY CAROLINA RIOS VILLOTA, INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT OF INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN LAWYERS (FIDA).

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Hadassah Swain (N. America)

Olufunmi Oluyede (N. America)

HONORARY LIFE PRESIDENT

Angela Dolmetsch (Colombia)

Carolina Rios Villota
President



May I sincerely congratulate our Africa Regional Vice Presidents; Joy C. Ejim [formerly Joy Ezeigbo] (North & West Africa) and Laura Nyirinkindi (East & Southern Africa). Their very commendable collaboration has birthed the convening of the 2023 Africa Regional Congress on the theme- MAPUTO PROTOCOL AND WOMEN IN AFRICA: DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AS A VITAL TOOL FOR ACCELERATION, holding in Abuja, Nigeria.

The President and members of the Executive of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) join all Branches in Africa to celebrate the Protocol to the African Charter on Human & Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. We note that this landmark instrument, the Maputo Protocol which has been in existence for 20 years has become a framework and tool for the advancement of women's rights in Africa and has to its credit some achievements and challenges. We celebrate all those who worked behind the scenes to bring about this instrument and have been at the forefront of the 80 per cent ratification by nations in Africa.

Making it work for all women in Africa remains the greatest challenge. It is therefore not surprising that the 2 FIDA Regional Vice Presidents, in tandem with FIDA objectives, have carefully chosen this theme. They have assembled distinguished speakers to further x-ray this instrument, especially in the context of digital technology and its critical importance in the development of women and girls in Africa, and indeed globally, which cannot be overemphasized. The current global economic context has made it even more important that this discourse be held.

We salute all the distinguished Speakers from across the African Continent that have been selected to share their experiences and thoughts on the way forward. Their wealth of experience will surely enhance the discourse and the quality of resolutions thereby reached.

FIDA International continues through its Branches and Affiliates at Regional and National levels to leverage their profession and the Law to change the narrative about gender equality worldwide. We may not have got to the 50/50 balance, but we are inching on, breaking and shattering glass ceilings and keeping the Gender Equality Flag flying higher.

May this 2023 Africa Regional Congress further uplift women in Africa. Congratulations once more, to the indefatigable Regional Vice Presidents whose collaboration exemplifies the strength in unity and the depth of development Africa is capable of.

Please accept my regrets for not being physically present, but be assured of my best wishes for a successful and productive Congress.



International Federation of Women Lawyers

Federación Internacional De Abogadas

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GOODWILLMESSAGE

On behalf of FIDA Nigeria, it is my great pleasure to extend a warm welcome to all of you as you gather in the beautiful city of Abuja for the FIDA Africa Triennial Congress. This momentous occasion marks the 20th Anniversary of the Maputo Protocol, a significant milestone in our collective pursuit of gender equality and women's empowerment. Abuja, the capital city of Nigeria, is honored to host this esteemed Congress, which brings together legal professionals, activists, and advocates from across the African continent. We are deeply grateful for your presence and commitment to advancing the rights of women in Africa.

The Maputo Protocol, adopted by the African Union in 2003, is a groundbreaking instrument that seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. It reaffirms our shared belief in the fundamental principles of gender equality, non-discrimination, and the empowerment of women. It is a testament to our collective determination to create a more just and equitable society. Over the past two decades, the Maputo Protocol has served as a catalyst for transformative change, inspiring legislative reforms, policy frameworks, and grassroots initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality. It has become a powerful tool for women's rights advocates, challenging societal norms and fostering a more inclusive and progressive Africa.

As we gather in Abuja, let us celebrate the progress achieved thus far while recognizing the challenges that lie ahead. This Congress provides us with a unique opportunity to reflect on our achievements, share best practices, and strategize for the future. Together, we can chart a course towards a more gender-equal Africa, where every woman and girl can fully realize her rights and potential.

In line with the theme of this Congress, let us harness our collective wisdom, creativity, and determination to explore innovative approaches to advancing gender equality. Let us strengthen our networks, deepen our partnerships, and mobilize resources to support the implementation of the Maputo Protocol in every corner of our beloved continent.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the organizing committee, volunteers, and sponsors who have worked tirelessly to make this event possible. Your dedication and hard work are truly commendable. Lastly, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you for your unwavering commitment to the cause of gender equality. Your presence here today is a testament to your passion, resilience, and belief in a better future for all African women.

I wish you all a fruitful and inspiring congress, filled with enriching discussions, new insights, and meaningful connections. May your time in Abuja be memorable, and may your efforts contribute towards a more just and equal Africa.

Thank you, and once again, welcome to Abuja!
Warm regards,

Amina Suzannah Agbaje
Country Vice/National President FIDA NIGERIA





Chukwuka Ikwuazom, SAN

I write to felicitate with the Regional Vice-President (FIDA) Africa, Council Members and the entire membership of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Nigeria as they host the 2023 FIDA Africa Regional Conference with the theme “Maputo Protocol and Women in Africa: Digital Technology as a Vital Tool for Acceleration” on 24 – 27 August 2023 in Abuja, Nigeria. The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and

Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol) was adopted by Heads of State and Government of Africa in Maputo, Mozambique on 11 July 2003 arguably the world’s most comprehensive women’s rights instrument. The Maputo Protocol, among other things, guarantees extensive rights to African women and girls and contains progressive provisions on harmful traditional practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation.

Many years after its ratification, many of the challenges that necessitated the adoption of the Maputo Protocol persist in Nigeria and the rest of Africa. The theme of this Conference, which seeks to explore the use of digital technology as a vital tool for accelerating the realization of the objectives of the Maputo Protocol is therefore timely.

I have no doubt that the excellent faculty of speakers lined to explore the theme of the Conference will do justice to it. I congratulate you and wish you very happy deliberations.

Chukwuka Ikwuazom, SAN
(Former Chairman, NBA Lagos Branch)



Chief (Mrs) Abimbola Jack Oladugba, FICMC

It gives me great pleasure to rejoice with our RVP, the Country Vice-President, Council Members and the entire membership of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Nigeria as it hosts the 2023 FIDA Africa Regional Conference with the theme “Maputo Protocol and Women in Africa Digital Technology as a vital Tool for

Acceleration” on 24 – 27 August 2023 in Abuja, Nigeria. The theme of this conference, which seeks to explore the use of digital technology, as a vital tool for accelerating the realization of the objectives of the Maputo protocol is therefore timely.

I wish us all a beautiful time out, wonderful deliberations and journey mercies. May the lot of women and Children in Africa be better at the end of this Congress. Congratulations FIDA AFRICA

The President,
International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA)

FELICITATION

I offer my heartfelt congratulations to the International Federation of Women Lawyers on the occasion of the FIDA AFRICA REGIONAL CONGRESS 2023, taking place from August 24th to 27th, 2023. Your chosen theme, "MAPUTO PROTOCOL AND WOMEN IN AFRICA: DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AS A VITAL TOOL FOR ACCELERATION," is both timely and inspiring. As you delve into discussions about the vital role of digital technology in advancing women's rights and empowerment across Africa, I commend your dedication to fostering positive change.

The Maputo Protocol, a significant milestone in women's rights, and the focus on harnessing digital technology to accelerate progress, highlight the forward-thinking approach you bring to the table. Your commitment to leveraging innovation for gender equality is truly commendable and holds the potential to reshape the landscape for women in Africa.

May your congress be a platform for insightful conversations, collaborative efforts, and impactful strategies. Your collective pursuit of justice, empowerment, and equality resonates deeply, and I wish you a successful and transformative event.

Best regards,



MAZIAFAM OSIGWE, SAN

Chairman,
2023 Nigerian Bar Association Annual Conference
Planning Committee



Mazi Afam Osigwe, SAN

Hearty Congratulations!
**INT'L FEDERATION OF WOMEN LAWYERS
(FIDA) AFRICA**
on the August occasion of your
2023 REGIONAL CONGRESS
24 – 27 AUGUST 2023



HRH Olori Olufunmi A. Oluyede
FIDA INT'L Regional Vice President, North America
& CVP/National President, FIDA USA

FIDA USA
Federación Internacional de Abogadas
International Federation of Women Lawyers

...Promoting, Protecting, Preserving THE WOMAN!

Oral goodwill messages were also delivered by some other dignitaries including Grace S. Orshio Esq., ECOWAS Representative, Ambassador Musa, Nigeria's Permanent Representative to the ECOWAS, Mr. Yakubu C. Maikyu SAN, President of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA).

1.5. KEYNOTE ADDRESS – DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND GENDER EQUALITY: MAPUTO PROTOCOL AND AFRICAN WOMEN IN FOCUS. By Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi, Co-Founder, African Women’s Development Fund and Former 1st Lady of Ekiti State



Her Excellency
Erelu Bisi Fayemi

Protocol.

I thank the leadership of FIDA for inviting me to address this powerful gathering of its members from around the world, especially from other African countries. I congratulate you all on what you have been able to achieve by carving out and sustaining this very important space. FIDA has a special place in my heart, as one of the most important women’s rights networks in the world, and one that has contributed immensely to the empowerment of women across the African continent. It has been my pleasure to work with FIDA branches in different African countries in various capacities – as a trainer, organizational development specialist and as a funder.

The African Women’s Leadership Institute which was a program of AMWA, established in 1996, has produced over 6,000 women leaders, and trained many female lawyers from several African countries. The African Women’s Development Fund which I co-founded in 2000 has supported FIDA/WILDAF/AWLA branches in Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania to mention a few. Without the services you provide at community level and in advocacy spaces, it would have been impossible to achieve all we have done in Africa today in our struggle for women’s voice and space.

I will always appreciate the role played by FIDA-Ekiti when I was First Lady of Ekiti during the two terms in office of my husband Dr Kayode Fayemi, 2010–2014 and 2018–2022. With the strong political will of the Governor and his team on the Executive, the Legislature, and civil society organisations such as FIDA, we were able to get seven gender-friendly laws passed as well as a number of important policies. Today, Ekiti State has one of the most comprehensive legal and policy frameworks for the protection of women’s rights in Nigeria.

In July 2003, the Protocol on Women’s Rights to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights was adopted by African Heads of State in Maputo, Mozambique. This document is famously known as the ‘Maputo Protocol’. The Maputo Protocol is one of the world’s most comprehensive and progressive women’s human rights instruments. The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the United Nations, and was meant to be a global Bill of Rights for Women. In 1981, the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights was adopted by the

Organisation of African Unity (OAU). Between the slow ratification of the 1979 CEDAW and the glaring absence of a reference to women's rights in the African Charter, the long struggle began for an African-owned agenda for the rights of women. This struggle was led by African women's rights activists, lawyers, policy-makers, academics and political leaders.

Between 1992–1995, there were UN World Conferences of critical importance to women: the 1992 World Conference on the Environment in Rio de Janeiro, the 1993 Vienna Human Rights Conference, the 1994 Population Conference in Cairo, the Copenhagen Social Development Conference in March 1995 and the Beijing Conference for Women in August–September 1995. At all these global spaces, African women placed their concerns and recommendations for peace, economic, social, cultural and political rights on the agenda. The leadership was provided by mostly members of regional networks such as Women in Law and Development–Africa (WILDAF) (which operated as a network for female lawyers across Africa using the law as a tool to promote women's rights) FEMNET, Akina Mama wa Afrika, Femme Africa Solidarite, Abantu for Development, Forum for African Women in Education (FAWE) and several others. All these regional networks were backed up by national platforms that did the groundwork locally. When it came time to sustain and promote the Maputo Protocol gains, various networks came together under the auspices of a formidable platform the Solidarity for African Women's Rights Coalition (SOAWR).

The Maputo Protocol was a watershed moment for the women's movement in Africa. The African Union had just formally emerged from the former Organisation of African Unity, and there were African Heads of State at the time who were eager to be seen in a more transformative light. Championing gender equality and women's empowerment was seen as an example of providing progressive leadership and was good for the brand of the new African Union. At the time of the adoption of the Maputo Protocol, Presidents Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia were in power. They helped steer the debates which led to the unprecedented gains for African women. The Maputo Protocol guarantees comprehensive rights to women including the right to take part in political processes, to social and political equality with men, improved autonomy in their reproductive health decisions, and an end to female genital mutilation. The protocol contains 32 Articles to promote the rights of women. The African Union solidified their commitment to the Maputo Protocol through the adoption of the 2004 Solemn Declaration on Gender in Africa, which affirmed their willingness to accede, ratify, domesticate and implement the Maputo Protocol.

According to a recent report, 'Twenty Years of the Maputo Protocol: Where are we now?' written by SOAWR, Make Every Woman Count and Equality Now, the Maputo Protocol has been ratified by 44 out of 55 AU member States. The Protocol has been signed but not acceded to by eight countries – Botswana,

Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Eritrea, Niger, Somalia and Sudan. It has neither been signed or acceded to by three member States – Botswana, Egypt and Morocco. Even with the high number of ratifications, there are still huge gaps such as harmonization with local laws, ambiguous legal systems, timely reporting, allocation of financial, human, material and technical resources for implementation, institutional memory and continuity, insecurity and the impact of Covid-19 to name a few. It is therefore no surprise that the Maputo at Twenty report summarises that, ‘Women and girls continue to face significant barriers to participation in education and decision-making, and a general lack of awareness of economic and social rights hinders financial equality. Meanwhile, deeply entrenched societal beliefs about women continue to legitimize cultural and religious practices that harm women’. In short, twenty years after Maputo, twenty-eight years after Beijing and forty-four years after CEDAW, African women are still struggling for rights, voice and space.

The Gains of African Women over the Years

Though there have been many painful roll-backs, it is worth mentioning that progress has been made over the years. Examples are as follows:

- More awareness of women’s rights: There is now more awareness of women’s rights and gender equality across all our communities. We have seen more acceptance of the need to address discrimination against women in terms of access to education, employment and also the need to prevent violence against women and girls.
- Existence of legal and policy frameworks: There are legal, policy, and constitutional frameworks in place to ensure that women’s human rights are guaranteed and protected. There is CEDAW, the Maputo Women’s Protocol, Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, UN Resolution 1325 on Women in Peace and Security, the Sustainable Development Goals (2010) and Africa Agenda 2030.
- Increase in educational opportunities: African women and girls have more access to educational opportunities than ever before. Not only is the enrolment of girls in schools at high levels, girls are doing very well in tertiary institutions, graduating with top degrees, winning prizes and excelling in areas such as Medicine, Science and Engineering. There also seems to be an unprecedented number of female role models on Faculties and non-teaching staff across the continent, inspiring new generations of female students.
- More women in public life: The notion of women as leaders has been popularized, and it is no longer strange to see women campaigning for very senior positions in public life. Due to the remarkable success of women in elected and appointed positions in other African countries, women have changed political landscapes, for example in Liberia, Rwanda, South Africa, Kenya, and this has motivated women across the continent.

There are also many role models who inspire younger generations to greatness such as Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Joyce Banda, Graca Machel, Samia Suluhu Hassan, Amina Mohammed, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Winnie Byanyima, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, to mention a few.

- Consensus on critical issues: The African women's movement has been able to build consensus around key issues of importance to women, such as peace and security, sexual and gender-based violence, livelihoods and economic empowerment, access to governance and decision-making, reproductive rights and health, education and training and non-discrimination in all spheres of life. In addition, African female scholars, activists, community leaders, writers, thinkers, professionals, rural women and politicians who are part of a progressive women's movement have been able to create a body of knowledge, thought and activism on women's rights and gender equality.
- A resilient women's movement: We have strong women's regional and national organisations and networks who have been at the forefront of shaping these agendas, and who have used their organisations as a training ground for many inspiring women leaders.

African Women in the Age of Digital Technology

Digital Technology broadly defined, entails the use of electronic tools, devices, systems, and resources to process or store data. Examples include mobile phones, laptops, digital cameras, personal computers, and all devices that utilize increasingly fast data transmission speeds and that store or process data using digital signals. Over 90% of jobs worldwide already have a digital component and most jobs will soon require sophisticated digital skills.

New digital tools are empowering, and can serve to support inclusive global economic growth. To seize this opportunity, it is essential that no one, especially women, is held back in trying to achieve their aspirations. As we reflect on where we are twenty years after Maputo, now is the time to step up efforts and take advantage of the digital age to ensure that it represents opportunities for women and a chance to bridge the many gaps that hinder our progress. According to recent research by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD):

There are 250 million fewer women than men online, and this is experienced mostly in developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Even in developed countries, women experience some of the digital gender divide with systematic under-representation in information and communication technology (ICT) jobs, and top management and academic careers. Women worldwide are 20% less likely to hold a senior leadership position in the mobile communication industry and they make only 8% of the investing partners at the top 100 Venture Capital (VC) firms.

There is still a Gender gap in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and girls are usually not encouraged to study these subjects. Consequently, there is no surprise that women account for only 20% of tertiary graduates in ICT fields. And even when they do study STEM, they face a “glass ceiling” preventing them from holding senior positions.

Software development still seems to be (mostly) a male-dominated club. Over the past five years, almost 90% of downloads packages were authored by men. This is particularly worrying, given the growing importance of “big data” analytics to the digital economy.

The most common obstacles women in Africa face include:

- Lack of ICT skills and knowledge.
- Low literacy and income levels,
- Geographical restrictions, with most rural women lacking access
- Lack of motivation to use technology,
- Lack of physical access to technology
- Sexism and discrimination

Like with all male dominated structures and systems, a gender gap will continue in the digital space if we do not make a concerted effort to address the challenges. There are however a number of opportunities for African women and girls that have emerged and that need to be explored and scaled up, examples include:

- Skills acquisition: The digital economy presents an opportunity for women to acquire skills that can make them marketable and in high demand across the private, public and social sectors. Ranging from coding to software design to digital project management, data analytics, multimedia production, cyber-security, website development to online learning, online marketing, and artificial intelligence, there are many opportunities for career development and growth that can aid women. It is also hoped that formal and informal learning opportunities can speed up access in all these areas.
- Entrepreneurship development: In these days of living with the fall out of COVID19, entrepreneurs are heavily reliant on the use of ICTs. Women will be able to scale up their enterprises if given access and training in appropriate digital tools. There are currently many women running thriving businesses online in fashion, food, make-up and agri-business on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. Women entrepreneurs in grassroots local communities have also been able to take advantage of digital applications to stay engaged with their customers. As governments at Federal State and County level attempt to address the massive youth unemployment challenge, this is an area of priority focus.

- Access to resources: Digital applications have been made accessible to many women for them to receive resources such as Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT), business grants, elderly people's grants, maternal healthcare and other opportunities. These are tools governments should continue to take advantage of as a way of delivering social investment programs in a transparent and accountable manner.
- Amplifying voices: The digital age has facilitated the amplification of women's voices in significant ways. Social movements around women's rights, sexual and gender-based violence, youth movements, peace networks, good governance, thought leadership, are all ways in which women have exercised agency and mobilized for change, using digital tools.
- Community Building: Digital tools have played a key role in community building. With the rise in social networking sites (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) and applications such as WhatsApp, Telegram and Tik Tok, people find common interests and women are able to take advantage of this to share views and concerns. It also facilitates the creation of networks that can provide the basis for community development and local philanthropy through alumni associations, Town Associations, family gatherings and so on, and there is a preponderance of women involved in anchoring these activities. There is a limitless amount of social and political capital that can be earned from the use of these opportunities, if one is able to look beyond all the unnecessary drama and 'clout chasing'.

I attended this year's UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York. I started attending CSW in 1993, as a young women's rights activist based in London working for a Pan-African women's organisation. The theme for the 2023 commemoration of March 8th International Women's Day (IWD) was DigitAll: Innovation and technology for gender equality. On March 8th I was in the UN General Assembly Hall for the formal commemoration of International Women's Day organised by UN Women. As I sat there listening to the speeches and performances, I noted the hundreds of mobile phones raised up by participants to record the proceedings. How times have changed. We did not have cell phones when I first started attending such programs in 1993. I sent my first ever email in March 1995, 28 years ago. I was in London at the time and we were preparing for the UN Women's Conference in August-September 1995 in Beijing. It was the only way we could register for the NGO Forum in Huairou and Official UN Conference in Beijing. There was only one women's organisation in the UK at the time who knew what the digital space was all about, a small group called Green Net. They went around opening accounts for us and getting us registered. It opened up a whole new world for us. Even with all the advances that have been made since then, women and girls might still be left behind, as we often see with male dominated structures and technologies.

So, what does all this mean for a network like FIDA? I would like to recommend that FIDA should build on the gains we have made as an African women's movement, taking advantage of the availability of digital technology.

Advocacy for Inclusive Policies in Digital Technology

FIDA can play a role to advocate for the removal of obstacles in the way of women and girls taking advantage of digital technology. National and local policies on digital technologies should be as gender inclusive as possible in order to bridge knowledge and opportunity gaps. Digital tools (mobile devices, applications, laptops, tablets, blue-tooth devices, smart watches) should be more affordable, functional and accessible. It is also important that telecommunications companies be encouraged to keep their services as accessible as possible.

Sensitisation and Awareness Raising

Many people do not know what the Maputo Protocol is all about. FIDA has a role to play in sensitisation and awareness about the protocol and how it can be used by different stakeholders. We cannot expect to make progress if people do not know what we are talking about. Digital technology can make the task of information dissemination a lot easier.

Make the Case for Legislative and Policy Frameworks

One of the major challenges we have faced with the Maputo Protocol is the lack of adequate national domestication. The implications of this are dire. For example, in the past four electoral cycles, Nigerian women have gone from bad to worse. We now stand at 3.5% of women in the National Assembly, and there are some State Houses of Assembly where there are no women at all. Without concrete and proactive measures such as affirmative action and quotas, we will continue to see dismal statistics of women in business, politics and decision-making. The proposed Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill is meant to address the domestication of the Maputo Protocol and CEDAW. This Bill will help enhance women's equal access to political participation, economic activities and resources such as land, credit, technology, training and information. FIDA can popularise the advantages of relevant Bills using digital tools to appeal to a wider audience of young people who can help put pressure on lawmakers.

Intensify Efforts to Accelerate Article XII of the Maputo Protocol on Education and Training.

Considering the vast number of girls out of school in Africa, using recent figures from UNICEF and UNESCO, Nigeria has 10 million, Ethiopia approximately 6.5 million, DRC 4 million, Kenya with 600,000 and Uganda 700,000, we have a serious problem on our hands. It will take a long time and serious work to bridge this gap. The ongoing efforts to send girls to school and keep them in school for as long as possible needs to be complemented with encouraging STEM in schools for girls.

There should be an ICTs lab or its equivalent in every school where young people can learn and explore the world they live in, and every Local Government Area in each country should have an ICT hub where young people can use and learn relevant tools. More investments are also needed to enable women take more advantage of the use of ICTs for enterprise development. All these strategies will entail partnerships with various, sectors, showcasing best practices and peer learning.

FIDA Can Use Digital Technology to Protect Women from all forms of violence.

FIDA can also develop a roadmap for local interventions that can protect women and girls from the alarming rise in cyber-violence. We cannot talk about empowering women and girls in the digital space without a mention of those things that might disempower them. We need more awareness raising on the dangers of some of these technologies and how it is creating huge security risks for women and girls in particular - kidnapping, pornography, sexual violence, sexploitation, cyber stalking, toxic online conversations and so on. All these have serious implications for well-being, self-esteem, confidence and mental health.

As We mark Twenty Years of Maputo, There has to be Story-Telling.

FIDA can use digital technology to tell the stories of the long journeys that have been undertaken from the UN Decade for Women (1975-1985), the years of the intense global advocacy of African women in the 1990s and their efforts up to Maputo in 2003 and beyond. There are Sheroes in all the countries where you have FIDA branches. If you have not already done so, set up databases, track these women, interview them, make videos, post online, teach about them, invite them to share their experiences, there is so much that has been done but comparatively little has been recorded for posterity.

Use Digital Technology to Learn and Teach others about Patriarchal Power and Privilege.

The reason why we keep making so little progress is because we continue to underestimate patriarchal power. Patriarchy is a system of male authority which legitimizes the oppression of women through political, social, economic, legal cultural, religious and military institutions. We cannot achieve gender equality and women's empowerment without questioning the institutions, norms and values that disempower women. We can use short videos, cartoons, animations, recorded speeches, music and so on to pass on messages to our target audiences.

Mentoring and Inter-Generational Organising

A key strategy going forward is intentionally mentoring across generations. As mentioned earlier a lot of work has been done but has gone unacknowledged. Mentoring in my own opinion is a two-way process. Digital technology can be deployed to bridge distances, save costs and expand frontiers of learning and knowledge. There are enough FIDA members to have

a critical mass of engaged younger women and older women willing to rededicate themselves to the promotion and protection of women's rights.

Creative Resource Mobilisation

One of the biggest obstacles in the way of women's agency is lack of resources. I know what it is like for women's organisations such as yours to struggle with the issue of resources. The funding that used to be available for social justice work has shrunk considerably over the years. This is why important networks such as yours need to make a move towards self-sufficiency. The digital space can be used to identify your members or allies and harvest resources in various forms. This is the only way your work can be truly sustainable. You can approach resource mobilisation experts who can work with you in your different contexts to design medium-long term resource mobilisation plans.

Conclusion

The digital revolution can provide women with access to educational opportunities, business development, participation in the global economy, and a platform to share their stories and experiences and make their voices heard in policy and advocacy. Enhancing women's safe and equal access to digital technologies offers immense opportunities to address development and humanitarian challenges and can spark innovative and creative solutions that meet women's needs and promote their empowerment. Governments and organizations using the Maputo Protocol, have a key role in advancing gender equality through digital technology, providing access to digital platforms and resources, digital literacy training, and content tailored to the needs of women, creating an environment in which women can access the resources they need to succeed. We all have a role to play in consciously creating a world of limitless opportunities for women and girls, grounded in values of equality, fairness, justice and peace. We have tools at our disposal now that we did not have years ago when we started this journey. Let us take advantage of this, it will make our journey quicker.

Once again, I congratulate FIDA on this conference. Please remember that strong, durable institutions are only made possible by passionate, committed and determined individuals. I urge you to continue to promote a culture of excellence and competence throughout your membership, and I hope that you will continue to enjoy pride of place as a space women of the world can count on as allies in the quest for gender justice, equality and fairness.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Questions & Answers

The Session was concluded with a vote of thanks rendered by Mrs. Eliana Martins. Chairperson, Congress Planning Committee.

MEET OUR SPEAKERS



Hon. Justice Elsie
Thompson



Ezinwa N. Okoroafor



Mfon Usoro



Hon. Justice (Prof.)
Elizabeth Ama Orji



Amina Suzanah Agbaje



Nomaswazi
Shabangu-Mndawe



Abimo Toyosi Olayiwola



Lensa Biyena Geleta



Dr. Monday
Onyekachi Ubani, SAN



Ayodeji Adelokun



Professor
Chukwudi Victor Odoeme



Eunice Musiime

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Rhoda Prevail Tyoden
Past CVP, FIDA Nigeria



Dr. Chigoziri Ojiaka
Law Teacher, Imo State University



Gladys Mbuya, CVP,
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Chapter Two
**MAPUTO PROTOCOL @ 20:
THE JOURNEY SO FAR**

2.1. MAPUTO PROTOCOL AT 20: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE By Hon. Justice Elsie Nwanwuri Thompson



Hon. Justice
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1. An Overview of the Maputo Protocol:

The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa otherwise called The Maputo Protocol is an international legal instrument adopted by the African Union (AU) on the 11th day of July, 2003. It is one of the most comprehensive and progressive instruments in the world for women's human rights. It was adopted by the Heads of States and Governments in Maputo, Mozambique.

The Protocol specifically focused on promoting and defending the rights of women across the African continent. The Protocol addresses various issues related to women's rights, including gender-based violence, discrimination, reproductive rights and economic empowerment.

Since the Maputo Protocol entered into force in 2005, 49 of the 55 member states of the African Union have signed it and 44 have ratified it. The Protocol has one of the highest ratifications of the African Union instrument. The following states are yet to ratify **Botswana, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, Madagascar, Morocco, Niger, Somalia and Sudan.**

The Maputo Protocol is said to be progressive because it grants African women new rights and expands on normative standards that have been incomplete or omitted in other treaties, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the African Charter on Humanity and People's Rights. The Maputo Protocol has been hailed as the only regional human rights treaty to focus heavily on the rights of women and girls.

2. What happened to women's rights in Africa before the Maputo Protocol?

It is important to assess the state of women's rights before the Maputo Protocol was adopted. Prior to the adoption of the Maputo Protocol, African countries sought to protect the rights of women through the framework of National constitutions and other international human rights treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). In addition, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Charter) also provides for, albeit to a limited extent, women's rights in Africa. However, all these tools were found to be inadequate as they do not take into account the specific challenges faced by African women and consequently, limit their full

enjoyment of their rights. For example, the African Charter contains mostly gender-neutral provisions:

- Article 2: Non-discrimination
- Article 3: Equality before the law
- Article 18(3): The State shall ensure the elimination of every discrimination against women and also ensure the protection of the rights of the woman and the child as stipulated in international declarations and conventions.

Article 60: Inspiration from international law on human rights

Therefore, a specific Women's Rights Protocol was needed to address the rights of African women and girls. In the afore-mentioned human rights documents, the rights of African women and girls seemed to slip through the cracks.

The OAU General Assembly, at its 31st regular session in Addis Ababa in June 1995 therefore ordered the African Commission on Human Rights (ACHPR) to draw up such a Protocol. The first draft, prepared by an expert group of ACHPR members, representatives of African NGOs, and international observers organized by ACHPR in cooperation with the International Justice Commission, was submitted to ACHPR at its 22nd meeting in October 1997. and comments circulated to other NGOs.

After further work at expert meetings and conferences in 2001, the process stalled, and the Protocol was not presented at the first AU Summit in 2002. In early 2003, an organisation, Equality Now hosted a women's group meeting to organize a campaign to encourage the African Union to adopt the Protocol, and work to bring the text of the Protocol into line with international standards.

One can then say that the Maputo Protocol is a response to the specific concerns of African women and it;

- Is customized to address the unique women's issues in Africa;
- Highlights issues that affect African women disproportionately;
- Addresses manifestations of gender inequality not previously recognised in CEDAW and the African Charter;
- Serves as a reminder of the commitment to women's rights in Africa especially due to the weak compliance with CEDAW by African states;
- Is home-grown, less easily to be dismissed as 'Western' or foreign; and;
- Recognises the positive cultural identity of African women.

3. Any Oppositions?

There are two particularly contentious factors driving opposition to the Protocol: (1) its article on reproductive health, which is opposed mainly by Catholics and other Christians, and (2) its articles on female genital mutilation, polygamous marriage and other traditional practices, which are opposed mainly by Muslims and traditionalists.

With respect to Christian opposition, Pope Benedict XVI described the reproductive rights granted to women in the Protocol in 2007 as “an attempt to trivialize abortion surreptitiously”. The Roman Catholic bishops of Africa oppose the Maputo Protocol because it defines abortion as a human right. In an open letter to the government and people of Uganda in January 2006, the Catholic Bishops` Conference of Uganda set out their opposition to the ratification of the Maputo Protocol.

In Niger, the parliament voted 42 to 31, with 4 abstentions against ratifying the Protocol in June 2006. In this Muslim-majority country, several traditions banned or deprecated by the Protocol are common. Nigerian Muslim women`s group in 2009 gathered in Niamey to protest what they called “the Satanic Maputo Protocol” specifying the marriage age of girls and abortion as objectionable. In Djibouti, however, the Protocol was ratified in February 2005 after a sub-regional conference on female genital mutilation called by the Djibouti government and an organisation, No Peace without Justice, at which the Djibouti Declaration on female genital mutilation was adopted.

4. The added value of the Maputo Protocol vis-à-vis the CEDAW:

While CEDAW is focused more on global issues such as poverty and development. The Maputo Protocol looks at issues specific to women in Africa. Though both are oriented at ending discrimination against women, the Maputo Protocol also relies on the notion of equity and represents a more guided and precise mechanism. Some of the highlights are stated below: The Protocol created new rights and expanded on existing rights. And so, it prohibits violence against women in the private and public spheres. The Protocol avoids essentialist assumptions and focuses on the specific status of African women such as the rights of widows and older women. It also deals with harmful traditional practices such as Girl-child marriage, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), reproductive health and Political rights, including Affirmative action and Economic empowerment.

It further deals with equality of rights under marriage and divorce.

The Protocol enjoins states parties to reduce military expenditure significantly in favour of spending on social development in general and the promotion of women in particular.

5. The Present:

Let us now examine the extent to which African countries have incorporated the provisions of the Protocol into their national laws and policies. In 2020, it was discovered that despite countries enacting laws against sexual and gender-based violence as well as harmful cultural practices, some were yet to ratify and implement the Maputo Protocol. This gaping realization was made worse by the advent of Covid-19 which worsened the exposure of women to more detrimental situations.

Other challenges highlighted were issues of conservative governments, pluralistic legal systems; resistance from strong faith-based groups; absence of, or lack of clarity on ratification procedures; the prioritization of peace and reconciliation in countries in active or emerging from civil strife; concerns with reproductive rights provisions and the provisions on rights related to marriage, among other challenges. In Nigeria, recently, a non-profit organization BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights, has called for the protection and promotion of the rights of women and girls across Nigeria and Africa for rapid development on the continent. It described the Maputo Protocol as an African legal instrument that protects the lives of women.

Omosefe Oyekanmi in his article, "Domesticating the Maputo Protocol: Violence and Women's Political Participation in Nigeria", recommends that; the Protocol should be incorporated into Nigeria's domestic law in order to be implemented at a national level. While the Maputo Protocol may not be implemented wholesale, issues of reservations as tendered by some other African countries should be raised by the Nigerian government and modified to suit national laws promoting gender equality and prohibition against any act of violence against women. The Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act 2015 though, passed at the national level is still yet to be adopted in some states in the Federation. It should be enforced at all levels of government. More so, the passage of the Gender and Equal Opportunity (GEO) Bill 2016, which is an amalgamation of the principles and provisions of CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol, poised toward specific prohibition against all forms of discrimination, should be expedited. Similarly, injustices against women can be further mitigated by upholding the Nigerian Constitution and the Electoral Act as amended, which supports equal representation of both women and men in decision-making. The National Gender Policy of 2006 which provides for 35% Affirmative action in favour of women, must be enforced at all levels of government and political parties, with an emphasis on prohibiting violence against women at these platforms, as a recourse to strengthening women's political participation and sustainable development in Nigeria.

The Author maintains that although the Maputo Protocol is not a stand-alone instrument in the promotion of equal rights in Nigeria, by virtue of section 12 (1), (2), (3) of the 1999 Constitution, the Protocol without domestication in Nigeria, has been limited in many ways. Howbeit, basing the Maputo Protocol on basic universal laws on human rights, legal frameworks could be drawn, in activating the Maputo Protocol and by extension enhancing women's participation in politics.

6. Cases adjudicated under the Maputo Protocol

An issue of concern regarding the implementation of the Maputo Protocol has been the limited or almost non-existent adjudication and litigation of cases under the instrument by regional human rights courts namely the African Court on Human and Peoples Rights, ECOWAS Court and the East African Court of Justice. To date, there are only few cases which have been adjudicated under the Maputo Protocol, one by the African Court and the others by the ECOWAS Court.

- i. African Court – Association Pour Le Progrès Et La Défense Des Droits Des Femmes Maliennes (APDF) And The Institute For Human Rights And Development In Africa (IHRDA) V. Republic Of Mali (Application 046/2016)
 - In 2018, the African Court applied the provisions of the Maputo Protocol in this landmark decision.
 - In 2011, the Government of Mali passed a new Family Code.
 - The Applicants, both human rights organizations, argued that certain provisions of the Family Code violated rights in various regional human rights instruments including the African Charter, the Maputo Protocol, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC).
 - The provisions challenged included the ones on the minimum age of marriage which was set at 16 for girls and 18 for boys (and also allowed a special exemption for girls to be married at 15 for compelling reasons), the provisions did not require religious ministers who perform marriages to verify parties' consent to the marriage.
 - The Court found that Mali, by enacting the Family Code, had violated Articles 6(a) and (b) and 21 of the Maputo Protocol related to the minimum age of marriage, consent to marriage, and right to inheritance. It also found that these provisions violated the right to non-discrimination and the obligation to eliminate harmful traditional and cultural practices as set out in the Maputo Protocol, ACRWC and CEDAW.
 - The Court ordered the State to amend the law and to comply with its obligations under Article 25 of the African Charter relating to information, teaching, education, and sensitisation of the populations. The decision can be accessed on [5f5215dbcd90b917144785.pdf](https://www.african-court.org/en/cases/2018-046) (African-court.org)

ii. ECOWAS Court –Dorothy Njemanze & 3 Others V. Federal Republic of Nigeria
 In 2017, the ECOWAS Court of Justice is the first human rights body to find an infringement of the Maputo Protocol.

- Some women by name, Dorothy Njemanze, Edu Ene Okoro, Justina Etim and Amarachi Jessy were abducted and assaulted sexually, physically, as well as verbally and unlawfully detained at different times between January 2011 and March 2013 by the Abuja Environmental Protection Board (AEPB) and other government agencies, such as the police and the military. They were arrested and accused of being prostitutes simply because they were found on the streets at night.
- Court handed down its judgment which was in favour of the Plaintiffs.
- In its judgment, the Court held that the arrest of the Plaintiffs was unlawful and violated the right to freedom of liberty, as the Defendant State had submitted no proof that these women were indeed prostitutes. The Court also found that branding the women prostitutes constituted verbal abuse, which violated the right of these women to dignity. Further, the Court held that the arrest violated the right of these women to be free from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; and also constituted gender-based discrimination.
- The Court found that there were multiple violations of Articles 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 25 of the Maputo Protocol. The decision can be accessed on <https://www.ecowas.org/en/cases/2017-001>

ECW_CCJ_JUD_08_17-1.pdf (courtecowas.org)

- Aminata Diantou Diane (represented by APDF & IHRDA) v Mali, 2018 (ECOWAS Community Court of Justice)
- Issue – access to justice; physical and economic assault by in-laws

Facts

- Aminata's husband suffered a stroke attack which left him unconscious and incapacitated. Following this, Aminata's brothers-in-law physically assaulted her and confiscated most of her husband's property. Aminata's in-laws also abducted her husband and initiated a divorce action against her in lieu of her husband, whose whereabouts remained unknown. Aminata sought justice before the Malian Courts but did not receive any relief. 58 Breathing Life Into The Maputo Protocol: Jurisprudence on The Rights of Women and Girls in Africa

Decision

- The ECOWAS Court found Mali in violation of Aminata's right to protection and to have her cause heard. The Court ordered Mali to pay Aminata financial reparation worth Fifteen Million West African Francs. It also ordered Mali to take adequate measures to locate Aminata's husband.

Analysis

- Aminata argued that Mali had violated Articles 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 and 25 of the Maputo Protocol. While the Court did not specifically refer to the provisions of the Maputo Protocol in its decision, it found that Aminata's (and her children's) rights to protection had been violated. While making this finding, the Court referenced the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the positive obligation of the State to protect the rights of women and children (Article 18(3)). The Court also relied on Article 14(2) of the ICCPR and Article 7 of the African Charter regarding the right of Aminata to have her cause heard within a reasonable time frame. It found Mali in violation of Aminata's right to protection and to have her cause heard.

Commentary

- Apart from Article 8 (Access to Justice and Equal Protection before the Law), this decision also addresses issues dealt with under Article 2 (Elimination of Discrimination against Women), Article 3 (Right to Dignity), Article 4 (Right to Life, Integrity and Security of Person) and Article 25 (Remedies) of the Maputo Protocol.
- Mary Sunday v. Nigeria 2018 (ECOWAS Community Court of Justice)
- Issue – domestic violence, access to justice

Facts

- The case was brought by two human rights organizations (Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre and IHRDA) on behalf of the Plaintiff, Mary Sunday. The Plaintiff had been the victim of domestic violence by her fiancé (Corporal Gbanuan), who was a policeman and

agent of the government. She had suffered severe facial burns after her fiancé allegedly poured hot oil on her during a domestic dispute. The counsel representing the Plaintiff had argued that Mary Sunday had suffered severe physical burn injuries, as well as psychological and emotional trauma due to the violent attack. She failed to obtain justice from the State justice system. The police report exonerated Corporal Gbanuan. The statements taken during the police investigation did not include statements from the two people involved, but only those from purported eyewitnesses and the police only interviewed Mary Sunday two years after the police report was filed. Additionally, the state Ministry of Justice lost Mary Sunday's file after the investigating police officer died.

Decision

- The ECOWAS Court awarded the sum of 15 million Naira in damages as compensation, as it found that the government of Nigeria had violated the plaintiff's right to effective remedy.

Analysis

- The Plaintiff argued that the Nigerian government had violated Articles 2, 8, 13, 14 and 25 of the Maputo Protocol. The Court held that there was a violation of the Plaintiff's right of access to justice, right to be informed of the procedure/process to which she is a party, and right to be heard within a reasonable time and cited the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. However, the Court dismissed the plaintiff's allegations of gender-based discrimination and violation of the victim's right to good medical care. The Court found that the gender-based discrimination was not systematic and the present case only applied to one person. In addition, the Court noted that the State is not implicated in the act of domestic violence, just because the alleged perpetrator is a police officer. With regard to the complainant's right to good health care, the Court found that the complainant did not show that the hospital services refused to give her care or were late in giving it to her, or even that the care given to her was inappropriate.

Commentary

- Apart from Article 8, this decision also addresses issues dealt with under Article 2 (Elimination of Discrimination against Women), Article 4 (Right to Life, Integrity and Security of Person), Article 13 (Economic and Social Welfare Rights), and Article 25 (Remedies) of the Maputo Protocol. Though the decision of the ECOWAS Court in this case was largely positive, it does not appear that the Court took into account all aspects of the various issues at hand before deciding that the gender discrimination was not systematic in nature. As recognized by the CEDAW Committee in General Recommendation No. 19, discrimination includes "gender-based violence, that is, violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women

disproportionately". Given that domestic violence is a form of gender-based violence, the Court should have ideally considered other aspects such as the prevalence of domestic violence in Nigeria and the State's record in responding to cases of domestic violence, before concluding that there was no systematic gender-based discrimination. The national courts have been adjudicating on issues which touch on the Maputo Protocol using their own constitutional provisions and legislation. In some cases, the courts have gone ahead to call on governments to domesticate the protocol. An example is the High Court of Tanzania in the case below.

Rebeca Z. Gyumi v. Attorney General, Miscellaneous Civil Cause No 5 of 2016 (High Court, Tanzania)

Issue – setting of different age requirements for girls and boys in contracting marriages, gender discrimination.

Facts

- Rebeca, the Applicant, challenged the constitutionality of Sections 13 and 17 of the Law of Marriage Act, on the grounds that they prescribed different minimum ages of marriages for boys and girls. Section 13 set the minimum age of marriage as 15 years for girls and 18 years for boys, and allowed marriages between boys and girls above the age of 14 with the permission of the Court. Section 17 required girls under the age of 18 to obtain the consent of their fathers to the marriage. Section 17 gives the privileged of consent to the father, since the mother can only give consent where the father is dead.

Decision

- The Court held that Sections 13 and 17 of the Marriage Act were unconstitutional. It directed the Government to amend the law within one year to set the minimum age of marriage at 18 for both boys and girls.

Analysis

- The Court observed that child marriages subject children to complex matrimonial and health concerns. The Court noted that it was "glaring" from the provisions of section 13 that it gave preferential treatment to boys regarding eligible marriage ages. Hence, since the provisions prescribe "differential treatment to persons in a similar situation", they were discriminatory and violated the principle of equality guaranteed by the Tanzanian Constitution. The Court referred to Article 6 of the Maputo Protocol, which "encourages State parties to ensure that there is equality between men and women and both are regarded as equal partners in marriage". The Court also noted that the Maputo Protocol requires marriages to take place with the free will and full consent of both parties, and sets the minimum age of marriage for women at 18 years. Accordingly, the Court concluded that since Tanzania had ratified the Maputo Protocol, it was "high time" that the State took appropriate

legislative measures to guarantee these rights. The State tried to justify child marriages on the grounds of customary and religious beliefs. However, the court disagreed with the State, noting that under Tanzanian law, the provisions of the Law of Marriage Act overrode rules of customary and Islamic law. In this regard, it took inspiration from the provisions of the ACRWC, which called for the elimination of harmful social and cultural practices, particularly those customs which were prejudicial to the health or life of the child, or which discriminated against the child on the grounds of sex (including child marriage). The Court concluded that sections 13 and 17, apart from being discriminatory, no longer served any useful purpose. It declared these sections to be null and void.

Commentary

- Apart from dealing with issues under Article 6 of the Maputo Protocol, this case also covers issues under Article 2 (Elimination of Discrimination) and Article 5 (Elimination of Harmful Practices). This is an important case in which young girls went to court on behalf of all girls under the risk of child marriages without necessarily having to wait for their rights to be violated. The case also brings out an important fact that any action that leads to sexual offences with children is outlawed in line with the Sexual Offences Act. Subjecting children to child marriages exposes them to abuse in the performance of conjugal “duties” that amount to sexual offences. The Government appealed this decision before the Court of Appeal of Tanzania, and the Appeal Court in 2019 upheld the decision of the High Court.

Some of the reasons for the low level of litigation is the issue of exhausting local remedies, special declarations, as in the case of the African Court and lack of enforcement mechanisms. The African Charter as well as the protocol establishing the African Court requires that Applicants exhaust local remedies before approaching the African court and the African commission while the protocol establishing the African court requires the making of a special declaration by State parties giving access to individual and NGOs to the court. One of the ways to get round the issue of special declaration in the case of the African Court is to go to the African Commission, who in turn may file the communication as a case in the African Court.

On the issue of women’s rights, there are some communications that the African Commission has dealt with such as:

- Equality Now and Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA) V. Federal Republic of Ethiopia, ACHPR Communication 341/2007 (African Commission on Human and People’s Rights) where a 13-year-old girl was abducted, raped and married off. The national court said it was consensual, but the African Commission found Ethiopia liable under the African Charter.
- Egyptians Initiative for Personal Rights & Interights Vs Egypt, ACHPR Communication No 33/06 (2011) (African Commission on Human and

People's Rights. A case involving four women who were violently assaulted during a demonstration in 2005. They sought for the prosecution of the culprits from the state of Egypt to no avail. The African Commission found the state of Egypt liable under the African Charter and urged Egypt to ratify the Maputo Protocol.

It is to be noted that Egypt has neither signed nor ratified the Maputo Protocol together with Botswana and Morocco. The politics of litigation requires that we go to court even when we think we cannot win. The case will garner public interest and hopefully draw the attention of Member States.

7. Challenges to the implementation of the Maputo Protocol – Where We Are Presently

While the Maputo Protocol is dubbed as a progressive instrument in the protection of the rights of women and girls in Africa, the following are some of the challenges:

- i. No independent/distinct monitoring body: One of the challenges in the implementation of the Maputo Protocol has been attributed to the fact that unlike other treaties such as the African Charter and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Maputo Protocol does not make any provision for a monitoring body for the implementation of the rights enshrined therein, This has been further exacerbated by a conflict in the provisions of Articles 27 and 32 which creates confusion as to whether the African Court or the African Commission has jurisdiction over the implementation of this Protocol.
- ii. Lack of or limited political will, non-domestication and failure to implement: Several African countries are still recording low numbers of women in political leadership despite Article 9 of the Protocol guaranteeing this right. This shows a lack of political will by countries to fully domesticate and implement the Protocol.
- iii. Weak national gender machinery: Challenges in the implementation of the Maputo Protocol have been attributed to weak national gender machinery stemming from a lack of political will and patriarchy which relegates women to the periphery of society.
- iv. Inadequate allocation of budgetary resources for implementation: Further, the challenges in the implementation of the Maputo Protocol have been attributed to inadequate allocation of financial resources.
- v. Patriarchy deeply entrenched: Patriarchy remains one of the key drivers for the low implementation of the Maputo Protocol. These narratives have seen challenges being posed to the implementation of the rights of women as set out in the Maputo Protocol since due to patriarchy, women's rights are not prioritised and in some instances are ignored.
- vi. Limited participation of women in politics: The limited participation of women in politics has also contributed to the challenges for the implementation of the Maputo Protocol. This creates a situation whereby decisions even on the implementation of the Protocol are left to men who dominate positions in decision making who in most cases do not prioritise women's rights as set out in the Maputo Protocol.

- vii. Harmful practices rationalized by religious and cultural attitudes: Challenges in the implementation of the Maputo Protocol have also been attributed to the perpetuation of harmful practices against women which, in most cases, are exacerbated by religion and culture.
- viii. Countries in conflict: In countries in conflict, implementation of the Protocol remains low as violations such as sexual violence against women are not properly addressed due to a lack of effective systems in this regard.
- ix. Missing Rights: The Maputo Protocol fails to provide for the rights of women comprehensively as seen by its failure to expressly provide for Women with different sexual orientation/persuasion, sex workers, HIV/AIDS as a women's rights issue and abortion in all circumstances.
- x. Lack or limited knowledge and awareness of the Maputo Protocol: Lastly, the Maputo Protocol is not widely known especially in remote areas, which leads to impunity when its provisions are being violated. This also creates a situation whereby the rights holders are not sufficiently equipped to demand for the effective implementation of their rights as set out in the Protocol.

8. Digital Technology and Women's Rights in Africa

The theme of this conference is Maputo Protocol and Women in Africa: Digital technology as a vital tool for acceleration. It is therefore necessary to talk about Digital technology and women's rights.

The use of mobile phones, social networks and other digital tools have created opportunities for women to access information, connect with others and participate in economic activities. This digital revolution has empowered women in Africa and provided them with a platform to claim their rights.

Digital technology has also provided a means to address some of the challenges hindering the implementation of the Maputo Protocol. It has helped women access information about their rights and provided them with the knowledge to claim their rights.

Social media platforms have created networks of women who can support each other, share their experiences and advocate for their rights. Women in Africa can use social media to mobilize, organize and coordinate campaigns promoting the implementation of the Maputo Protocol.

The use of mobile phones and other digital tools has created opportunities for women to participate in the digital economy. Women in Africa can use digital platforms to sell their products, advertise their services and create new business opportunities. This economic empowerment has given women the resources to take control of their lives, make informed choices, and claim their rights. Digital technology provides a way for women to report and seek help in GBV cases through the use of hotlines or other dedicated IT-based platforms.

9. Way Forward - The Future

What is the future of the Maputo Protocol?

According to the McKinsey Global Institute, more than half of Africa's

population is female. Yet, they only generate 33 percent of Africa's collective GDP. There is no difference in politics, where African women make few contributions to policy-making. These statistics are verified by the 2019 Global Gender Summit report that proposes gender inequality as one of Africa's greatest threats in the future. The Maputo Protocol validates women's rights to social and political equality with men. It also empowers women's autonomy of choice in reproductive health. Since its adoption, only 44 African countries have ratified the protocol out of 55 members of the African Union as stated earlier.

Africa should therefore:

- Emphasize women's active participation in political activities and protect their right to make reproductive health decisions before the protocol can fully become effective.
- Encourage Women to contribute better to political decision-making when actively involved. The introduction of gender quotas in some countries, like South Africa and Kenya, has given women a better opportunity to access policy-making bodies, according to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA).
- Ensure gender quota system, in which women would then have positions allocated to them by selection or election. This policy protects women's rights to attain offices with minimal competition and be enabled to contribute actively to policies that can affect them. About 16 countries have constitutional quotas for parliamentary representation. Rwanda, among others, provides constitutional backing for women to occupy at least 30 percent of positions in decision-making organs. As one of the top five leading countries in gender equality, Rwanda has witnessed a decline rate of 11 percent in poverty levels as of 2021. Women's ability to drive social accountability through active political inclusion is one reason attributed to this economic improvement. Promoting proportional representation for women in politics will fulfill Article 9 of the Maputo Protocol. Such representations can be legislated reserved seats, as practised in Tanzania and Uganda, or a voluntary party quota system, as observed in South Africa.
- Make intentional efforts to promote gender inclusion. With the increased female participation there will be better recommendations beneficial to women's causes.
- Adopt potential strategies that would strengthen the Maputo Protocol's impact and ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness in Africa. It may involve considering ways to enhance awareness, advocacy, capacity-building, litigation and institutional support for the Protocol's implementation.
- Ensure the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms, frameworks and policies within the AU that promote gender equality and women's empowerment, such as the Women, Gender, Development and Youth Directorate, the African Union Commission on Human and Peoples` Rights, the African Court on Human and Peoples` Rights, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

10. Conclusion

As the Maputo Protocol marks 20 years since its adoption, the African Union Member States must take stock of the achievements under the Protocol to date, while assessing the gaps to adopt measures towards ensuring that the Protocol is effectively implemented. Noting that this may not be taken up by the States, FIDA, as a foremost organisation focused on the enhancement of the rights of women, should actively pursue this in the interest of the women of and in, Africa.

Empowering women through political participation and full access to reproductive health rights will increase societal development and provide more creative minds for overall progress across African countries following the Maputo Protocol.

FIDA should also advocate for specific and clear court human rights jurisdiction for the regional courts of Northern, Eastern, Central and Southern Africa this will go a long way in improving the protection of the rights of women through litigation.

As women lawyers trained in the practice of law FIDA while continuing our advocacy to get all States parties of the AU to come on board, we must step up litigation as the number one strategy in advancing the Maputo Protocol to the desired level in the protection of the rights of women.

Finally, FIDA at the International Regional and National levels must have a repository. We must build on the body of knowledge that we have. Continuity makes for meaningful development. It is hoped that your minds have been challenged enough to continue the conversation.

Thank you and God bless you.

Elsie Nwanwuri Thompson is a Judge of the Rivers State High Court in Nigeria and a former Judge and Vice President of the African Court on Human and People's Rights.

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 - African Charter on Human and People's Rights
 - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
 - ECOWAS Treaty
 - East African Community Treaty
 - Maputo Protocol
 - UN Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

2.2. MAPUTO PROTOCOL @ 20: ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

By Eunice Musiime



EUNICE MUSIIME



20 years on, Achievements and Challenges of the Maputo Protocol



photo credit: SOAWR Maputo@20 celebrations

- The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa was adopted on 11th July, 2003 in Maputo, Mozambique.
- The most comprehensive and progressive framework for the recognition and promotion of women's human rights.

Ratification Status



- 44 countries i.e 80% of African member states have signed and ratified the Protocol.
- States that haven't ratified include: Botswana, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, Madagascar, Morocco, Niger, Somalia and Sudan

Achievements

Women's Economic and Social rights:

- Over **half of African states** maintain constitutional provisions and have specific laws guaranteeing equal remuneration for work of equal value.
- More than half of African states provide paid maternity leave that is 98 days or longer.

Women's Health and Reproductive Rights:

- Almost all African states have constitutional provisions related to health and enshrine the principle of non-discrimination in access to health services. Notably, Angola, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe enshrine rights related to reproductive health care, such as access to family planning or reproductive care.
- And many others have policies and action plans related to family planning and other reproductive health issues



Achievements

The right to marriage, including prohibition of child marriage.

- Several member states have adopted constitutional reforms related to marriage. For example, the constitutions of Burundi and Uganda guarantees marriage equality. The constitutions of Guinea, Malawi, Uganda and Zimbabwe set the legal age of marriage at 18 years.

Protection of Women from all forms of Violence:

- Countries have enacted laws prohibiting and criminalizing various forms of VAW including domestic violence, sexual harassment and harmful practices like FGM
- Countries like Uganda, Namibia, Cameroon have national strategies to address GBV, and over 20 member states including Namibia and Somalia have specific laws criminalizing FGM.



Achievements

Progress in Women's political participation and decision-making:



- Countries have adopted measures to improve women's participation at various levels for example through quotas and affirmative action (Uganda).
- Countries like Djibouti have reached 40% representation of women and Malawi and Namibia have introduced 50/50 campaigns to increase women's participation.

Achievements continued

Progress in protecting vulnerable groups of women:

Special groups of women like women with disabilities, elderly women and widows have been catered for in national legislations of member states. For example Botswana and the Gambia have specific laws on widows' inheritance rights, and Angola established a council for persons with disabilities



photo credit: SOAWR Maputo@20 celebrations

Challenges:

Social and Cultural Gender Norms:

This remains a major hindrance to the domestication of the Protocol and enactment of progressive laws that uphold rights of African women.

Limitations in addressing Child Marriage Even though countries have legislated on placing the age of marriage at 18, in more than half of African states exemptions are permitted, some of which are based on religious and cultural grounds.

No harmonized position on access to safe and legal abortion

This remains a contentious issue in many member states, evidenced by the number of reservations on art 14(2)(c). National legislation differs regarding when it is permitted, ranging from at the woman's request to when her life is in danger, and for some countries, there are no specific laws stipulating circumstances under which it is permitted.

Challenges

Gaps in implementation and enforcement of existing legislation

Despite domesticating the Protocol, governments are not allocating sufficient budgets towards enforcement of the national laws and policies, leaving the provisions on the advancement of women's rights as mere words on paper.

Implications of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The impact of the pandemic rolled back some of the gains in upholding women's rights specifically the fight against GBV. Many African governments imposed lockdowns and movement restrictions which exacerbated violence against women. Many countries registered an increase in domestic violence, defilement and restrictions in access to essential SRHR services for women and girls.



Challenges

Gaps in reporting

Some member states have not been consistent in reporting to the African Union in terms of their progress towards actualisation of the Protocol. For example Uganda has not reported for the last 10 years. This poses a challenge in monitoring the progress and gaps in implementation of the Protocol.



Gaps in Women's Participation in Governance- A case of Nigeria

- Nigeria has recorded low participation of women in both elective and appointive positions.
- The national average of women's political participation in Nigeria has remained **6.7 percent** in elective and appointive positions, which is far below the Africa Regional Average of 23.4 percent and West African Sub Regional Average of 15 percent (Nigeria Bureau of Statistics, 2015)
- This has been attributed to both cultural and religious barriers reinforced by patriarchy.
- Efforts have been made to address this include the establishment of Women Political Empowerment office and Nigeria Women Trust Funds; the initiation of several interventions to actualize affirmative action and the convening of the Nigeria Women Strategy Conference.

Recommendations

1. Member states should consider lifting reservations on clauses that are considered most progressive in recognizing women's fundamental human rights for example articles 6 and 14 on right to marriage (and prohibition of child marriage) and reproductive health rights respectively have the most reservations.
2. Governments should allocate and employ all resources towards implementation of the Protocol and their domestic legislation to realise the aspirations of all women and girls to live in a world that is free from all forms of discrimination and violence.
3. Member states should work with CSOs to raise consciousness in order to dismantle harmful social, cultural and gender norms, rooted in patriarchy that hamper the realization and enjoyment of rights enshrined in the Protocol.
4. To improve reporting, member states should work closely with CSOs to strengthen reporting information and data; and the AU can consider expanding the reporting period from 2 years. This would improve compliance and enable the ACHPR to publish its Concluding Observations and Recommendations more efficiently.



AKINA MAMA
WA AFRIKA

Questions & Answers

Chapter Three

**GENDER JUSTICE AND
RULE OF LAW – THE PLACE OF
TECHNOLOGY & INCLUSION**

3.1. PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY: LESSONS FROM NIGERIA

By Mrs. Amina Suzanah Agbaje, Country Vice President/
National President of The International Federation
of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Nigeria



Mrs. Amina Suzanah Agbaje

Introduction

It has been established that involving women and encouraging their participation at all levels in a country achieves faster economic and social development than those with low rate of women's participation. A nation can progress and attain higher development growth only when both men and women are entitled to equal opportunities, and digital innovation and technology can be used to promote gender equality. Digital technology has been identified as an important tool in promoting and achieving gender equality, however accessibility and utilization of ICT by women is lower compared to men. The rise of digital tools and platforms unveils opportunities for women to gain access to education, healthcare, and employment, while also empowering them to participate in political and social decision-making.

Article 18(3) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights states that *"The state shall ensure the elimination of every discrimination against women and also ensure the protection of the rights of the woman and the child as stipulated in international declarations and conventions"*. Furthermore, section 46 of the 1999 Constitution prohibits practices and policies that tend to discriminate against women in all spheres of life.

Onyeché Tifase the Vice President of Grid Consulting, Siemens Energy stated in an interview

"Women in STEM fields bring new perspectives, compassion, strength, resilience, warmth, and sparkle to the workplace. They are also capable of creating safe spaces that enable more women to thrive in male dominated fields."

Key Impactful Areas of technology on gender equality

- **Education** – women are able to access education and training with online learning platforms irrespective of their location and circumstances. In Senegal two phone companies one a Senegalese called Sonatel and a French called Manobi provided cell phones with Web Access Protocol (WAP) to rural women agricultural producers in Senegal, thereby extending their access to the Internet. A very high level of economic benefits these traders enjoyed was recorded with some women indicating interest in technology.
- **Health** – Mobile health apps and platforms have enabled access to health care services particularly in remote areas where healthcare

facilities are limited or inaccessible. While these mobile Apps might not be currently accessible to every woman in remote areas the possibilities that this has to offer is endless and will go a long way in reducing mortality rates and improve the health care for women.

- **Employment** – remote work encourages women in the work force. It is flexible and allows for a fair balance for working women with families in managing responsibilities. Digital platforms also allow for women entrepreneurs to reach customers, market her goods and access finance services.
- **Justice** – there are various platforms for reporting cases of sexual and gender-based violence. These platforms provide legal and psychological support for survivors and some protect the identities of the reporter thereby encouraging survivors to speak up and break the silence. Additionally, the justice system is also utilizing technology for witness testimony, allowing for survivors to feel less threatened in giving their testimonies and are not forced to face their perpetrators.

Lessons from Nigeria

Recruiting more women to technology leadership roles will increase the visibility of women’s perspectives on tech policy issues. The Nigerian National Gender Policy 2006 provides for at least 35% affirmative action for women in appointive positions, to ensure inclusivity. If women are involved in the decision-making processes relating to technology, this will help in promoting gender equality. Their views will be well represented and presented.

Her Excellency, Mrs Betty Anyanwu-Akeredolu, the first lady of Ondo State is the convener of the BeMore Summer Bootcamp for girls through which girls are empowered in STEM. At the bootcamp in 2022, over 350 girls were camped for two weeks training in ICT, Solar technology and other life-enhancing skills. This initiative by the first lady is aimed to bridge gender disparity in science. To encourage women to pursue careers in technology, it is imperative that enabling environment is created where entry barriers are broken, diversity promoted and inclusion initiatives adopted.

Women in STEM are doing profound work and able to deal with issues affecting women. Ms. Bolarinwa Kemisola, a Nigerian robotics engineer developed a smart bra that can detect breast cancer following the death of her aunt. This is a clear instance of a woman doing things for women.

Challenges

There are challenges impeding these opportunities that technology offers in promoting gender equality around the world but in particular Nigeria some of which includes:

- **Skills** – what good is the provision of technology if the target beneficiaries have no knowledge on how to utilise it nor the willingness to learn.

1. United Nations “Gender equality and empowerment of women through ICT” Women 2000 and beyond. September 2005
2. Kemi Ajumobi, “Women in Technology: Promoting gender equality in the digital age” Business Day, 17 March, 2023

- Affordability of Resources – a good example will be the provision of online platforms to help facilitate a beneficiary's business. Without the purchase of data or phones that are compatible with such mobile platforms, the provided technology becomes difficult to access.
- Social Norms – existing gender biases within the technology industry must be addressed. Additionally, girls are systematically trailed away from STEM. Gender stereotypes, discrimination, cultural biases, amongst others are pertinent issues to be addressed.

Conclusion

To ensure gender equity through the use of technology, Nigeria must challenge itself by exploring the progress made in the past years, evaluate the impact on the society, review the lessons learnt, and chart a course going forward to drive inclusion of women and overcome the barriers that exist. Girls in STEM must be encouraged at an early age for them to be able to level up. Counselling by women in STEM will go a long way in building the confidence of girls interested in the field and will also serve as great role models for the future generation.

Purple For:

**GENDER EQUALITY;
LOYALTY;
CONSTANCY TO PURPOSE;
STEADFASTNESS TO CAUSE;
FREEDOM &
DIGNITY.**

3.2.a. ENGAGING MEN TOWARDS GENDER PARITY AND INCLUSION IN PUBLIC SPACE

By Ayodeji Adedokun



Ayodeji Adedokun

Gender parity and inclusion are central concepts in the pursuit of a just and equitable society. These terms refer to the equal representation and participation of all genders in all aspects of life, without discrimination or bias.

Gender parity and inclusion have gained significant attention in recent years as essential components of building equitable societies. While progress has been made, achieving true gender equality requires the active involvement of all members of the society, especially the men. Historically, the burden of advocating for gender parity has largely fallen on women, but engaging men in this effort is crucial for sustainable change.

One of the sustainable development goals of the United Nations is Gender Equality and inclusion which are fundamental human rights that is believed to be essential for social and economic development. Achieving these goals requires the active participation of all genders. Historically, women have borne the primary responsibility of advocating for gender parity, often in the face of resistance and social norms. Engaging men in this endeavor is crucial not only for accelerating progress but also for challenging deeply ingrained gender norms that perpetuate inequality. While considerable progress has been made, gender disparities persist globally, hindering societal progress. The importance of engaging men in the pursuit of gender parity and inclusion can therefore not be overemphasized.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF ATTAINING GENDER PARITY AND INCLUSION

Various interconnected factors impact progress towards the goals of achieving gender parity and inclusion ranging from socio-cultural norms and institutional practices to economic disparities and policy frameworks. By comprehending these factors, societies can develop more effective strategies to address the barriers and biases that hinder progress.

Although gender parity and inclusion are fundamental pillars of societal progress, their achievement is far from uniform. Numerous factors influence the pace and extent of progress in these areas especially in Africa, reflecting the intricate interplay between individual, societal, and structural dimensions.

(a) Socio-Cultural Norms and Stereotypes:

- Traditional Gender Roles: Deep-rooted societal expectations and roles assigned to men and women can reinforce unequal distribution of responsibilities and opportunities.

- Stereotypes: Preconceived notions about gender can limit individuals' choices and perceptions of what they are capable of, affecting educational and career decisions.
- Cultural Practices: Norms and customs that discriminate against women or restrict their agency can impede their participation in various spheres.

(b) Economic Disparities:

- Wage Gap: Unequal pay for the same work contributes to economic inequality between genders, limiting women's financial independence.
- Occupational Segregation: Certain professions remain heavily gender-segregated, with women often confined to lower-paid sectors.
- Unpaid Care Work: The disproportionate burden of caregiving responsibilities falls on women, limiting their ability to engage in paid work and other opportunities.

(c) Institutional Practices and Policies:

- Lack of Representation: Insufficient representation of women in leadership roles and decision-making bodies perpetuates gender imbalances.
- Maternity and Paternity Leave: Inadequate parental leave policies can hinder women's career advancement and reinforce traditional gender roles.
- Workplace Culture: Hostile or non-inclusive work environments discourage women's participation and advancement.

(d) Education and Access to Resources:

- Educational Attainment: Disparities in education, especially at higher levels, can limit women's access to certain professions and leadership roles.
- Access to Healthcare: Inadequate healthcare facilities and services can disproportionately affect women's well-being and participation in society.
- Digital Divide: Limited access to technology and digital literacy can hinder women's engagement in the digital economy and decision-making.

(e) Intersectionality and Marginalization:

- Race and Ethnicity: Women from marginalized racial and ethnic backgrounds face compounded challenges due to intersectional discrimination.
- Disability: Women with disabilities encounter unique challenges in accessing education, employment, and social participation.

(f) Policy Frameworks and Implementation:

- Legal Gaps: Inadequate or discriminatory laws can perpetuate gender-based inequalities and impede progress towards gender parity and inclusion.

- **Policy Implementation:** Even with favorable policies in place, inadequate enforcement and lack of monitoring can limit their impact.
- **Implicit Bias in Policy Design:** Policies designed without considering gender biases can inadvertently perpetuate existing inequalities.

Gender parity and inclusion are complex goals that require a nuanced understanding of the interconnected factors that shape them. By recognizing the influence of socio-cultural norms, economic disparities, institutional practices, education, intersectionality, and policy frameworks, societies can develop targeted strategies to dismantle barriers and biases. Achieving gender parity and inclusion demands a concerted effort, involving individuals, communities, institutions, and governments working collaboratively to create a more just and equitable world.

ENGAGING MEN IN THE CONVERSATION

Getting men actively engaged in gender parity and inclusion initiatives is essential for creating meaningful and lasting change.

Engaging men in the pursuit of gender parity brings multifaceted benefits. Firstly, it contributes to creating a more inclusive and diverse society where the potential of all individuals is maximized, irrespective of their gender. Engaged men can act as role models, demonstrating that it is possible to break free from traditional masculinity without losing one's identity. Moreover, their influence can extend to workplaces, homes, and communities, fostering environments that are supportive of women's participation and leadership.

There are challenges to securing men's engagement, however. Historical gender roles and societal norms have shaped a perception of masculinity that often resists engagement in discussions related to gender equality. Men may fear that advocating for gender parity might threaten their status or be perceived as a relinquishment of power. The fear of change, coupled with stereotypes that label gender equality as a women's issue, can create resistance to men's involvement. These stereotypes must be consciously dismantled systematically.

Strategies for Engaging Men

Education and Awareness: Many men may not fully comprehend the extent of gender inequality and its impact. Education campaigns that highlight the benefits of gender equality and debunk myths about masculinity can create a more receptive environment for men's engagement. The target of these campaigns must include elementary schools. This awareness must be ingrained into the fabric of our culture; it must become a part and parcel of our identity to effectively challenge existing harmful stereotypes. We must provide educational workshops, seminars, and training sessions such as conferences and fora like these that help men understand the importance of gender equality, the benefits it brings to individuals and society, and the role they can play in promoting it. These fora will address common misconceptions and stereotypes to foster empathy and understanding.

Leadership Involvement: In public spaces, we need to involve male leaders as advocates for gender parity to drive significant change. This is especially so because men currently dominate the public space. When male leaders champion diversity and inclusion, their actions send a powerful message to their peers and subordinates. Prominent male figures in various fields can inspire other men to become advocates and allies.

Parenting and Education: Engaging men as fathers and educators is crucial for breaking the cycle of gender inequality. We need to teach our young boys more about respect, empathy, and equal partnership irrespective of gender. These will shape the attitudes and behaviors they carry into adulthood.

Championing Positive Masculinity: We need to promote positive aspects of masculinity that emphasize qualities like empathy, collaboration, and emotional intelligence. We need to encourage men more to break away from traditional gender norms that may perpetuate harmful behaviors.

Men's Groups and Allies: We need to establishing more men's groups that discuss gender equality and provide a safe space for sharing experiences can foster a sense of belonging and collective responsibility in our society. Men who understand the systemic challenges women face can become powerful allies.

Highlight Personal and Professional Benefits: We need to emphasize how gender equality benefits men personally and professionally. Studies have shown that diverse and inclusive environments foster creativity, innovation, and healthier work-life balance.

Engage in Dialogue: We need to create safe spaces for open and non-confrontational discussions about gender equality. Encourage our men to ask questions, voice concerns, and express their thoughts.

Recognize Intersectionality: We need to highlight how gender intersects with other identities like race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Men should recognize that equality is not just about gender but about addressing all forms of discrimination.

Involve Men in Planning and Decision-Making: Engaging men in the design and implementation of gender parity and inclusion initiatives. Their input can lead to more effective strategies.

Workplace Allies: We need to establish male allyship networks within workplaces. These groups can provide support, education, and opportunities for collaboration.

Collaborate with Women's Groups: We need to partner more with women's organizations and initiatives to foster joint efforts in advancing gender equality. Collaboration strengthens the impact of advocacy.

¹ See page 4, The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023.

² "Political leadership, investments and comprehensive policy reforms are needed to dismantle systemic barriers to achieving Goal 5. Gender equality is a cross-cutting objective and must be a key focus of national policies, budgets and institutions." – see page 22, The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023

Recognize and Celebrate Progress: We need to acknowledge and celebrate the positive changes brought about by men's involvement. Recognize and amplify their efforts to inspire others.

Encourage Self-Reflection: We need to encourage our men to reflect on their own biases, behaviors, and privilege. Self-awareness is a crucial step towards becoming effective allies.

Policies and laws:

According to the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023: Special Edition, "The way things are going, it will take 286 years to close gender gaps in legal protection and remove discriminatory laws."

Since the gender asymmetry favours men, it stands to reason that more men (especially leaders) need to be involved in this discourse. The success or failure of the strategies proposed depend largely on changes in policy and laws that will improve gender parity and inclusion in public spaces, and since men dominate the legislature, it is important to secure the buy-in and support of the legislature to make laws and policies that will drive positive changes in gender parity and inclusion in public space.

Governments should also be encouraged to include women in leadership positions to strike a balance in gender parity and inclusion. I will like to conclude by emphasizing that, engaging men in gender parity and inclusion initiatives requires a multifaceted approach that combines education, orientation, empathy, and deliberate societal actions. By highlighting the benefits, emphasizing personal connection, and fostering collaboration, men can become effective advocates for a more inclusive and equitable world.

Thank you.

3.2.b. ENGAGING MEN TOWARDS GENDER PARITY AND INCLUSION IN PUBLIC SPACE

By Prof. Chukwudi Victor Odoeme
(representing Dr. Monday Ubani, SAN)



Professor
Chukwudi Victor Odoeme

Introduction

Gender parity can only be achieved by engaging men, and that is the smartest way to empower women. Put differently, by engaging men you empower women. That is the smartest way to achieve gender parity.

Engaging men is at the foundation of all attempts towards achieving inclusivity in public spaces. The benefits extend to reduction in poverty, improvement in health, and addressing other concerns of the Maputo Protocol. The rationale is that men's relationships with women support or impede the welfare of women and society. Furthermore, it is the rights of men and women in relation to the gender-related values and norms that determine people's well-being in communities.

Overview of the Maputo Protocol

Made pursuant to Article 66 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (which provided for enactment of supplements to the provisions of the African Charter) and endorsed by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of OAU (AU) [at its 31st Ordinary Session in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in June 1995 - through Resolution AHG/Res.240 (XXXI)], the Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa is one of the world's most comprehensive and progressive women's human rights instruments. It was adopted by Heads of State and Government in Maputo, Mozambique on 11 July 2003. Entered into force in 2005. Signed by 49 (Ratified by 44) of the 55 African Union Member States; becoming one of the most successful instruments in the African Union in terms of the number of ratifications it received. the Republic of South Sudan is the 44th African Union (AU) Member State to deposit its instruments of ratification to the AU Commission on 7th June 2023.

The Maputo Protocol emphasized and sought to build on the successes of the African Platform for Action and the Dakar Declaration of 1994 and the Beijing Platform for Action of 1995 calls on all Member States of the United Nations (which have made a solemn commitment to implement them) to take concrete steps to give greater attention to the human rights of women in order to eliminate all forms of discrimination and of gender-based violence against women.

¹ Engaging Men and Boys: A Brief Summary of UNFPA Experience and Lessons Learned Integrating work with men and boys into core areas of the UNFPA mandate at country, regional and global levels. United Nations Population Fund, January 2013
²This was one of the revelations from the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo, 1994

Overview of the Provisions of the Maputo Protocol

Article 1	Interpretation
Article 2	Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
Article 3	Right to Dignity
Article 4	The Rights to Life, Integrity and Security of the Person
Article 5	Elimination of Harmful Practices

Article 5 Elimination of Harmful Practices

States Parties shall prohibit and condemn all forms of harmful practices which negatively affect the human rights of women and which are contrary to recognised international standards. States Parties shall take all necessary legislative and other measures to eliminate such practices, including:

- a. creation of public awareness in all sectors of society regarding harmful practices through information, formal and informal education and outreach programmes;
- b. prohibition, through legislative measures backed by sanctions, of all forms of female genital mutilation, scarification, medicalisation and para-medicalisation of female genital mutilation and all other practices in order to eradicate them;
- c. provision of necessary support to victims of harmful practices through basic services such as health services, legal and judicial support, emotional and psychological counselling as well as vocational training to make them self-supporting;
- d. protection of women who are at risk of being subjected to harmful practices or all other forms of violence, abuse and intolerance.

Article 6 Marriage

States Parties shall ensure that women and men enjoy equal rights and are regarded as equal partners in marriage. They shall enact appropriate national legislative measures to guarantee that:

- a. no marriage shall take place without the free and full consent of both parties;
- b. the minimum age of marriage for women shall be 18 years;
- c. monogamy is encouraged as the preferred form of marriage and that the rights of women in marriage and family, including in polygamous marital relationships are promoted and protected;
- d. every marriage shall be recorded in writing and registered in accordance with national laws, in order to be legally recognised;
- e. the husband and wife shall, by mutual agreement, choose their matrimonial regime and place of residence;
- f. a married woman shall have the right to retain her maiden name, to use it as she pleases, jointly or separately with her husband's surname;
- g. a woman shall have the right to retain her nationality or to acquire the nationality of her husband;
- h. a woman and a man shall have equal rights, with respect to the nationality of their children except where this is contrary to a provision in national legislation or is contrary to national security interests;

- i. a woman and a man shall jointly contribute to safeguarding the interests of the family, protecting and educating their children;
- j. during her marriage, a woman shall have the right to acquire her own property and to administer and manage it freely.

Article 7 Separation, Divorce and Annulment of Marriage

Article 8 Access to Justice and Equal Protection before the Law

Article 9 Right to Participation in the Political and Decision-Making Process

- 1. States Parties shall take specific positive action to promote participative governance and the equal participation of women in the political life of their countries through affirmative action, enabling national legislation and other measures to ensure that:
 - a. women participate without any discrimination in all elections;
 - b. women are represented equally at all levels with men in all electoral processes;
 - c. women are equal partners with men at all levels of development and implementation of State policies and development programmes.
- 2. States Parties shall ensure increased and effective representation and participation of women at all levels of decision-making.

Article 10 Right to Peace

Article 11 Protection of Women in Armed Conflicts

4. States Parties shall take all necessary measures to ensure that no child, especially girls under 18 years of age, take a direct part in hostilities and that no child is recruited as a soldier.

Article 12	Right to Education and Training
Article 13	Economic and Social Welfare Rights
Article 14	Health and Reproductive Rights
Article 15	Right to Food Security
Article 16	Right to Adequate Housing
Article 17	Right to Positive Cultural Context
Article 18	Right to a Healthy and Sustainable Environment
Article 19	Right to Sustainable Development
Article 20	Widows' Rights
Article 21	Right to Inheritance
Article 22	Special Protection of Elderly Women
Article 23	Special Protection of Women with Disabilities
Article 24	Special Protection of Women in Distress
Article 25	Remedies

Towards Women Inclusivity in the Public Space

Achieving inclusivity in public spaces is possible by the methodological application of the following:

1. Gender-Balanced Workforce

2. Flexible work policy: This includes part-time employment, remote work, parental leave, job sharing, and additional unpaid vacation. In dual career households especially, flexible-work arrangements can have a huge impact on a couple's ability to better balance domestic and work commitments. With set clear boundaries about when people will or will not be available, transparently communicate their teams' schedules to clients, and make sure that no one on the team disparages people using flexible-work models.

3. Model the right behaviours in the work environment: Seek team members' opinions and preferences for work-related decisions. Women are just as ambitious and eager to take on leadership roles as men. Avoid making assumptions about female employees' goals, needs, and ambition levels. Instead, ask the employee's opinion or reference in decisions that affect her specifically e.g., a male manager's well-intentioned move to "help" a new mother by taking her out of contention for an international job assignment may instead end up adversely affecting her career rather ask whether she wants to be considered for such a position instead of assuming and taking her out of contention because of childbirth.

4. Fair Communicate in workplace: talented women employees have equally strong ideas and contributions but are less dominant in the way they present them. Therefore, ensure that every team member has equal opportunity to speak. Do neither talk over or consistently interrupt team female team members. Ensure to give credit to the originator of a good point and not just whoever talked the longest or the loudest.

5. Sponsor a high-potential woman: move beyond mentorship to sponsorship i.e., senior male leader should sponsor the career of a junior woman in his department or business unit. Sponsorship entails advocating for a female employee at key inflection points in her career, such as bringing her to high-profile meetings, supporting her application for a promotion or a key international post, and ensuring that she gets the training and development she needs to move up in the company.

6. Get involved with company-specific initiatives: Initiate programs dedicated to improving the recruiting, retention, and promotion of women; create greater awareness for inclusion of women to help signal the importance of inclusivity.

7. Promote the full involvement of men in family life and the full integration of women in community life," ensuring that "men and women are equal partners" (United Nations,1994b, paras 4 29, 4 24).

8. Emphasize men's shared responsibility and promote their active involvement in responsible parenthood, sexual and reproductive behaviour, including family planning; prenatal, maternal and child health; prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, prevention of unwanted and high-risk pregnancies." Particularly in times of crisis.

9. Just listen: men must learn to listen to women's voices in a way that inspires trust and respect. This is a fundamental relationship promise men must make, and then keep with women who function in their spaces. Here listening requires focus, sincerity, empathy, refusal to interrupt, and genuine valuing of both her experience and her willingness to share it with you.

10. Attend Women's conferences: Women's conferences are thought to be outgrowth of experiences of exclusion, marginalization, and discrimination as women often express helpfulness communally and relationally. Men should attend to share in women's out pouring of their painful experiences provided by such conferences with the view to providing support.

11. Remember, it's not about you: Ask women how you can amplify, not replace or usurp existing gender parity efforts.

12. Refrain from taking center stage, speaking for women, or mansplaining how women should approach gender equity efforts.

13. Develop a commitment to learning and advocating for gender equity: Learning about the professional challenges of women may produce feelings of self-shame or self-blame and can cause anxiety. However, that could trigger the needed action towards gender parity. The solution is more interaction and learning, not less.

14. Engage in supportive partnerships with women: The best cross-gender ally relationships are reciprocal, and mutually growth-enhancing. Share your social capital (influence, information, knowledge, and organizational resources) with women. However, do not assume that you know how best to support them – ask first.

15. Express as little sexism as possible in your interactions with women: It is the easy part of allyship. Use your experience in women's events and initiatives to learn how you can best become a public ally for social justice around gender.

16. Speak out for gender party "if" you can ("if" because it could mean upsetting the status quo.)

Selected Legal Instruments in Support of Women Inclusivity in the Public Space

1. The international conference on Population and development, Programme of Action (September 1994): Expresses a holistic view of reproductive health as a state of well-being and takes into account the social and environmental conditions that shape health. Notes that gender inequality undermines health and identifies men as a group who needs to be actively involved in overcoming gender inequality and improving women's and men's health.
2. Beijing Platform for Action (September 1995): calls for a full commitment to international norms and standards of equality between men and women, to protect and promote the human rights of women and girl-children as an integral part of universal human rights.

3. The Windhoek declaration and Namibia Plan of Action (May 2000): calls for the equal inclusion of women in all aspects of peace processes; the appointment of gender Advisors to peace operations; and the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in all mandates and in planning of peace operations.
4. Millennium Development Goals (September 2000): creates a blueprint for all countries and leading development institutions through the adoption of eight Millennium development goals (Mdgs), to be achieved by the 2015 target date. goals 3 (gender equality), 4 (child health), 5 (maternal health) and 6 (combat hiv/AidS) are interdependent and mutually reinforcing, and men are central to achieving each.
5. The 48th session of the commission on the Status of women (March 2004): Focuses on two thematic issues as outlined in the commission's multi-year programme of work: the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality. women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peacebuilding.
6. The 45th session of the commission on Population and development on "Adolescents & youth" (April 2012): Strongly promotes gender equality in the resolution on "Adolescents & youth" and calls upon governments "to take measures to encourage boys and young men to participate fully in all actions towards gender equality."

States Constitutions

The following provisions of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 in one respect or the other prohibits exclusion:

1. S. 15(2) Accordingly, national integration shall be actively encouraged, whilst discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic association or ties shall be prohibited.
2. s.17 (3) The State shall direct its policy towards ensuring that- (a) all citizens, without discrimination on any group whatsoever, have the opportunity for securing adequate means of livelihood as well as adequate opportunity to secure suitable employment; (e) there is equal pay for equal work without discrimination on account of sex, or on any other ground whatsoever;
3. S. 19. The foreign policy objectives shall be - (c) promotion of international co-operation for the consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect among all nations and elimination of discrimination in all its manifestations;
4. S. 42. (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.

1. No citizen of Nigeria shall be subjected to any disability or deprivation merely by reason of the circumstances of his birth.
 2. Nothing in subsection (1) of this section shall invalidate any law by reason only that the law imposes restrictions with respect to the appointment of any person to any office under the State or as a member of the armed forces of the Federation or member of the Nigeria Police Forces or to an office in the service of a body, corporate established directly by any law in force in Nigeria.
5. S. 222. No association by whatever name called shall function as a party, unless - (b) the membership of the association is open to every citizen of Nigeria irrespective of his place of origin, circumstance of birth, sex, religion or ethnic grouping;

The Significance of Gender Parity and Inclusion in Public Spaces

1. **Social Justice and Human Rights:** Gender parity and inclusion are fundamental human rights principles enshrined in international agreements such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Denying women equal access to public spaces infringes upon these rights and perpetuates gender-based discrimination.
2. **Economic Growth and Development:** Numerous studies have shown that societies that embrace gender diversity in the workplace and other economic sectors tend to perform better economically. A diverse workforce brings varied perspectives and talents, fostering innovation and competitiveness.
3. **Political Participation and Representation:** Achieving gender parity in political spaces is essential for creating policies that address the needs and concerns of both men and women. When women have a seat at the decision-making table, it leads to more inclusive and representative governance.
4. **Safety and Security:** Public spaces that are inclusive are also safer spaces. Women, who often face higher risks of harassment and violence, benefit from environments where their security is prioritized and protected.
5. **Cultural and Social Enrichment:** Inclusive public spaces encourage cultural diversity and social cohesion. They provide platforms for different groups to share their perspectives, fostering a more vibrant and enriched society.

Challenges to Gender Parity and Inclusion

Achieving gender parity and inclusion in public spaces is not without challenges:

1. **Deep-Seated Gender Stereotypes:** Societal norms and stereotypes that prescribe traditional gender roles continue to persist, hindering women's participation and leadership in various spheres.
2. **Barriers to Education:** Unequal access to education, particularly in developing countries, limits women's opportunities to enter public spaces as informed and empowered individuals.
3. **Workplace Discrimination:** Gender discrimination in the workplace, such as unequal pay and lack of opportunities for career advancement, remains a significant barrier to gender parity.

4. Cultural Resistance: In some societies, cultural norms and traditions may resist efforts to promote gender parity and inclusion, making change a gradual and challenging process.
5. Lack of Representation: The absence of female role models and mentors in leadership positions can discourage women from aspiring to such roles.

Conclusion

In conclusion, gender parity and inclusion in public spaces are critical components of a just and equitable society. The importance of this concept is evident in its impact on social justice, economic growth, political representation, safety, and cultural enrichment. However, numerous challenges must be overcome to realize these goals. As we continue to address these challenges, it is essential to acknowledge that gender parity and inclusion are not just women's issues; they are societal imperatives that benefit everyone. In subsequent essays, we will delve deeper into specific aspects of gender parity and inclusion and explore strategies for achieving them in various public spaces.

3.3. DIGITALISATION FOR GENDER JUSTICE AND THE RULE OF LAW

By Nomaswazi Shabangu-Mndawe
President, South African Women Lawyers Association/FIDA S. A.



Nomaswazi
Shabangu-Mndawe

Program Director

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen, good afternoon.

Program Director, allow me to start by unpacking briefly as to what gender justice is.

Gender justice is a full equality and equity between women and men in all spheres of life, resulting in women jointly, and on an equal basis with men, defining and shaping the policies, structures and decisions that affect their lives and society as a whole.

It is believed that women taking control and taking collective action are the most important drivers and sustained improvements in women's rights. It is also a known factor that women remain an exploited labour force, marginalised from the formal economy, paid less than men for same work and performing minimally paid or wholly unpaid social reproductive labour. Black women continue to be the face of poverty in Africa and there seem to be no political will to address this.

Gender inequality is a problem which the world has been battling with for years regardless of the availability of the rule of law. The rule of law comprises of a number of principles of a formal and procedural character, addressing the way in which a community is governed. However, it seems we are not getting it right or there is a lack of appetite of dealing with gender inequality.

Will **digitalisation** assist in advancing gender justice and the rule of law?

There is a school of thought that believes that **digital technology** is a powerful tool for advancing gender equality. One cannot be naïve and refuse to acknowledge the impact that digital technology has on gender equality.

In these modern years, digital technology has become an integral part of our lives. Covid 19 pandemic has accelerated the use of digital technology which saw women accessing amongst others workplace, attending meetings while at the comfort of their homes. While acknowledging the impact that digital technology has in gender equality, we do know that there are challenges as well.

Digital technology comes with its own gender divide. On top of my list is lack of skills and knowledge by women and cost of accessing digital technology. In many parts of the world women lack access to affordable internet and smart phones.

This brings us to the fact that government and organisations like FIDA and many others has a role to play. FIDA can make proposals to government to create policies and regulations to promote digital access and inclusion. Organisations can create content tailored to the needs of women.

In South Africa before Covid 19 pandemic the office of the Chief Justice had advanced with the introduction of an end-to-end E-filing system for High Courts, known as Court Online.

Normally our courts did not allow electronically signed documents however in the wake of Covid 19 and the introduction of Court Online, electronically signed court documents are now accepted.

Our department of justice is piloting the online application for new maintenance cases and be able to track the progress of the case, payment status and application to emolument attachments.

Notwithstanding the good things that digital technology is bringing to have women not standing long queues and getting orders online, maintenance still remain unpaid.

Having said all these good things about digitalisation, women remain marginalised, particularly those who are in rural areas with no network and those who cannot afford technology and yes, that is where the government has to come in and assist.

The digital economy is advancing rapidly and tech professionals are needed in practically every industry. Ensuring digital skill access will help achieve gender parity and improve the global economy.

In justice, there is no doubt that digital technology has brought rapid advancement. Courts proceedings are run virtually, public is able to access judgments through digital technology.

Digitalisation for gender justice and the rule of law must not be only a topic but it must happen.

I thank you.

Questions & Answers

Chapter Four
**ICT & DIGITAL EDUCATION:
THE WAY FORWARD**

4.1. EDUCATION, USING CUTTING EDGE TECHNOLOGY: A SINE QUA NON TO GENDER EQUALITY IN AFRICA By Hon. Justice (Prof) Elizabeth Ama Oji FCI, Arb Judge, National Industrial Court of Nigeria, Lagos Division



Hon. Justice (Prof.)
Elizabeth Ama Oji

I wish to first extend my commendation to the Organisers of this FIDA Regional Conference, and to thank them for inviting me to be one of the Speakers. It is always a pleasure to be amongst my FIDA sisters. Of course, what I say today, I say extra-judicially – except stated otherwise. The Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa guarantees extensive rights to African women and girls. Discussing how Digital Technology can accelerate the achievement of the rights enshrined in the Maputo Protocol is quite commendable, at this time. It is obvious that the World is dynamically speeding towards a new era of artificial intelligence with modern technologies evolving everyday; it behoves us as agents of gender equity, to find ways of utilizing the progression of the new age towards advancing gender equality in Africa.

The Maputo Protocol and Right to Education:

2. Here are extracts of the Maputo Protocol, which speak to the obligation for States to ensure parity in access to education, and specifically, to science and technology.

Article 2(2).

States Parties shall commit themselves to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of women and men through public education, information, education and communication strategies, with a view to achieving the elimination of harmful cultural and traditional practices and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes, or on stereotyped roles for women and men

Article 12 Right to Education and Training

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to:

- a. Eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and guarantee equal opportunity and access in the sphere of education and training;
- b. Eliminate all stereotypes in textbooks, syllabuses and the media, that perpetuate such discrimination;
- c. Protect women, especially the girl-child from all forms of abuse, including sexual harassment in schools and other educational institutions and provide for sanctions against the perpetrators of such practices;
- d. Provide access to counselling and rehabilitation services to women who suffer abuses and sexual harassment;

1 Paper presented at the FIDA Africa Regional congress 2023 from 24th - 27th August 2023 at Abuja, Nigeria By Hon. Justice (Prof) Elizabeth Ama Oji FCI/Arb.

2 I acknowledge the assistance of Denis Ogunbowale Esq in the research for this paper.

2 Formerly of the Faculty of Law, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State.

3 Protocol To The African Charter On Human And Peoples' Rights On The Rights Of Women In Africa 2003 adopted in Maputo, Mozambique 11th July 2003, Entry into Force 25th November 2005.

4 Protocol To The African Charter On Human And Peoples' Rights On The Rights Of Women In Africa, Article 2(2)

- a. Integrate gender sensitisation and human rights education at all levels of education curricula including teacher training.
- b. States Parties shall take specific positive action to:
- c. Promote literacy among women;
- d. Promote education and training for women at all levels and in all disciplines, particularly in the fields of science and technology;
- e. Promote the enrolment and retention of girls in schools and other training institutions and the organisation of programmes for women who

3. Technology had not reached the level it is today, when the Maputo Protocol acknowledged and incorporated the need for wholesome education, and the need for women to be quick on the uptake, with science and technology. Technology is defined as the sum of techniques, skills, methods and processes used in the production of goods and services or in the accomplishment of desired objectives. As a noun a 'cutting edge' refers to the sharp edge of a blade that is used to cut objects. 'Cutting edge', as an adjective, refers to something that is extremely advanced and new. Cutting edge technology refers to the latest and most advanced tools, techniques, and platforms that are currently available in the software development industry.

4. The term is sometimes contrasted with "bleeding-edge," which refers to technologies that are so new that they are not quite ready for mass adoption. The use of cutting-edge technology in software development offers significant benefits, such as improved performance and efficiency, access to new and advanced features, and a competitive advantage in the market. Technology begets technology, hence innovations evolve faster and faster. The key leading-edge technologies being utilized and investigated by software developers today include:

a) Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI is helping software developers with advanced automation, advanced algorithms that can test code to identify and fix bugs. But more than that, AI can even generate code today, greatly augmenting the output of human programmers.

b) Low-code

One of the biggest changes in software development in the last few years has been the advent of low-code solutions. These platforms allow business users and developers to create applications much faster than traditional coding methods by using graphical user interfaces. Even non-programmers can create small but powerful apps just by dragging and dropping functional elements.

c) Serverless Computing

Moving compute resources offsite and into the cloud is facilitating more efficient code development and driving down costs. That's because it eliminates the need to provision, manage, and scale servers, reducing infrastructure costs and allowing organizations to only pay for the resources they actually use. It also gives skilled employees more time to focus on their code, not dealing with hardware issues.

d) Microservices

Instead of building giant, monolithic apps and services, there is a recent push to break software solutions into an array of microservices that all work together seamlessly. By distributing application components across multiple services, microservices help to ensure that applications continue to function even if one component fails, improving overall resilience.

e) Natural Language Processing (NLP)

Machine learning and AI-enhanced software development tools are increasingly leveraging Natural Language Processing. These systems attempt to understand text input much the same way humans can. NLP algorithms are being used by developers to classify and analyze text data, helping them extract insights from large datasets and build applications that respond intelligently to text inputs

Women; a Disadvantaged Group:

5. Women are empirically acknowledged as being more technological shy than the men. From the homes to the offices, women when challenged with technological know-hows are more likely to look around for the boy/man to solve the problem. Some of us cannot operate hi tech remote controls of our television sets at home and would scream for help from our boys/men. The phones in our hands are enigmas to some of us, as we do not utilise up to 30% of their functions. This attitude by itself have left women behind in technological professions. Thankfully, many of our daughters are better than we are. We need it to be so, to ensure gender equality in our age and clime. This paper seeks to highlight the historical trend of gender inequality and how technology and digital literacy can be utilised to foster greater gender equality with a focus on Sub-Saharan Africa as a case study.

6. Historically, women all over the world were discriminated against in a variety of ways including: human trafficking (which is done primarily for domestic servitude and sexual exploitation), not having the right to vote, domestic violence, prohibition from owning and inheriting property, unequal wages and treatment at the workplace, gender-based violence, lack of access to education, to mention a few. In recent years, the role of women in society has been expanded beyond their traditional roles with emphasis on gender equality and emancipating women through the initiatives and actions of governments and concerned private sector participants. However, despite significant progress, gender disparities continue to persist worldwide, and Africa is no exception. Societal and cultural factors, along with limited access to resources and opportunities, have hindered women's involvement in the workplace. Nevertheless, technology and education has the potential to serve as a catalyst for change, empowering women and promoting gender equality in Africa's workspace as the increasing use of technology is creating opportunities for all women all over the world to live better lives.

7. Gender Equality in Africa: Historical Context and Assessing the current trend
Gender discrimination (especially that of women) in Africa has persisted for donkey years, deeply pervading every stratum of society including: economic, political and cultural dimensions. Over time, African women have encountered

⁸ According to a commentator, females under the age of 18 are the highest victims of human trafficking in Africa. See Myranda Campanella, 'Violence Against Women in Africa', Borgen Project, 03.09.2020. <https://borgenproject.org/violence-against-women-in-africa/#:~:text=Alfrican%20women%20have%20experienced%20inequality%20in%20many%20aspects,lesser%20access%20to%20education%20and%20forms%20opportunities>, (accessed 28.07.2023).

⁹ According to statistics by the World Health Organization, 1 in every 3 women worldwide have been subjected to either sexual or violence by their partners. See World Health Organization, 'Violence against women', WHO Newsroom, 9.03.2021. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women> (accessed 31.07.2023).

countless obstacles, enduring unequal treatment and restricted opportunities in contrast to men. Prior to the advent of colonialism in Africa, gender roles were often clearly defined and deeply embedded in cultural practices and beliefs. Men were responsible for 'productive' work (such as hunting, farming, and political governance), while women were primarily assigned domestic duties and childcare responsibilities. Despite playing essential roles in their communities, women's access to education, property, and decision-making positions was significantly limited.

8. The colonisation of Africans by Europeans worsened gender disparities. The colonialists propagated patriarchal norms as they imposed their legal systems and other practices on communities. They often jettisoned traditional African practices that gave women certain rights and authority, thereby reinforcing gender inequality. For example, in Yoruba Land, there was the Iyalode who was a high ranking female chieftain in the land whose role was to represent the interests of women in governance. This is not to say that the pre-colonial system was perfect but existing prejudices were merely exacerbated by the European colonisers. In Nigeria, men and European companies were the major players in businesses such the distribution of rubber, groundnut and palm oil as the countries relied heavily on agricultural exports to grow. This further pushed women to the side lines. The customary land ownership which recognised ownership of lands by families was slowly erased and with societies being more capitalistic, land was owned primarily by the wealthy.

9. Following the attainment of independence by various countries in Africa, there was light at the end of tunnel as many nation's constitutions provided for women rights and anti-discrimination . For example, Section 42 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as Amended) states that no Nigerian should be discriminated against due to the circumstances of his/her birth. However, in reality, progress towards gender equality has been slow as traditional patriarchal structures persist.

10. During the course of the 20th century, African women's rights activists initiated mobilization efforts, advocating for parity in rights and opportunities. They played pivotal roles in the anti-colonial movements and subsequently in the pursuit of democracy and human rights. Their endeavours not only raised awareness about gender discrimination but also paved the path for incremental policy shifts. Over the past few decades, African nations have made remarkable strides in advancing gender equality. Numerous countries have undertaken legal reforms to safeguard women's rights, encompassing measures to combat gender-based violence, reform inheritance laws, and enhance the representation of women in politics. Although there has been progress, gender discrimination remains deeply rooted in African societies. Women's advancement is still hindered by gender-based violence, unequal access to education and healthcare, and limited economic opportunities. Nevertheless, numerous organizations, governments, and individuals are tirelessly working to tackle these challenges and promote gender equality in

10 United Women, 'In focus: UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67)', 27.02.2023.

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/in-focus/2023/02/in-focus-un-commission-on-the-status-of-women-csw67> (accessed 31.07.2023).

11 E. Kiptot, 'Gender Roles, Responsibilities, and Spaces: Implications for Agroforestry Research and Development in Africa', World Agroforestry Centre.

<https://www.ijstor.org/stable/2643618?#s=text=Women%20in%20Africa%20are%20generally%20ahead%20responsibility%20for%20the%20household.> (accessed 01.08.2023).

12 Eurzha Saungweine, 'A Critique of Africa's Post-Colonial Freedoms Through a Feminist Lens: Challenging Patriarchy and Assessing the Gains', Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 07.07.2021.

<https://za.boell.org/en/2021/07/07/critique-africas-post-colonial-freedoms-through-feminist-lens-challenging-patriarchy> (accessed 01.08.2023).

13 Nigerian Wiki, 'Iyalode': <https://nigerianwiki.com/iyalode> (accessed 01.08.2023).

14 Ibid. In 7.

15 Following from the recognition that women's rights are often marginalised in the context of human rights, specific human rights conventions and laws have been made to address specific needs of women. These include the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women, The Beijing Platform for Action, Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Right on the Rights of Women, etc. These instruments guarantees in a comprehensive manner, rights relating to the peculiar needs and challenges of women; such as: elimination of discrimination against women; elimination of harmful practices against women; rights in marriage, separation, divorce and annulment of marriage; access to justice and equal protection before the law; right to participation in the political and decision making process; protection of women in armed conflict; right of women to education and training, economic and social welfare rights, health and reproductive rights, right to food security, right to adequate housing, right to positive cultural context, right to health and sustainable environment, right to

Africa. As Africa progresses, it's crucial to keep prioritizing gender equality, striving to create a more just, inclusive, and prosperous continent for all its people.

The Digital Literacy Gap in Africa

Digital Literacy can be defined as “the ability to access, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate and create information safely and appropriately through digital technologies for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. It includes competences that are variously referred to as computer literacy, ICT literacy, information literacy and media literacy.” A high digital literacy level in Africa is useful because it would boost education, innovation, and economic growth. A recent report by the International Finance Corporation stated that the market size for teaching digital skills through 2030 across Sub-Saharan Africa, is estimated at approximately \$130 billion with a potential target market of 650 million people in need. This is evidenced by an increase in technology business and investments in Africa.

For example, according to Partech’s 2021 Africa Tech Venture Capital Report, investments in technology businesses and start-ups within Africa grew faster than any other region as \$6 billion dollars (both in debt and equity financing) was raised by them. This was spurred in part by the success of Fintech and the consequential rise of African techpreneurs.

11. The emergence of new and successful technology businesses such as Flutterwave, Paystack, Piggyvest, Kuda and Opay in Africa have birthed improvements in digital literacy in Africa as there has been increased adoption of fintech which was driven by the lockdown which characterised the Covid-19 era. It should however be noted that due to microeconomic challenges, investments in the African technology space have slowed down considerably in 2023. To buttress this point, analysis shows that Venture Capital firms only invested \$951 million in African technology businesses in H1 2023, which is a 50% decline from H1 2022.

While digital technology is essential for inclusive growth and innovation, there is still a huge deficit in Africa. According to World Bank statistics, only 50% of African countries have computer education as part of their curriculum. This is as opposed to 85% of countries globally that have computer education in their curriculum. The Digital Literacy deficit in Africa is further worsened by the migration of talent to other countries and Africa’s macroeconomic challenges. A proposal is that Digital skills should be embedded in the entire curriculum rather than taught separately. Children should be applying digital skills in their maths and literature classes, although a standalone digital skills class may still be useful.

12. While the use of technology holds a lot of promise in Africa, it is delayed by infrastructural deficits and the digital literacy gap as explicated above. Infrastructural deficits that have slowed down the widespread use of internet in

sustainable development, widows' rights, right to inheritance, special protection of elderly women, special protection of women with disabilities and women in distress.
16 See also the case of *Mojekwe v Mojekwe* [1997] 7 NWLR (Pt. 512) 283 at 304E – 305C, where the Court of Appeal held per Tobi, JCA (as then was), that the Orl-Ekpe custom which prevented women inheriting property was repugnant to justice being that Nigeria is an egalitarian society.
17 See Iris Berger, African Women's Movements in the Twentieth Century: A Hidden History, *African Studies Review*, Volume 57, Number 3 (December 2014), p.3: https://genderandsecurity.org/sites/default/files/Berger_-_African_Wo_Movements_in_the_20th_Century.pdf (accessed 01.08.2023).
18 Africa Human Development Report 2018: Accelerating Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Africa', United Nations Development Programme', p.vi: https://www.undp.org/files/gfiles/zskige320/files/publications/AHDR_2018_lowres_EN.pdf (accessed 01.08.2023).
19 Nancy Law et al, 'A Global Framework of Reference on Digital Literacy Skills for Indicator 4.4.2', United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics, *UIS/2018/ICT/1/1*, June 2018, p.6: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000265403/PDF/265403eng.pdf.multi> (accessed 31.07.2023).
20 George Asamari, Bridging the Digital Divide in Africa: How Technology and Education can empower the next generation, *Businessdayng*, 21.02.2022: [https://www.ifc.org/content/dam/ifc/doc/mgrt/digital-skills-final-web-5-7-19.pdf](https://businessdayng.com/articles/bridging-the-digital-divide-in-africa-how-technology-and-education-can-empower-the-next-generation/#:~:text=According%20to%20the%202021%20Ibrahim,ia,vered%20by%20a%20mobile%20network,(accessed 28.07.2023).
21 International Finance Corporation and L.E.K. Consulting, Digital Skills in Sub-Saharan Africa Spotlight on Ghana', p.10: <a href=) (accessed 23.07.2023).

Africa include lack of access to reliable internet and high level of poverty that makes basic digital technological devices and internet access unaffordable for the bottom segment of the market. Recent statistics by the World Bank show that only 22% of people living in sub-Saharan Africa use mobile internet services despite the fact that 54% live in areas where there is 4G internet. It was also shown that the price of 1.5 gigabytes for 1 month – a data bundle that typically covers a few hours of daily use for a month, is equivalent to approximately one-third of 40% of Africans' income. This shows that while the use of technology holds great potential in Africa, urgent action and strategy formulation towards addressing data illiteracy, digital skills shortages and access to credit, has to be undertaken by governments and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that the technology is properly harnessed and its potential is realised in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Gender Digital Literacy Gap in Africa

12. As stated above, it is intrinsic to note that while the statistics on digital literacy in Africa are very concerning, an analysis of the statistics with emphasis on access to technology by men and women paints a more horrid picture. For instance, 16 % fewer Nigerian women than men use technology. Evidence also shows that in countries in sub-Saharan Africa, there is a 43% discrepancy in women's access to the internet in comparison to that of men. This gap is largely driven by the following factors: draconian customs and traditions that subjugate women and unaffordability of technological devices and internet access. The lack of digital literacy amongst women in Africa and the world at large has led to women being excluded in the Information and Technology fields. This means that the technology sector is dominated by men and the technology produced is largely customised to the preference of men. According to findings by Boston Consulting Group (BCG), gender diversity in leadership of technology companies fell to 59% in 2021.

The Role of Technology and Innovations in Bridging the Gender Equality Gap

13. Medical Advancements/Innovations

Historically and till date, continuous technological innovations in fields of medicine play an important role in entrenching gender equality. Prior to the dawn of the 20th century, most women did not work outside the home. This was in part driven by high illiteracy and societal customs that necessitated women to be primarily relegated to household chores and unsafe factory work. The evidence shows that as soon as most women got married, they left the workforce.

Another factor that affected women's ability to participate in the workplace was their biological idiosyncrasies such as having menstrual flows, and an inability to effectively control pregnancy. Medical innovations have played a critical role in allowing women to be included in the workplace. Jordan Peterson –a renowned psychologist and political commentator once stated as follows:

“...throughout history, men and women both struggled terribly for freedom from the overwhelming horrors of privation and necessity. Women were often at a disadvantage during that struggle, as they had all the vulnerabilities of men, with the extra reproductive burden, and less physical strength. In addition to

22 Partech Partners, '2021 Africa Tech Venture Capital Report: <https://partechpartners.com/2021-africa-tech-venture-capital-report/> (accessed 29.07.2023).

23 Ephraim Modise, 'Africa VC funding dips by 54% in H1 2023, as accelerators lead the way in cheque-writing', *techcabal*, 11.07.2023: <https://techcabal.com/2023/07/11/africa-vc-funding-h1/> (accessed 24.07.2023).

24 Salah-Eddine Kandri, 'Africa's future is bright—and digital', *World Bank Blogs*, 23.10.2019: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/digital-development/africas-future-bright-and-digital> (accessed 31.07.2023).

25 Office of the Chief Economist, 'Digital Africa: Technological Transformation for Jobs', *World Bank, Press Releases*, 13.03.2023: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/aftr/publication/digital-africa> (accessed 20.07.2023). Ibid.

the filth, misery, disease, starvation, cruelty and ignorance that characterized the lives of both sexes, back before the twentieth century (when even people in the Western world typically existed on less than a dollar a day in today's money) women also had to put up with the serious practical inconvenience of menstruation, the high probability of unwanted pregnancy, the chance of death or serious damage during childbirth, and the burden of too many young children. Perhaps that is sufficient reason for the different legal and practical treatment of men and women that characterized most societies prior to the recent technological revolutions, including the invention of the birth control pill.” Emphasis supplied.

14. The above quote shows that the advancement of birth control methods had a critical role to play in advancing women rights especially. To give credence to the preceding statement, we should do an analysis of the evolution of birth control methods. In the 1800s, the Egyptians used fermented leaves, and donkey milk as contraceptives. In 1839, rubber was used for birth control for the first time in history with mass production of rubber condoms happening 20 years. In 1957, the first birth control pills (which included artificial progesterone and oestrogen) were created by Margaret Sanger and her friends. In 1960, emergency contraceptive pills were made. In more recent time, the first contraceptive mobile application was created and launched by Karolinska Institutet, which shows fertility using an accompanying thermometer.

15. There is no doubt that women are under pressure to figure out their family and career in their middle terms and this creates pressure on women to either slow down their career or put a hold on having children. With reliable birth control mechanisms, women can with greater certainty determine when they decide to get pregnant. This gives them the much-needed flexibility to advance further in their careers without being slowed down by unplanned pregnancies. Other medical advancements like the freezing of eggs, surrogacy and even in-vitro fertilisation help women to either outsource or defer having a child entirely without the need to worry about menopause.

Furthermore, the creation of appropriate menstrual products (such as tampons, disposal pads, and modern menstrual caps) has also helped women to be integrated into the workplace as they now have the freedom to move freely and work without any fear of embarrassment and stigmatisation. While there is no direct evidence that advancements in medical innovations caused women to be more included in the workspace thereby reducing gender equality, there is at a minimum evidence to show that there is a positive correlation (and necessary causation) between the advancement of birth control and sanitary products and the integration of women in the workplace.

16. *Other conventional forms of technology.*

In recent time, there has been increasing adoption of technology especially in sub-Saharan Africa. This was partly as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to restrictions that were placed on physical transactions during the covid-19 era, businesses and individuals had to adopt innovative ways of transacting. The benefits of harnessing technology during this time still persist and have

27 Felix Aguboshim et al, 'Closing ICT usability gaps for Nigerian women and girls: Strategies for reducing gender inequality', World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 03.07.2022, 15(01), 056-063, p.67; <https://wjarr.com/sites/default/files/WJARR-2022-0665.pdf> (accessed 01.08.2023).
28 Maria Barton et al, 'Preparing Girls for the Future of Africa: Approaches to Empowerment through Digital Skills', World Bank, 27.04.2023; [https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/preparing-girls-future-africa-approaches-empowerment-through-digital-skills#:~:text=In%20sub%20saharan%20africa%20\(SSA,57%25%20of%20men%2C%20respective, \(accessed 22.07.2023\).
29 Victoria Kwakwa, 'Accelerating Gender Equality: Let's Make Digital Technology Work for All', World Bank Blogs, 07.03.2023; <https://blogs.worldbank.org/african/accelerating-gender-equality-lets-make-digital-technology-work-all> \(accessed 21.07.2023\).
30 Estimates show that women only make up 25% of employees in the technology sector. See Tech Funnel, 'International Women's Day: The Latest Women in Tech Statistics to Know in 2023', 19.04.2023; \[https://www.techfunnel.com/information-technology/women-in-tech/#:~:text=According%20to%20research%2C%20women%20make,oles%20are%20held%20by%20women. \\(accessed 25.07.2023\\).
31 Neveen Awad et al, 'The Pandemic's Lasting and Surprising Effects on Women in Tech', Boston Consulting Group, 11.08.2022; <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2022/how-the-pandemic-continues-to-affect-female-leaders-in-tech> \\(accessed 26.07.2023\\).\]\(https://www.techfunnel.com/information-technology/women-in-tech/#:~:text=According%20to%20research%2C%20women%20make,oles%20are%20held%20by%20women.\)](https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/preparing-girls-future-africa-approaches-empowerment-through-digital-skills#:~:text=In%20sub%20saharan%20africa%20(SSA,57%25%20of%20men%2C%20respective,)

helped in erasing gender disparities. They include:

(i) *Video-conferencing tools like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meets*

One of the forms of technology that was adopted on a larger scale both in Africa and globally was video-conferencing tools like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meets to host virtual meetings in the workplace. Video-conferencing tools can give women the flexibility they need to succeed in their careers. The use of video conferencing technology removes the need for women (and men) to be physically present at work to be able to hold collaborative meetings with their team members easily. This means that women can mix-up their traditional gender roles with work in an easier manner.

(ii) *The use of social media*

Social media has been used for feminists and activities to bring awareness to challenges that women face in society. The role of social media in our daily lives is of utmost importance, as it greatly influences our social values. UN Women has been working in partnership with private sector organizations to harness the power of media, especially social media, as a potent tool to advocate for gender equality and the elimination of violence against women. A good example of when social media has been utilised to bring awareness to discrimination and mistreatment is the #metoo movement. It started as an initial post by Alyssa Milano which stated as follows: "If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet." 24 hours after the tweet, she got 500 replies. This brought awareness to sexual assault and gave a lot of women who had been victims of sexual assault the courage to speak out about their experiences without fears of being stigmatised. It also led to the investigation and conviction of offenders who had gone unpunished for a long time. Another notable mention is the UN's HeForShe movement (which was in part driven by social media) which extends an invitation to men and individuals of all gender identities to unite in solidarity with women, forming a powerful, conspicuous, and unified movement for gender equality. The above efforts can also be replicated in Africa so that social media would play a positive role in reducing the gender disparities in all segments of society, and drive inclusive and sustainable growth.

(iii) *Remote Work*

Remote work offers numerous advantages for women, ranging from improved life and family management to extended career longevity. According to Ola Brown – Country Manager for Microsoft Nigeria, "Innovation surges when diversity increases and one thing that remote and hybrid workplaces have enabled is more diverse hiring." Remote work opportunities create a "win for all" outcome for all parties involved. Due to the flexibility and reduced costs for both business and their employees, it is attractive for workers (especially women). Statistics also show that women are likely to earn similar wages with their male counterparts when working remotely.

Remote work creates a work-life balance for its employees which is mostly beneficial to women. This gives women the ability to focus on their families and carry out their traditional gender roles. Adoption of remote work or at minimum a hybrid environment is therefore an important device that can be utilised to reduce gender equality.

32 Jordan Peterson, '12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos', published by Allen Lane, 2018, p.206: <https://nashah.net/wp-content/uploads/books/12-Rules-for-Life.pdf> (accessed 01.08.2023).

33 Mårten Gøthlin, 'Timeline: Contraceptives', Karolinska Institutet, first published in Swedish in Medicinsk Vetenskap no 3/2017, reviewed by Cecilia Odling on 13-09-2022. <https://isee/en/research/timeline-contraceptives> (accessed 31.07.2023).

34 Adam McCulloch, 'Gender equality: Men and women are not the same and won't be', Personnel Today, 13.03.2018: <https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/jordan-peterson-gender-pay-gap-exist/> (accessed 01.08.2023).

35 Megan Cummings, 'The Evolution of Menstrual Products', Mymed.com: <https://www.mymed.com/health-wellness/interesting-health-info/the-evolution-of-menstrual-products#:~:text=The%20first%20absorbent%20disposable%20sanitary,French%20nurses%20found%20in%20hospitals.> (accessed 30.07.2023).

(iv) Remote Learning

During Covid-19, schools across Africa and all over the world were forced to adopt EduTech and innovative solutions to teach students without the need of physically meeting with them. Edutech like Coursera, Udemy and Edx have also been increasingly used. Furthermore, innovative schools like Nexford University which issues degrees are also in demand. Since Edutech do not have the overhead of traditional educational institutions, they make education more affordable and accessible to wide range of people all over the world. If properly utilised, remote learning can be a useful tool in eliminating gender disparity vis-à-vis access to quality education in Africa. Governments therefore have to develop policies that would improve the adoption of Edutech without compromising the quality of education.

(v) Scheduling tools

Work scheduling tools like Calendly and Google Calendar can play a significant role in bridging the gender disparity gap within workplaces. While these tools may not directly address gender disparities, they contribute to creating a more inclusive and equitable work environment in several ways. They include: (i) providing transparent and accessible calendars, making it easier for other team members to see each other's availability; (ii) facilitating flexible work arrangements that accommodate personal and family responsibilities which can be especially beneficial for women, as they often face additional societal expectations related to family commitments. While work scheduling tools alone cannot completely eliminate gender disparities in the workplace, they certainly contribute to fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment.

(vi) Online Networking/Recruiting

Various online recruiting agencies and Apps exist that have reduced the need for physical interviews which sometimes discourage female applicants in certain employment environments. In these social employment networks and recruiting procedures, qualifications and competences take the pride of place in the recruitment exercises. The procedures are transparent and do not allow for sexualisation of the process.

(vii) Online Marketing

Online marketing is a set of tools and methodologies used for promoting products and services through the internet. Online marketing includes a wider range of marketing elements than traditional business marketing due to the extra channels and marketing mechanisms available on the internet. Online marketing is also known as internet marketing, web marketing, or digital marketing. It includes several branches such as social media marketing (SMM), search engine optimization (SEO), pay-per-click advertising (PPC), and search engine marketing (SEM). Online marketing can deliver benefits such as; growth in potential, reduced expenses, elegant communications, better control, improved customer service and competitive advantage.

(viii) Using cutting-edge technology in education and software development has the added advantage of:

36 Ritu Srivastava, 'Tech in Pandemic Response, But Many Left Behind: Lessons from Africa', ORF Issue Brief No. 809, 03. 2023, Observer Research Foundation: <https://www.orfonline.org/research/tech-in-pandemic-response-but-many-left-behind/> (accessed 01.08.2023).

37 Natasha Dhawan et al, 'Videoconferencing Etiquette: Promoting Gender Equity During Virtual Meetings', Journal of Women's Health, 18.04.2022: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8054546/#> (accessed 01.08.2022).

38 Using Media to Promote Gender Equality, UN Women:

[https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/china/using-media-to-promote-gender-equality#:~:text=Media%20plays%20a%20very%20important,women%20and%20promote%20gender%20equality,\(accessed 31.08.2023\).](https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/china/using-media-to-promote-gender-equality#:~:text=Media%20plays%20a%20very%20important,women%20and%20promote%20gender%20equality,(accessed 31.08.2023).)

39 Rachel Haas, 'One year on from the #MeToo movement, what exactly has changed?', World Economic Forum, 26.11.2018:

https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/11/meetoo-women-equality-one-year-later/?DAG=3&gclid=Cj0KCQw2qKmbhCtARisAFy8buJdIAhE_3c4PNj_2NufaFofnZFJXZMdlmWH3kIgGlnPB3XylnJn98AorRIE&w_wick (accessed on 02.08.2023).

40 PricewaterhouseCoopers, 'UN Women HeForShe Alliance', n.d.: <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/about/diversity/he-for-she.html> (accessed 01.08.2023).

Improved Performance and Efficiency

Newer technologies are designed to offer faster, more efficient solutions to common problems in software development, making it easier for developers to produce high-quality software in less time. This can accelerate time-to-market, lower development costs, and improve the user experience.

Access to New and Advanced Features

With the continuous evolution of technology, new features are being developed all the time, and by using cutting-edge technology, businesses can take advantage of these advancements. For example, the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning is becoming increasingly common in software development.

Competitive Advantage in the Market

By staying ahead of the curve and using the latest technologies, businesses can differentiate themselves from their competitors and offer differentiated solutions to their customers – all of which help increase market share and brand recognition and improve customer satisfaction.

Cost savings

Upon final establishment and operation, goods and services become cheaper. This improves customer experience and competitiveness.

17. Challenges:

It is apposite to state that if not properly harnessed, technology could have a negative impact on the good strides that have been engendering gender equality all over the world and be used as a tool to abuse women's right. Buttressing this point, during the 67th Annual Session of the United Nations (UN) on the Status of Women (CSW67) held in March 2023, António Guterres – UN Secretary-General stated that "The gender digital divide is fast becoming the new face of gender inequality...". He also opined that the domination of new technologies by men is reversing gender equality as same means that power is concentrated more in the hands of men. Examples of how technology can be used to abuse women's rights include cyber bullying, objectification of women and revenge porn.

Unguided Use of Social Media

There is the need to note that the social media can reduce productivity when used unguardedly. Women spend more time on social media for less productive activities than men. This is a big challenge to gender parity.

Talent Drain

Over reliance on hitechs in what has hitherto been recognised as high competences may lead to over-dependence on techs and a reduction in talents.

41 Rachael J, 'How Remote Work Supports UN Sustainable Development Goal No. 5 of Achieving Gender Equality', Flexjobs blogs: <https://www.flexjobs.com/blog/post/remote-work-un-sdg-gender-equality/> (accessed 01.08.2022)
42 Chuka Uroko, 'How Remote Work is [Bridging] Gender Gap in Workplaces', Businessday, 28.03.2022: <https://businessday.ng/news/article/how-remote-work-is-bridging-gender-gap-in-workplaces/> (accessed 02.08.2022).
43 Diogo Omaro et al, 'COVID-19 and education: The Digital Gender Divide among Adolescents in Sub-Saharan Africa', UNICEF, 4.08.2020: <https://data.unicef.org/data-for-action/covid-19-and-education-the-digital-gender-divide-among-adolescents-in-sub-saharan-africa/> (accessed on 02.08.2022).
44 It should be noted that the licensing of universities in Nigeria is primarily done by the National Universities Commission. The requirement of a physical before provincial and final licences can be given to universities might slow down the adoption of degree issuing EduTechs.

Lack of Tech Infrastructure

According to World Bank statistics, only 50% of African countries have computer education as part of their curriculum. This is as opposed to 85% of countries globally that have computer education in their curriculum. The Digital Literacy deficit in Africa is further worsened by the migration of talent to other countries and Africa's macroeconomic challenges

Adoption and Implementation Costs

New technologies often require significant investments in time, money, and resources. Also, new technologies may not be compatible with existing systems and processes, requiring significant resources and effort to integrate them into an organization's operational infrastructure.

Maturity and Stability Issues

New technologies are often untested and can be unreliable, which can result in compatibility issues and bugs. This can lead to increased development time and reduced user satisfaction, as well as an increased risk of project failure.

Limited Community Support

With new technologies, there is often a smaller pool of skilled developers and a lack of established best practices and proven methodologies. That can make it difficult for businesses to find the support they need to successfully implement and use these technologies.

18. As we consider the effect which embracing cutting-edge technology can have on bridging the gender gap, we as legal practitioners must note that there is a need to keep learning and upgrading our IT knowledge, in order not to create a new gender concern. We must be quick on technological uptake, both in the profession and in other callings. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is on the rise and is changing the way we conduct legal and other researches. Recently, a company called ROSS Intelligence has started using the IBM called Watson in order to perform Legal Research. Specifically, the company is attempting to get Watson to understand and interpret the legal terminology used by lawyers in order to look up case law and statutes. It is of interest to know that many other firms are trying to develop similar technology that will enable lawyers delegate the task of reviewing contracts to a computer . Other areas of legal practice affected by technological advancement are:

- Filing of Processes: Many Courts today have court processes being filed electronically.
- Service of Processes. Courts are adopting electronic services in addition to the traditional methods of service of Court's processes.
- Virtual and Hybrid Court Proceedings are now conducted by Courts.

19. We as female legal practitioners must not shy away from these new methods of legal practice. Technology makes it easier for Attorneys to practice law while saving on large overhead costs. However, ICT literacy amongst legal practitioners and Judicial Officers is presently low and is affected by lack of the infrastructure needed to effectively mount the needed applications. There are still the issue of cyber security and inadequate legislation to regulate ICT implementation. Therefore, with the rise of technology in legal practice, technology-based Continuing Legal Education (CLE) programs should be encouraged.

45 United Women, 'Technology is playing key role in gender equality reversals, says UN Chief', 15.03.2023:

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/news/2023/03/technology-is-playing-key-role-in-gender-equality-reversals-says-un-chief> (accessed 31.07.2023).

46 Dianova, 'Is Digital Technology a Driver or a Barrier to Gender Equality?', 08.03.2023: <https://www.dianova.org/opinion/is-digital-technology-a-driver-or-a-barrier-to-gender-equality/> (accessed 20.06.2023).

47 Salah-Eddine Kandri, 'Africa's future is bright—and digital', World Bank Blogs, 23.10.2019: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/digital-development/africas-future-bright-and-digital> (accessed 31.07.2023).

This means that the traditional way of practice will gradually be de-emphasised. Cyber security/protection should be assured as Legal Practitioners have an obligation to keep the information and property of their clients safe and that includes keeping information away from hackers.

20. Conclusion/Recommendations

From the above explications, it is clear that the adoption of innovative technology and digital literacy plays an essential role in achieving gender equality in Africa as they can be used as tools to break down the barriers that have stopped women from reaching their potential and contributing to society. However, achieving gender equality through education and adoption of technology requires a collective effort from governments, educational institutions, and the private sector. Possible solutions to erase the digital literacy gaps and gender disparities in this regard include: (i) the formulation of policies and the development of bespoke infrastructure projects to support affordable and inclusive internet access; (ii) re-jigging the entire educational curriculum to include Computer Science courses across all levels of education and deploying edutech to teach students at all levels; and (iii) government support of technology-enabled firms including funding, skills and market access tailored to women. Closing the gender disparity in digital literacy would help improve gender equality. While strides and considerable improvements have been made, as the aphorism states: "it is not yet uhuru". Steps must therefore be taken to continually reduce and possibly eliminate the financial literacy gap in Africa and the world at large.

Conclusively, education and embracing cutting-edge technology are undeniably sine qua non to achieving gender equality in Africa. By embracing this holistic approach, we can create a future where every individual, regardless of gender, has an equal opportunity to thrive, contribute, and shape a brighter and more prosperous continent for all. While total gender equality might seem impossible to some, it is important to note that we have taken several steps in actualising that journey of a thousand miles. There is therefore hope, that the future is brighter than today, in the gender indices of our dear continent.

48 Hon. Justice BB Kanyi/ PNICN, "The Future of Legal Practice in the Face of Emerging Technologies", Text of the Keynote Address Delivered on 30 November 2020 at the Annual Law Week of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) Branches in Enugu State, the theme of which is Future of Legal Practice in the Face of Emerging Technologies. The Law Week held at the Hon. Justice I. A. Umezulike Auditorium, High Court Complex, Independence Layout, Enugu

49 Victoria Kwakwa, 'Accelerating Gender Equality: Let's Make Digital Technology Work for All', World Bank Blogs, 07.03.2023. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/african/accelerating-gender-equality-lets-make-digital-technology-work-all> (accessed 21.07.2023).

50 For example, according to World Economic Forum's 2018 Global Gap Index, if the current gender inequities persist, it would take 135 years to eradicate gender inequality. See Lynsey Chutel, 'It will take 135 years to Close the Gender Gap in sub-Saharan Africa', Quartz, 20.12.2018: <https://qz.com/africa/1503278/global-gender-gap-index-africas-gap-widens> (accessed 02.08.2023).

4.2. Unlocking the Power of Digital Branding, Building an online Presence & Strategies for Protection against Cyber Bullying/Digital Pornography.
By Abimo Toyosi Olayiwola



Abimo Toyosi Olayiwola

**THE POWER OF
DIGITAL BRANDING
FOR WOMEN IN AFRICA:
BUILDING ONLINE PRESENCE,
STRATEGISING AGAINST
CYBER-BULLYING AND DIGITAL
PORNOGRAPHY**

BY ABIMO OLAYIWOLA ESQ



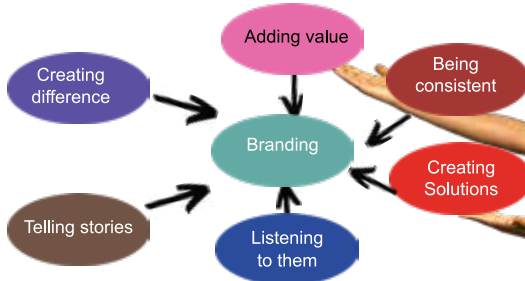
INTRODUCTION

Your brand is the way the outside world perceives you.



BRANDING

The process of designing and shaping the world's perception about you!



DIGITAL BRANDING

Shaping people's perception about you by projecting and maintaining a consistent identity, reputation, and presence across online platforms.



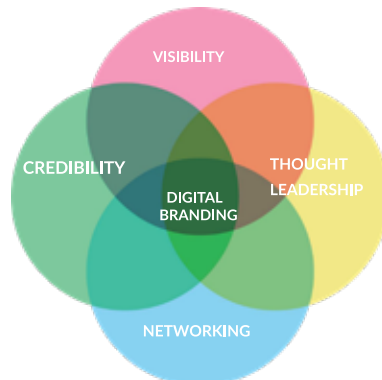
THE POWER OF DIGITAL BRANDING

It allows immediate access to a global audience at the click of a button.



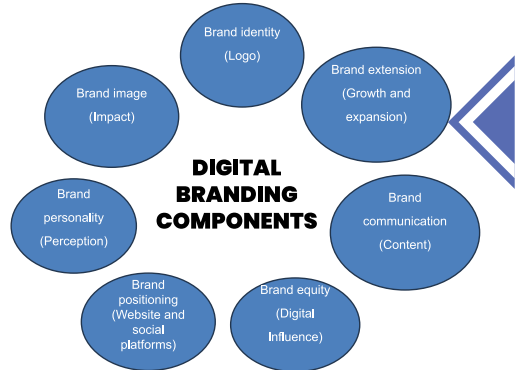
HOW A STRONG DIGITAL BRAND CAN ENHANCE THE CAREER OF WOMEN IN AFRICA

- 1 VISIBILITY
- 2 CREDIBILITY
- 3 AUTHORITY
- 4 NETWORKING



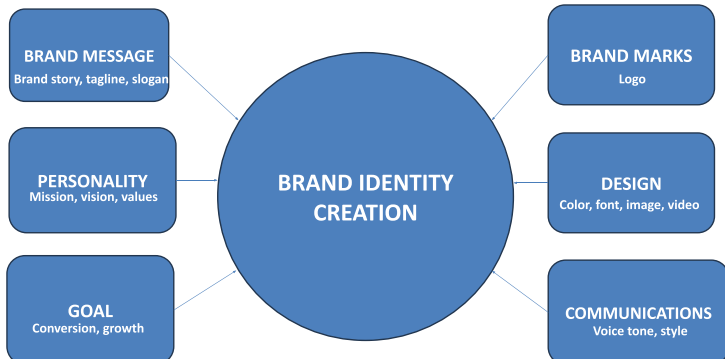
COMPONENTS OF DIGITAL BRANDING

- 1 LOGO, COLOR, FONT
- 2 VISUALS & PICTURES
- 3 WHAT THEY THINK
- 4 WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA
- 5 FOLLOWERS & COMMUNITY
- 6 VOICE TONE & MESSAGE
- 7 CAMPAIGN & ACTIVISM



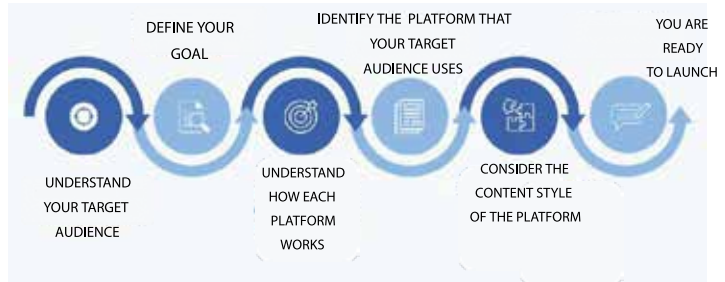
DIGITAL BRANDING STRATEGIES

Step 1



DIGITAL BRANDING STRATEGIES

Step 2: Ideal platform decision



DIGITAL BRANDING STRATEGIES

Step 3: Launch out



DIGITAL BRANDING STRATEGIES

Step 4: Share content



PROTECTION AGAINST CYBER-BULLYING AND DIGITAL PORNOGRAPHY

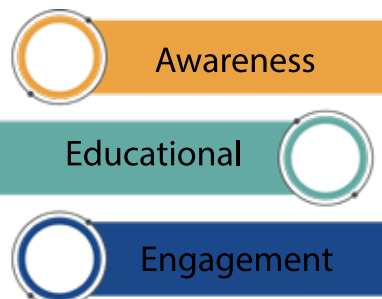


PROTECTION AGAINST CYBER-BULLYING AND DIGITAL PORNOGRAPHY

Article III(4) of the Maputo Protocol provides for the right to dignity and protection of women from all forms of violence, particularly sexual and verbal violence.

PROTECTION AGAINST CYBER-BULLYING AND DIGITAL PORNOGRAPHY

Online campaigns



PROTECTION AGAINST CYBER-BULLYING AND DIGITAL PORNOGRAPHY

Reporting mechanisms



PROTECTION AGAINST CYBER-BULLYING AND DIGITAL PORNOGRAPHY

Parental control software and safe search filters

Parental control software

<https://kidlogger.net>

Family Shield

<https://www.opendns.com>

Google Safe search

<https://google.com/safesearch>



PROTECTION AGAINST CYBER-BULLYING AND DIGITAL PORNOGRAPHY

Social media control

Facebook allows parents to set up a supervised profile for their child.



Instagram has a feature called restricted account which allows parents to restrict their children's activities on the app.



TikTok has a family safety mode that allow parents to link their own account to their child's account.



Youtube has Youtube kids app



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Abimo Toyosi Olayiwola
LLB, BL, LLM

Questions & Answers

Chapter Five

PROMOTING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT THROUGH TECHNOLOGY, INFORMATION & FINANCE.

5.1. UNDERSTANDING THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA AGREEMENT (AfCFTA)
By Mfon Ekong Usoro





Mfon Ekong Usoro

**Talking Points**
African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA)
at
FIDA African Regional Congress

Mfon Ekong Usoro
26 August 2023

Mfon Ekong Usoro 1

**About AfCFTA**

Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Regional integration•Boost intra African trade•Harmonize trade rules across regions•Entry into force - January 2021	
Single Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eliminate tariff in trade in goods, reduce barriers to trade in services• Free movement of persons• No of signatories – 54; ratifications - 41	
Market size	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 55 countries, over 1.3billion people. Projection 1.7bn by 2030 (WEF)• Combined GDP - US\$3.4trillion (World Bank, 2022)	

Mfon Ekong Usoro 2



Key Objectives of AfCFTA, Arts 3 & 4

AfCFTA - African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement



DEEPEN THE ECONOMIC
INTERGRATION OF THE AFRICAN
CONTINENT



CREATE A SINGLE MARKET FOR
GOODS, SERVICES BY MOVEMENT OF
PERSONS



CREATE A LIBERALIZED MARKET FOR
GOODS AND SERVICES THROUGH
NEGOTIATIONS

Mfon Ekong Usoro

3



Negotiation Phases & Priority Sectors

Attainment of AfCFTA
is approached in
Phases

Phase 1 – Trade in
Goods and Trade in
Services

5 Priority Service
Sectors

Business Services

Financial
Services

Communication
Services

Tourism & Travel
Services

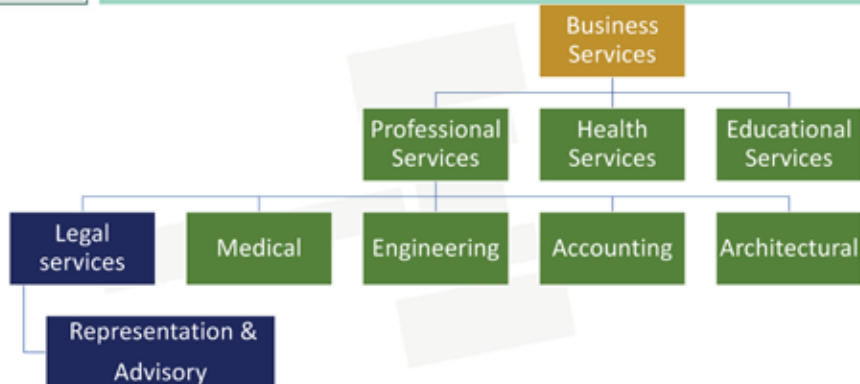
Transport
Services

Mfon Ekong Usoro

4



Classification of Services

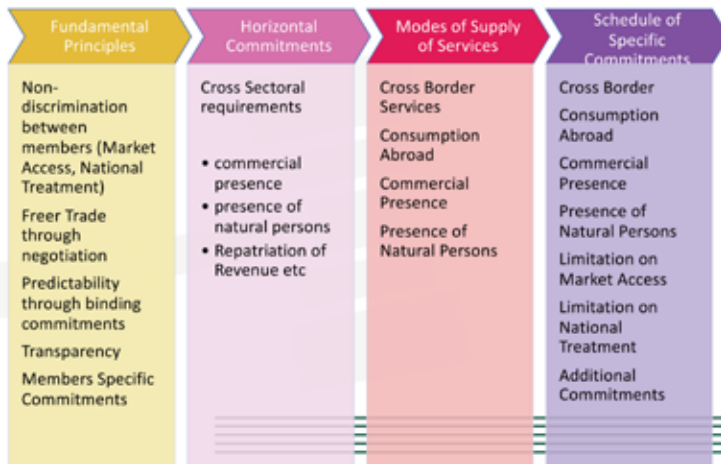


Mon Ekong Usoro

5



AfCFTA NEGOTIATION PRINCIPLES



8/22/23

6



Opportunities in AfCFTA



Gather knowledge

Engage with your government's National Action Committees on AfCFTA Agreement on Services that are relevant to legal services



Digital Trade in Legal Services; Contribute to rule making



Be on your Government's negotiating team

Contribute to policies, laws and regulations on trade in legal services

AfCFTA is gender neutral



AfCFTA

• Discussions



5.2. PROMOTING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT THROUGH TECHNOLOGY, INFORMATION AND FINANCE STRATEGIES – A FOCUS ON THE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GENDER STRATEGY – AFFIRMATIVE FINANCE ACTION FOR WOMEN IN AFRICA (AFAWA).

By Ezinwa N. Okoroafor – International Director, FIDA



Ezinwa N. Okoroafor

Introduction

The empowerment of women and girls is key to their advancement. There are various forms of empowerment, but the focus of this presentation is the economic empowerment of women and girls.

One of the anchors of FIDA's objectives is the realisation that the happiness of the home and the strength of society depend on the well-being of women and children. In the same manner, increasingly, the importance of the place of women and girls as critical to fostering inclusive and dynamic economies as well as establishing prosperous and healthy societies is gaining traction. Societies thrive when all citizens have equal access to and control of resources, as well as broader access to opportunity.

What is the current status of Women?

The United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres told the Commission on the Status of Women at an event ahead of International Women's Day in March 2023, that progress toward gender equality is "vanishing before our eyes". He stated further that gender equality is "300 years away" according to the latest estimates from UN Women.

This is consistent with other available evidence that suggests that it will take over 100 years to close the gender gap globally, and over 200 years to reach economic gender parity. The situation is most likely to be worse in Africa, given its history of lagging generally in indices relating to women's advancement. The foregoing therefore underscores the need to intensify action to accelerate progress for women all over the world.

The indices do not favour women:

The African Development Bank (AfDB) Group Gender Strategy Report 2012- 2025 highlights the following salient facts:

- A review of key sectors, namely agriculture, trade, industry, energy, finance, water, sanitation and hygiene as well as social, shows that women and girls face several constraints that hinder their active participation and full benefit from sector potential and growth.
- Around 50% of the African population is female, and yet resources, opportunities, and decision-making in all sectors, are still heavily tilted towards men. (This is buttressed by a UNDP Africa Bureau report - Closing Gender Gaps in Labour and Productive Resources in Africa, gender

inequality in the labour market cost Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) USD 95 billion annually between 2010 and 2014, implying that Africa's growth potential is not fully utilised or realised).

- In agriculture, female smallholder farmers face a 20–30% productivity gap compared to their male counterparts. Closing the gender gap in food and agriculture could have a tremendous development impact, including raising crop production by up to 19%, boosting agricultural and overall GDP, and lifting millions of people out of poverty.
- Women aged 25–34 are 25% more likely than men to live in extreme poverty. Despite rising education levels among women and girls, there is still a high gender imbalance in both education and employment. Data from a sample of African countries shows that women spend 15– 20% of their time on unpaid care and domestic work, compared to an average of 5% among men.
- On the continent, female-owned enterprises record monthly profits that are on average 38% lower than those of male-owned enterprises.
- Furthermore, women's access to digital technology remains limited. In Sub-Saharan Africa, women are 10% less likely to own a mobile phone than men and 23% less likely than men to use mobile internet.
- Gender imbalances deepen in conflict areas. Women are also disproportionately affected by climate change and global health shocks such as COVID-19.

Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment

The economic empowerment of women is a critical need if the world as a whole must advance. Studies have shown that women reinvest most of their revenues in the health, education, and nutrition of their families, thereby helping to break the cycle of poverty. Their full socio-economic participation therefore yields high dividends in terms of development. Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment are intrinsically linked to sustainable development and are vital to the realisation of human rights for all.

Economic Empowerment is also key to the advancement of women and girls in Africa. If African nations are to effectively navigate their path toward economic prosperity, they must enhance delivery on establishing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. In recognition of the importance of women's economic empowerment, Article XIII of the MAPUTO Protocol provides for Economic and Social Welfare Rights and requires States Parties to adopt and enforce legislative and other measures to guarantee women equal opportunities in work and career advancement and other economic opportunities.

In line with the ongoing efforts by the African Union Commission to ensure the inclusion of women in Africa's development agenda, the 33rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the AU in February 2020, declared 2020-2030 the second African Women's Decade, focusing on the financial inclusion of African women.

Building on this, organisations such as the African Development Bank (AfDB) Group have taken steps to help support and empower Africa's women.

The AfDB Economic Empowerment Strategy

The AfDB Group is a regional multilateral development finance institution established to contribute to the economic development and social progress of African countries that are its regional member countries. It is a financial provider to African governments and private companies investing in the regional member countries. The AfDB's mission is to help reduce poverty, improve living conditions for Africans, and mobilise resources for the continent's economic and social development. The Bank also plans to accelerate economic and social development in regional member countries (RMCs).

The AfDB recognised that although Africa is a rising continent, its journey towards socio-economic fulfillment will be slowed down if there is no focus on accelerating the empowerment of its women and girls. The 2020 African Economic Outlook of the AfDB noted an improvement in growth fundamentals in Africa and prospects for economic recovery. It therefore noted further that with equal access and participation, women can be powerful drivers of recovery in the effort to build back better economies and societies.

The AfDB Group developed its Gender Strategy 2021 – 2025 to invest in Africa's women and accelerate inclusive growth. The Gender Strategy 2021-2025 is intended to prioritise the need to reduce gender inequalities across Africa by increasing access to finance and technical assistance, enhancing technical skills, and gender-responsive infrastructure.

The Strategy is anchored on three pillars that support the Bank's priorities to promote transformative gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment. These are:

- Pillar 1- Empowering women through access to finance and markets
- Pillar 2- Accelerating employability and job creation for women through skills enhancement.
- Pillar 3- Increasing women's access to social services through infrastructure.

The Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa (AFAWA) is a pan-African initiative of AfDB under its Gender Strategy 2021 – 2025, to bridge the \$42 billion financing gap facing women in Africa.

Why was AFAWA set up?

AFAWA was set up based on the following realisations:

- **Women are the backbone of the African economy.** The African continent has the highest percentage of women entrepreneurs in the world. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2016/17 Women's Report, the female entrepreneurship rate in sub-Saharan Africa is 25.9% of the female adult population, meaning that one in four women starts or manages a business.
- **Women typically reinvest up to 90% of their income in the education, health and nutrition of their family and community** - compared to up to 40% for men. This means that investing in women's businesses can transform societies.
- **Women entrepreneurs face multiple challenges to access finance**, with an estimated \$42 billion financing gap for African women across business value chains, including \$15.6 billion in agriculture alone. The challenges include:
 - Finance: lending to women is seen as riskier, so they face prohibitive interest rates. In addition, women often lack traditional collateral and guarantees.
 - Capacity: financial institutions lack the capacity to understand and respond appropriately to women entrepreneurs, who also often lack the financial and business acumen to respond to the needs of financial institutions.
 - Business environment: in many countries, the legal and regulatory frameworks hinder women's full participation in private sector growth.

AFAWA's approach challenges the gender gap in access to finance and liberates women's entrepreneurial capacity in Africa.

What does AFAWA do? - This program seeks to improve access to finance across the African continent using a unique risk-sharing mechanism dedicated to Women-led Small and Medium Enterprises (WSMEs). It also focuses on overcoming some of the institutional challenges constraining women's access to finance. By employing a holistic approach, the program offers innovative and tailored financial products, including a credit enhancement instrument, specialized capacity building trainings for financial institutions and WSMEs, and targeted initiatives to transform the business-enabling environment for WSMEs.

AFAWA does this in the following ways: AFAWA finance- Empowering women through access to finance and markets: Improving access to finance for WSMEs by implementing a first-loss risk-sharing facility to de-risk the WSME portfolio of banks, SME impact funds, and financial institutions-focused funds that invest in Tier 2 and 3 banks and microfinance institutions that target WSMEs.

- This pillar focuses on enhancing access to finance, and technical assistance to women SMEs to transform them into productive and competitive enterprises.
- Leveraging all its traditional instruments and through the development of innovative financing mechanisms, the Bank will also direct efforts to increasing the confidence of African financial institutions to provide financing and technical assistance to women SMEs.
- Supporting women SMEs with technical assistance in areas such as business model development, financial and business planning can reduce their risk profile thereby increasing Bank lending to women entrepreneurs.
- The Bank will also support RMCs to establish a conducive business environment for women entrepreneurs to thrive.
- Additionally, the Bank will dedicate efforts to creating opportunities for women in the non-financial sectors of the Bank's Non-Sovereign Operation (NSO) offerings.
- This pillar will also significantly contribute to eliminating poverty (SDG 1), promoting gender equality and women and girl's empowerment (SDG 5), securing access to decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), as well as peace and justice (SDG 16). In addition, this pillar will seek to be consistent with the priorities of the African Union Agenda 2063 (empowering women to play their rightful role in all spheres of life and eliminating barriers to quality health and education for women and girls) and the commitments stemming from the AU declaration of 2020 to 2030 as the new Decade of Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion.
- Leverages the African Development Bank's financial instruments and has two innovative solutions to drastically transform the banking and financial landscape in Africa and to create incentives for lending to women in business:
 - A \$300 million risk-sharing instrument to unlock \$3 billion in credit for women businesses and enterprises in Africa. This mechanism will build upon the existing network of commercial banks and microfinance institutions to create structural change and lasting impact for women.
 - A rating system to evaluate financial institutions based on the share and quality of their lending to women, and their socio-economic impact. Top institutions will be rewarded with preferential financing terms from the African Development Bank.

AFAWA technical assistance - Accelerating employability and job creation for women through skills enhancement: Providing technical assistance to partner financial institutions on developing products for WSMs, and providing capacity building to WSMs, cooperatives, and other women's associations on financial literacy, business plan development, and financial management.

- Under this pillar the focus is on increasing access to relevant skills and jobs for women by taking into account the need to introduce more women to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

fields, while leveraging technology to enhance access to skills and information.

- This pillar will significantly contribute to achieving access to quality education (SDG 4), securing access to decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), promoting gender equality and women and girl's empowerment (SDG 5), peace and justice (SDG 16) and eliminating poverty (SDG 1).
- Provides advisory services to financial institutions to ensure successful implementation of their product portfolios for women and strengthens the capacity of women entrepreneurs through training to enhance business productivity and growth.

AFAWA enabling environment - Increasing women's access to social services through infrastructure: Improving the policy and enabling environment for WSMEs across Africa by assessing legal and policy frameworks in target countries, highlighting gaps and policies to enhance women's financial inclusion, and promoting grassroots advocacy and enactment of policy and legal reforms.

Through this third pillar, the Bank aims to influence gender-responsive quality infrastructure development to guarantee women have adequate access and positively benefit from infrastructure projects as stakeholders, workers and end-users.

Through increased access to quality infrastructure for women and girls, pillar 3 will directly contribute to achieving industry, innovation and infrastructure development (SDG 9) and indirectly to achieving good health and well-being (SDG 3), quality education (SDG 4), gender equality and women and girl's 33 The African Development Bank Group Gender Strategy and Action Plan 2021 - 2025 empowerment (SDG 5), peace and justice (SDG 16), clean water and sanitation (SDG 6), and affordable and clean energy (SDG 7)

engages with African governments and other key stakeholders to support legal, policy and regulatory reforms and strike down the structural barriers impeding women in business.

AFAWA special initiatives - Promoting special initiatives to expand access to financial and non-financial services and develop activities that complement and maximize outreach to underserved urban and rural women entrepreneurs and WSMEs.

Examples of Interventions in this regard are as follows:

- **AFAWA finance:** in 2018, the African Development Bank dedicated over \$50 million in lines of credit to women through financial institutions such as Fidelity Bank and Kenya Commercial Bank. It also made an anchor investment of \$12.5 million in Alitheia IDF Managers (AIM), the first-of-its-kind private equity fund managed by experienced female fund managers that invests in high-growth women-owned and -led SMEs in Africa. AIM aspires to raise \$100 million and targets ten countries in Southern and Western Africa.

- **AFAWA technical assistance:** in 2018, AFAWA provided technical assistance to various banks and partnered with the Entrepreneurium Foundation to train 1,000 women entrepreneurs across the continent in business model development and financial planning.
- **AFAWA enabling environment:** AFAWA engaged in policy dialogue with central banks and government entities in various countries. In addition, the 50 Million African Women Speak digital platform is being developed to connect women entrepreneurs across the continent

One of the initiatives under AFAWA is a partnership with the Green Climate Fund (GCF). Established by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and serving the Paris Agreement, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) is the world's largest climate fund.

GCF is a climate finance catalyser. It uses its funds to accelerate green market creation, unlocking the financial flows needed for developing countries to transition to low-emission, climate-resilient development pathways. GCF is mandated to equally support adaptation and mitigation projects through a country-driven approach that prioritises direct access and targets the most vulnerable developing countries. Under its FP 114 Program, the GCF under AFAWA is financing Climate Resilient Agricultural Practices in Ghana. Although women carry out about 70 percent of agricultural activities in Ghana, they often do not have full control over incomes and agricultural products. They also lack access to formal, financing channels. This programme is an on-lending programme providing credit lines to local commercial banks. These loans will exclusively target micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and farmer-based associations led by women to support low-emissions and climate-resilient agricultural practices. It seeks to empower women entrepreneurs through enhanced access to finance.

The following additional examples are culled from recent AfDB news:

- Sahel region – AfDB to extend nearly \$1m in gender-based grants to boost opportunities to women-led businesses.
- AfDB's Gender Equality Trust Fund will provide a \$950,000 grant to the Africa Small and Medium Enterprise Business Linkages Program in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. The grant will supplement an earlier \$3.9 million financing grant.
- Letshego Microfinance Bank Nigeria was named the first "AFAWA Bank of the Year" at African Business Awards. This followed a successful business relationship.
- Cote D'Ivoire – Women-led staple food cooperatives Advisory Project – The project "Support to Women's Cooperatives in the Food Sector" was initiated to address (i) the challenges related to the fragmentation of supply and demand for food products on local markets and (ii) the weaknesses that hinder the performance and competitiveness of women's farms/agricultural.
- Burundi to receive support from the African Development Bank Group in key sectors. The Group will mobilise close to \$4 million to help Burundi urgently procure over 3,000 tons of fertilizer over the upcoming

agricultural season. The support will enable the country to procure fertilizer for the first phase of the season, which begins in May.

- Bernadette Umunyana increased her company's staff strength from 2 to 39 with help from Access Bank's W Program.
- Mary Thou solved her business cash flow challenges through Credit Bank's "Elevate Her" program.
- Marieme Fall acquired finance and accounting skills to scale her natural beauty products business.

How has AFAWA impacted on economic empowerment of women in Africa?

- The Bank has a strong comparative advantage in advocating for and promoting gender equality and women and girls' empowerment across the continent due to its track record and position as a leading African institution.
- The Bank's actions are anchored on a thesis that ensures and encourages the need for a focus on women. It is clear that where there is no insistence on gender parameters – a focus on women and inclusion, even the best-intentioned and well laid out programmes will fall short of meeting women's needs.

What can be done?

Platforms for women's economic empowerment and advancement may be few and far between, but it is clear that they exist to address Women's challenges e.g. AFAWA. It is therefore the challenge of Women to seek out and take advantage of these platforms, noting the specifications and restrictions to accessing the facilities they offer.

Women must also undertake advocacy to ensure that there is a gender dimension to every initiative – e.g. Wikipedia Story. A conscious effort must be made in this regard to avoid gender blindness. Typical invitations to Captains of Industry.

It calls for creativity and thinking outside the box as the traditional strategies may no longer be relevant – Women and other actors focused on the empowerment of women must consider and buy into the current themes and strategies that donors are centered on, for example, ESG, Climate Change, etc. in order to attract resources for the advancement of women.

Gender equality remains unfinished business in every country of the world. Women and girls have less access to education and healthcare, too often lack economic autonomy and are under-represented in decision-making at all levels. The progress that has been made towards gender equality over the past quarter of a century, though slow and incremental, does however show that change is possible.

Legal reform, strengthening gender-responsive social protection and public service delivery, quotas for women's representation, and support for women's movements are all strategies that have made a difference and should be scaled up.

How can FIDA help across Africa?

Be a Resource – Inform women of available opportunities. Do the research that enables you be a veritable wellspring of information, education and motivation.

Be a Facilitator – Organise! Work to support women groups to access resources.

Be an Advocate – Push for more platforms focused on women advancement.

Be a Supporter – Engage on ways to make available resources more effective. Partner with organisations and enhance their capacity to access funds. There is a Directorate for Gender, Women and Civil Society within AfDB. There are also other organisations in Africa, such as the Africa Finance Corporation, which we can explore.

Be a Utiliser – Funds exist for those who are inclined to entrepreneurial ventures and initiatives. The need for multiple streams of income has been greatly emphasised, so women should seek to take advantage of the resources offered by various funds. In any event, some of FIDA's work needs funding as it has limited access to resources being funded largely by dues and donations of members.

Be a Funder – The keynote speaker had talked about us as women undertaking some funding for the matters that we believe in. We cannot continue to overly rely on donor funding but must make the effort to contribute our resources in every which way we can, every woman participating.

Thank you for Listening!

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Questions & Answers

5.3. FIDA Africa Empowering Women – A Grant Initiative.

A grant of various amounts (One Hundred Thousand Naira, Sixty Thousand Naira, Fifty Thousand Naira and Thirty Thousand Naira) was given out to support some indigent persons.

Chapter Six
HEALTH IS WEALTH

6.1 FREE HEALTH CHECKS:

Hallmark Insurance HMO Health Services Limited provided free health checks to the participants.

Outreach/Advocacy Visit to FIDA Ward at Gwarimpa General Hospital, Abuja.

The visit was led by the RVPs. In attendance were also International Officers, National Presidents & delegates from Nigeria, Uganda, Cameroon, South Africa, Ethiopia, and Zanzibar.



6.2. AEROBICS AND PHYSICAL EXERCISES

To promote health and wellness, the participants engaged in aerobic exercises.



Chapter Seven
FIRESIDE CHAT

7.1. FIRESIDE CHAT – “THE FIDA AFRICA OF OUR DREAMS”

The Congress was concluded with a robust and fruitful conversation on “**The FIDA Africa of our Dreams**” with the past and present RVPs, CVPs and International Officers as Panelists. During the chat, the great work done by the various Country Chapters was highly commended.

However, it was pointed out that FIDA needed to be more visible and vocal at regional and global levels. We must strive to build a strong and vibrant platform that speaks to issues at the regional/continental level and partner across divides to promote regional cooperation and deepen continental integration. It is also necessary to build networks and alliances and collaborate with other organizations.

Leaders and members alike must continually connect, collaborate, support, encourage and engage one another to promote FIDA’s ideals and core values. Mentorship is key. Establishing mentorship programs where experienced senior members support the younger professionals enhances skills and creates pathways for growth, further solidifying the Organization.

The Congress was intimated of the “FIDA Africa Focus Group”, a regional WhatsApp forum of past and present Regional Vice Presidents, International Officers of African descent, Country Vice Presidents/National Presidents, select members from the academia, judiciary and activists of high repute, created by the current Regional Vice Presidents Joy Ejim & Laura Nyirinkindi, to interact, build bridges, share lessons, promote cooperation and synergize for greater impact. It was announced that there was a plan to add more members in order to flatten the pyramid and gradually form a database of all FIDA Africa members.

The need for membership drive, in a bid to resuscitate inactive country branches and engage more individual members, was emphasized as this would facilitate the formation of various Committees to serve at the regional level. The Congress was informed of the concerted efforts of both Regional Vice Presidents in that regard. In the course of the conversation, a concern was raised about the apparent precarious position of the regional level of administration, leading to a call for critical review and a request for more support from the International Executive.

A major high point of the deliberation was the initiative of establishing a FIDA App, shared by the Regional Vice President Africa (North & West) Joy Ejim. The concept was about creating an app for the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) that would guide users on how to report issues like rape, domestic violence, harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, child abuse, access to child/children, custody of child/children, and other infringement of the rights of women and children.

It is envisaged that the FIDA App would serve as a vital tool in empowering women and children, particularly the girl-child, by providing accessible legal information and support services, thereby promoting justice and safety for vulnerable individuals.

Key Components of the App

1. User-Friendly Interface

- Simple Navigation: Clear and intuitive menu options to easily access various sections of the app.
- Language Options: Multiple languages to cater to diverse users.
- Accessibility Features: Tools for visually or hearing-impaired users, such as text-to-speech, large text, or sign language videos.

2. Reporting Mechanism

- Incident Reporting:
- Step-by-Step Guide: Instructions on how to report incidents of rape, domestic violence, FGM, etc.
- Report Form: A digital form for users to submit detailed reports of their experiences, including the option to attach evidence (photos, videos, documents).
- Anonymous Reporting: An option to report incidents anonymously for those fearing retaliation.
- Emergency Contacts: Quick dial buttons to reach local authorities, FIDA representatives (Help Desks), or emergency hotlines.

Tracking and Feedback:

- Case Tracking: A feature for users to track the progress of their reports.
- Feedback System: Allows users to receive updates or provide feedback on the assistance received.

3. Legal Information Hub

- Laws and Rights:
- Information on Women's Rights: Detailed explanations of legal rights concerning rape, domestic violence, FGM, matrimonial causes...
- Child Rights: Focused information on the rights of children, particularly the girl-child, including protection laws and educational rights.
- Child abuse, emotional/verbal abuse, widowhood issues, traditional harmful practices,

FAQs:

- Common Legal Questions: Answers to frequently asked questions regarding women's and children's rights.
- Myth Busting: Clarifications on common misconceptions about the law and women's rights.

4. Support Services

- Counseling & Mediation Services
- Chat Support: A live chat feature for immediate help.

Legal Assistance:

- Find a Lawyer: Directory of lawyers affiliated with FIDA who specialize in women's rights.
- Legal Aid Application: Online application for free or subsidized legal services.

Shelter and Safety:

- Safe Houses: Information and access to nearby shelters for victims of domestic violence or other forms of abuse.
- Safety Planning: Resources and advice on creating a safety plan for those in dangerous situations.

5. Educational Resources

- Workshops and Seminars: Information on upcoming events, legal literacy programs, and workshops hosted by FIDA.
- Videos and Tutorials: Educational videos on rights awareness, how to handle legal processes, and self-defense techniques.
- Articles and Publications: Access to a library of articles, legal documents, and publications related to women's and children's rights.

6. Community Engagement:

- Forums and Discussion Groups:
- Support Groups: Online forums for survivors of abuse to share their experiences and seek support.
- Legal Q&A: A platform where users can ask legal questions and get responses from experts.

Advocacy and Campaigns:

- Current Campaigns: Information on ongoing campaigns for women's rights.
- Volunteer and Donate: Options for users to volunteer or donate to FIDA's causes.

7. Security and Privacy

- Data Protection: Strong encryption and secure data storage to protect users' personal information.
- User Anonymity: Ensuring that users can report issues or seek help without fear of exposure.
- Consent and Permissions: Clear information on how user data will be used, with options to opt in or out of certain features.

8. Notifications and Alerts

- Legal Updates: Push notifications about new laws or changes in existing laws that affect women and children.
- Safety Alerts: Alerts in case of immediate threats or important safety information.

9. Feedback and Improvement

- User Feedback: A section where users can provide feedback on the app's functionality and content.
- Updates and Improvements: Regular updates based on user feedback and legal developments.

10. Offline Access

- Downloadable Resources: Essential information and resources that can be accessed offline.
- Emergency Numbers: A list of emergency contacts that can be accessed without an internet connection.

Proposed Key Power Metrics (KPM)

To comprehensively capture the enormous work done by Country Chapters and track the impact of FIDA's activities across women, child, and family legal support, policy-making, and pro bono cases, FIDA Africa Regional Vice Presidents proposed that countries and regions that were part of FIDA could adopt the following key Power Metrics (KPM), including digital engagement. By incorporating digital metrics such as website visitors, social media engagement, and participation in online events, FIDA can better understand and measure the reach and impact of its work.

These metrics will provide a holistic view of how effectively FIDA's initiatives support women, children, and families while raising awareness on key legal issues.

1.a. Legal Services and Casework

- **Number of Pro Bono Cases Handled:** Track the total number of pro bono cases handled annually, categorized by type (e.g., domestic violence, child custody, inheritance disputes, sexual assault).
- **Number of Women, Children, and Indigent Persons Represented.**

1.b. Digitalization of Legal Services:

Environmental Impact: Track the adoption and usage of digital platforms for legal casework and support services, **aiming to reduce reliance on paper and physical meetings.**

- **Number of digital inquiries and consultations:** Track the volume of legal consultations and inquiries made through FIDA's digital platforms (email, website, or mobile apps).
- **Reduction in paper-based processes:** Track the percentage reduction in paper usage by shifting towards digital documentation and e-signatures.
- **Virtual case management:** Monitor the number of cases handled entirely through digital tools, including mediation, consultations, and hearings.
- **Environmental footprint savings:** Calculate the reduction in carbon emissions from minimizing travel for in-person consultations and court appearances.

2. Seminars, Webinars, and Training for Lawyers

- **Number of Trainings Conducted:** Number of training events (seminars, webinars, in-person sessions) held each year.
- **Attendance and Participation:** Track the number of lawyers, legal professionals, and beneficiaries participating in these events.

3. Policy Advocacy and Legal Reform

- **Legislative Changes Influenced:** Track the number and title of new laws, reforms, or policies influenced or passed due to FIDA's advocacy (e.g., enhanced child protection or domestic violence laws).
- **Policy Recommendations Made:** Number of policy papers or recommendations submitted to government or international bodies.

- Stakeholder Engagement: Number of consultations and meetings with government officials, lawmakers, and community leaders.
- Public Campaign Engagement: Measure the reach of public campaigns advocating for legal rights.

4. Support Opportunities for Beneficiaries

- Number of Women and Children Supported: Total number of beneficiaries who received legal aid, social, or counselling and mediation services.
- Economic Empowerment Initiatives: Number of women supported with economic empowerment programs.
- Beneficiary Satisfaction: Satisfaction rates collected through feedback forms or surveys from beneficiaries.

5. Digital Footprint and Engagement

- Website Visitors: Number of visitors to FIDA’s website, tracked monthly and annually.
- Social Media Followers: Number of followers across FIDA’s digital platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn).
- Engagement Metrics: Track the number of likes, shares, comments, and interactions on FIDA’s posts across social media.
- Website Interactions: Measure metrics like time spent on the website, pages visited, and downloads of resources or publications.
- Number of Digital Inquiries: Track the number of inquiries (emails, calls) made through digital platforms (website forms, social media) seeking legal assistance or information.
- FIDA-Related Video Views: Track views and engagement on videos related to FIDA’s work on platforms like YouTube, Facebook, or Instagram.
- Event Participation via Digital Platforms: Measure the number of participants joining webinars, virtual events, or live streams hosted by FIDA.
- Conversion Rate from Social Media to Legal Services: Track the number of people who transition from engaging with FIDA’s digital platforms to receiving legal services.
- Social Media Campaign Reach: Measure the total reach of specific digital campaigns promoting women’s rights or legal awareness.

6. Regional and Cross-Country Coordination

- Inter-Country Collaborations: Number of cross-country projects or legal initiatives within Africa or globally.
- Cross-Border Legal Cases: Track cross-border legal support, especially for trafficked or displaced women and children.
- Best Practices Shared: Measure the sharing of best practices, legal reports, or strategies between FIDA regions.

7. Impact of Awareness Campaigns

- Public Awareness Campaigns Conducted: Number of awareness campaigns on women’s rights, child protection, and family law.
- Social Media Reach and Engagement: Measure reach and interaction

(likes, shares, comments) on social media posts related to awareness campaigns.

- Digital Ad Campaign Performance: Track engagement on any paid digital advertisements promoting FIDA's work.
- Website Traffic During Campaigns: Number of visitors to FIDA's website as a result of specific campaigns.
- Behavioural Changes: Survey public perceptions or behaviours that shift due to awareness campaigns (e.g., increased reporting of domestic violence).

8. Human Resource Development

- Lawyers Engaged in Pro Bono Work: Track the number of lawyers providing pro bono services and their total hours.
- Paralegal Capacity Building: Number of paralegals trained to provide support, especially in rural or underserved areas.

9. Collaborations and Partnerships

- Partnerships with NGOs and Governments: Track the number of partnerships formed with NGOs, government bodies, and international organizations.
- Joint Projects and Conferences: Number of joint events, projects, and conferences held in partnership with other organizations.
- Partner Feedback: Measure the effectiveness of partnerships through feedback and performance reviews.

Movement Building

The Regional Vice President Africa (East & Southern Africa) Laura Nyirinkindi along with some of the other panelists, spoke passionately about movement building across FIDA Africa Country Branches, referring to the imperatives of an organized effort to create a shared identity, advocate for systemic change, and empower each other to address legal and social injustices.

Movement Building is about creating a supportive environment where FIDA members can share experiences openly, advocate for one another, and cultivate a sense of solidarity which reinforces the movement. Also, recognizing successes and celebrating achievements (both big and small) help to sustain morale. This encourages sustained participation in the movement.

In addition, acknowledging the diverse identities and experiences of members and the intersecting issues they face, (such as race, class and socio-economic status) helps to build a more inclusive movement that represents all voices and perspectives.

In summary, movement building leverages on solidarity and support, collaboration, recognizing successes, capacity building, addressing multiple identities, and grassroots engagement to make meaningful strides towards actualizing FIDA's mission and vision.

Fireside Chat

Visit www.fidaafrica.org to see more pictures.





7.2. OUTCOME STATEMENT OF THE FIDA AFRICA REGIONAL CONGRESS 2023, HELD IN ABUJA, NIGERIA.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Africa Regional Congress is a triennial event that usually offers a significant opportunity for FIDA country chapters and members of Women Lawyers Associations in Africa, to converge, interact, exchange information, and share lessons. They also get to learn new strategies that will help them in actualizing their mission and continuing with their campaigns as well as various activities geared towards improving the status and overall well-being of women and children in the Continent.

From the 24th – 27th of August 2023, the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) held her Africa Regional Congress in commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) under the theme; “MAPUTO PROTOCOL AND WOMEN IN AFRICA: DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AS A VITAL TOOL FOR ACCELERATION” The event which brought together, female lawyers from Africa, professionals and key stakeholders, was an opportunity for everyone to dialogue, air their views/visions on the interplay between the rights guaranteed in the Maputo Protocol and how they can be enhanced using digital technology. The Regional Vice President in charge of North and West Africa (Joy Ejim), and her Counterpart in charge of East, Central, and Southern Africa (Laura Nyirinkindi), jointly hosted the Congress.

Women Lawyers from Nigeria, Uganda Cameroun, South Africa, Zanzibar, Ethiopia, and Cote D'Ivoire participated in the Congress. The Country Vice Presidents (National Presidents) of FIDA Cameroun, (Gladys Mbuyah) and FIDA Nigeria (Amina Agbaje) as well as the heads of - the South Africa Women Lawyers Association (Nomaswazi Shabangu Mndawe), Zanzibar Female Lawyers Association (Jameela Mahmoud), Ethiopia Women Lawyers Association (Lensa Geletu), and Cote D'Ivoire Women Lawyers Association (Francine Aka Anghui) also attended. In addition, the FIDA International Director, Ezinwa Okoroafor, United Nations Representative Honourable Inime Aguma, past FIDA International Director Mercy Agbamuche and past Regional Vice Presidents for Africa - Stella Omiyi, Honourable Justice Elsie Thompson, Roseline Nwosu, Hajia Laraba Shuaibu and Victoria Awomolo (Senior Advocate of Nigeria).

Other Distinguished guests included the ECOWAS Representative Grace Orshio, Farida Kaita representing Nigeria's Permanent Representative to the ECOWAS Ambassador Nuhu Musa and other Government officials, the President of the Nigeria Bar Association – Yakubu Chonoko Maikyau (Senior Advocate of Nigeria) and Erelu Bisi Fayemi (former First Lady of Ekiti State) who was the Keynote Speaker.

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE AFRICA REGIONAL CONGRESS

The Congress brought together over 500 women lawyers. Over 3 days, the participants of the Congress held discussions and discourses on critical issues of importance to the protection, promotion, and realization of women's rights in Africa through the use of digital technology, and noted the following.

The effectiveness of the Maputo Protocol and enforcement of rights:

- a. The Maputo Protocol is comprehensive in terms of its provisions in relation to women's rights
- b. Despite this important framework, women and girls have lagged in terms of rights recognition and socio-economic advancement.
- c. Empowerment of women is when women can have a livelihood, control their bodies and voices, and not have to apologize for their femininity.
- d. In examining the implementation of the Maputo Protocol, there has been improvement in the areas of awareness, advocacy, and ratification, which is why there are cases before the ECOWAS Court of Human Rights. However, the challenge has been the enforcement of the judgments of the Court or poor implementation.
- e. In the African Court of Human Rights, the exhaustion of local remedies and the process is very slow. In comparison, the ECOWAS Court has established internal mechanisms that provide more procedural options and has provided far-reaching judgments on women's rights in West African states.
- f. FIDA members and women lawyers will not rest on their oars until the implementation of the Protocol is accelerated.

Gender Parity and Inclusion under the Maputo Protocol:

- a. It is essential to acknowledge that gender parity and inclusion are not viewed as just women's issues; they are societal imperatives that benefit everyone. Substantive gender equality allows everyone to reach their full potential.
- b. Gender justice is full equality and equity between women and men in all spheres of life, resulting in women, on an equal basis with men, defining and shaping the policies, structures and decisions that affect their lives and the society, as a whole.
- c. The realization by women of the need to take control over their destinies and to take collective action are the most important drivers for sustained improvements in women's rights.

Challenges to implementation of the Maputo Protocol:

- a. The African Union has not adequately ensured effective monitoring of the implementation of the Maputo Protocol through its reporting mechanisms.
- b. In most Member States, there is a lack of political will to implement the Maputo Protocol, evidenced by inadequate allocation of human, financial, logistical and technological resources to implement the Protocol, limited participation of women in politics and the perpetuation of harmful traditional practices.

- c. Failure by Member States to engage men in advocating for gender parity delays the acceleration of progress and there remain deeply ingrained gender norms that perpetuate inequality in many countries at the societal and national level.
- d. Other challenges in attaining gender parity and inclusion include; negative socio-cultural norms and gender stereotypes, economic disparities, gender-blind institutional practices and policies, low education and access to resources, intersectional vulnerabilities and marginalization of women, workplace discrimination, cultural resistance, lack of representation and inadequate policy frameworks and their low implementation.

The role of Technology in accelerating Gender Equality:

- a. Under the Maputo Protocol, state parties commit themselves to modifying the capacity of women through education, and to guarantee the right to education for women, particularly in the field of science and technology.
- b. Research shows that despite the rapid growth of the technological sector of the African region, only very few women are able to participate, as the technological ecosystem is largely dominated by men.
- c. Despite the significant impact that digital technology has on human development, there are challenges in its application, such as limited skills and knowledge by women and the cost of accessing digital technology
- d. In as much as technology has advanced women's rights, it has also fostered a rise in violence against women, especially online violence in the form of sexual harassment, revenge porn, trafficking in women, and threats against women in public office.
- e. Women, especially professional women, can utilise digital tools and technology to increase access to information, strengthen their brand and enhance their careers by making them visible and credible.

Enhancing Women's economic rights and participation: A role for African Institutions:

- a. The 33rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the AU in February 2020, declared 2020-2030 the second African Women's Decade, focusing on the financial inclusion of African women.
- b. Women in Africa remain an exploited labour force especially in the paid and unpaid informal economy, despite their hard work and potential to contribute meaningfully to economies.
- c. The economic empowerment of women and girls is key to the advancement of women and girls in Africa and trade is one of the important avenues to achieve this.
- d. In recognition of the importance of economic empowerment, the Maputo Protocol provides for economic and social welfare rights and requires States Parties to adopt and enforce legislative and other measures to guarantee women equal opportunities in work and career advancement and other economic opportunities.

- e. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is designed to boost intra-African Trade. The fundamental principles of the AfCFTA include non-discrimination between Member States and freer movement of peoples, goods and services among others. These important principles if well utilised by states would provide women with a more level trade field to advance their economic rights.
- f. Women typically reinvest up to 90% of their income in the education, health, and nutrition of their family and community. However, women entrepreneurs face multiple challenges in accessing finance, as even commercial banks consider investments in women a security risk.
- g. Based on the realization that women are the backbone of the African economy, the Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa (AFAWA), a pan-African initiative of AfDB under its Gender Strategy 2021 – 2025, set out to bridge the \$42 billion financing gap facing women in Africa.
- h. Educating Africa’s women entrepreneurs is key to promoting access to these resources.

KEY TAKE-AWAY MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Economic Justice as a means to women’s economic wellbeing:

- There is a need to move beyond the narrative of women’s empowerment and take action to realise economic justice
- Promoting women’s and girls’ socio-economic through legal provisions, processes and mechanisms is critical, as a means of enhancing overall societal well-being. The women movement in Africa, especially women lawyers, have a key role to play in influencing laws, policies and processes to protect women’s socio-economic rights.
- To benefit from the opportunity inherent in the AfCFTA, women should be supported to acquire knowledge and to engage with country National Action Committees on the AfCFTA. In this regard, FIDA country chapters and women lawyers’ associations should be included in government negotiating teams to enable them to contribute to policies, laws, and regulations on trade in legal services from a gender perspective.
- Increasing women’s participation in enterprise should be linked to enhancing women’s leadership and decision-making opportunities as well as inclusion in organized business through deliberate actions, capacitation, and gender mainstreaming strategies.
- Financial institutions in Africa should be encouraged to organize women-specific programmes and facilities and women adequately trained to take advantage of any existing facilities such as AFAWA set up by the AfDB.
- FIDA Africa should engage regional and continental human rights courts such as the ECOWAS Court and the African Court of Human Rights to promote the rights of women in Africa.

Leveraging digital technology:

- To achieve any meaningful progress, development and gender balance, it is essential to incorporate digital technology into gender equality and women’s empowerment initiatives.
- Digital technology can foster social change through activism.

Technological devices like mobile phones can facilitate protective actions for women and increase access to information, justice and advocacy. Adapting and innovating with safe affordable and convenient technologies for all cadres of women should be prioritised.

- Realizing the full potential of digital technology requires collaboration among governments, organizations, and communities. Hence governments, non-state actors and the private sector should collectively provide digital infrastructure and promote digital literacy for men and women.
- FIDA should advocate for governments to create policies and regulations to promote women's digital access and inclusion and laws that promote e-governance.
- To protect women against cyberbullying and pornography, FIDA country chapters and women lawyers' associations should engage in awareness/education campaigns and advocate for the creation of digital reporting mechanisms and platforms such as telephones, emails, and social media platforms.

Accountability from Member States:

- FIDA country chapters and women lawyers' associations should demand accountability from systems and structures that keep women behind.
- Investigation of cases of violence against women and their prosecution should be strengthened. The capacities of law enforcement agencies should be enhanced to be able to protect and promote women from all walks of life.

Responsibility for promoting Gender equality:

- To promote the full involvement of men in family life and the full integration of women in community life, governments and non-state actors should promote men's active involvement in eliminating gender stereotypes and advocate for gender equality.
- Men should be actively encouraged to engage in supportive partnerships with women and to participate in influencing social capital towards positive gender norms and sharing information, knowledge, and organizational resources with women. However, men should not assume that they know how best to support women but should work as allies with them.

Strengthening Legal Responses:

- The various women lawyer's associations and FIDA country chapters should reflect continuously on FIDA Africa's mission and vision, to reposition themselves to accelerate the empowerment of African women and girls through decisive leadership and action.
- FIDA organizations while continuing their advocacy at the national level should step up public interest litigation as the number one strategy in advancing the Maputo Protocol to the desired level in the protection of the rights of women.
- FIDA organizations at international, national and local levels must have a repository of enabling case and statutory law and best practices in legislative advocacy and judicial activism.

3.6 Institutional Strengthening:

- FIDA Africa under the auspices of FIDA International exists to connect, collaborate, support, encourage and engage FIDA members across Africa to focus on FIDA's mission to promote, protect, and preserve the rights, interests and well-being of women and children in African societies through the instrumentality of the law. FIDA Africa must continuously strive to build a strong and vibrant platform that speaks to issues at the regional or continental levels and collaborate across divides to promote regional cooperation and deepen continental integration.
- The Regional Vice Presidents for Africa and members are united in their dreams for FIDA to become a stronger movement and to foster stronger solidarity with existing African women lawyers' organizations.
- The power of mentorship in keeping the FIDA dream requires FIDA members to ensure younger members are effectively mentored and groomed to carry on the mission and vision of the organization.



Mrs. Joy Ejim
Regional Vice President



Laura Nyirinkindi
Regional Vice President

Chapter Eight
CLOSING

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- Amina Agbaje
- Ezinwa Okoroafor
- Chukwuka Ikwuazom
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Ngozi Onyia, Nachamanda Shaltha, Uche Ogwo, Marian Jones, Chinwe Efobi, Josephine Akweze, Esther Doorshima, all FIDA Nigeria members & National Secretariat staff, National Human Rights Commission and Customary Court of Appeal, Abuja.

God bless you as you continue to uplift the cause of women and children.
Thank you.















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FIDA AFRICA CURRENT AND PAST REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENTS



Mrs. Joy Ejim
(Formerly Joy Ezeigbo)
2021 - 2024



Laura Nyirinkindi
2017 - 2021; 2021 - 2024



Chief (Mrs.)
Victoria Awomolo, SAN
2017 - 2021



Hajija Laraba M. Shua'ibu
2014 - 2017



Mrs. Ezinwa N. Okoroafor
2011 - 2014



Gladys Mbuyah Historian
2011 - 2014



ROSELINE OBIAGELI NWOSU
2008 - 2011



HON. JUSTICE ELSIE THOMPSON
2005 - 2008



Veronica Adunuga
2002 - 2005



Hashiya Ben Umar
2000 - 2002



Chief Mrs. Tessa Ikimi
1997 - 1999



Mrs. Stella Omiyi
1990 - 1992

COUNTRY VICE PRESIDENTS FIDA AFRICA COUNTRY BRANCHES & AFFILIATES



Amina Suzannah Agbaje
FIDA Nigeria



Lensa Biyena Gelata
FIDA Ethiopia/EWLA



Gladys Mbuya
FIDA Cameroon



Nomaswazi Shabangu-Mndawe
SAWLA/FIDA S.A.



FRANCINE AKA ANGHUI
Cote D'Ivoire



Jameela Mahmood
FIDA Zanzibar/ZAFELA



Lady Justice Susan Okatany
FIDA Uganda



Lydia Lariba Bawa
FIDA Ghana

PART 2

**COUNTRY REPORTS
(Including 2024 Activities)**

FIDA NIGERIA REPORT

Introduction

This Country Report of FIDA Nigeria covers the period from 2021, when the last International Report was presented, to October 2024.

Executive Summary

FIDA Nigeria has continued to be a driving force in advancing women's and children's rights in Nigeria. This report therefore provides a comprehensive overview of the organization's activities and achievements during this period, focusing on leadership changes, and the composition of standing committees, strategic direction, and impactful interventions.

Part A

FIDA Operational Structure and Administration

1. Our Secretariat

As part of the organization's strategic goal of building an innovative and impactful Organization with strong leadership and unalloyed support of its executive team, FIDA Nigeria owns a fully equipped and highly functional national secretariat situate at No. 2 Ankpa Close Garki Abuja. We have continued to operate effectively through the following work departments and units: Programs, Administration, Finance, Legal, Communications and IT; and Monitoring and Evaluation.

2. Administration and Management

FIDA Nigeria operates through a well-structured governance system to ensure the effective delivery of its mandate. The National Executive Committee oversees day-to-day administration, while the National Executive Council provides strategic guidance. Several specialized committees drive different aspects of the organization's work, including the Parliamentary Committee, the Convention Committee, the Project Committee, the Public Relations Committee, the Ethics/Disciplinary Committee, the Finance Committee, the Litigation/ADR Committee, the Special Litigation Team (Ad-Hoc), the Continuing Legal Education Committee, Zonal Coordinators manage activities in different regions, and the 8-member Board of Trustees.

Board of Trustees:

The following persons continued to form our Board of Trustees structure;

1. Chief (Mrs) Theresa Omawunmi Ikimi (Chairperson)
2. Prof. Jummai A.M. Audi (Secretary)
3. Hon. Justice Mary U. Odili, JSC (Member)
4. Hon. Justice Elsie N. Thompson (Member)
5. Hajija Fatima Kwaku MFR (Member)
6. Mrs. Susan O. Onyeche (Member)
7. Dr. Zuwairatu Ibrahim Mantu (Member)

8. Mrs. Veronica O. Odunuga (Member)
9. Late. Hon. Justice Margret Mary Igbetar (Member)

National Executive Committee (2021–2024)

In November 2021, a new executive team assumed office following a transparent and democratic election held during the FIDA Nigeria Triennial General Meeting.

The Officers are:

- i. Amina Suzanah Agbaje – Country Vice President (CVP)
- ii. Evelyn Membere-Asimiea – Deputy Country Vice President (DCVP)
- iii. Eliana Martins– National Secretary
- iv. Beatrice Awah – Assistant National Secretary
- v. Chineze Obianyo – National Treasurer
- vi. Olubunmi Arajuwa – National Financial Secretary
- vii. Christiana Adejumo – National Publicity Secretary
- viii. Nachamada Shaltha – Assistant National Publicity Secretary
- ix. Rhoda Prevail Thyoden – Ex-Officio

This leadership team is responsible for steering FIDA Nigeria through its strategic objectives and ensuring the continued protection and promotion of the rights of women and children across the country.

Part B

Execution of FIDA Nigeria's Mandate through Strategic Plan Engagement
Outcome 1: Effective Implementation of Legal Frameworks

1. Enabling Capacity for the Adoption and Implementation of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA), 2015: FIDA facilitated the adoption of the ACJA in 14 states and translated the ACJL into local languages for community outreach, with support from the MacArthur Foundation.

2. Strengthening Collaboration amongst Criminal Justice Actors: This initiative improved compatibility between ACJA/ACJLs and anti-corruption laws in Kano, Rivers, Anambra, Ekiti, and Bayelsa states through sensitization campaigns and Practice Directions, supported by the MacArthur Foundation.

3. Enhancing the Capacity of 20 FIDA Members on the Maputo Protocol: FIDA improved the understanding of the Maputo Protocol among 20 members, with support from Alliance for Africa.

Outcome 2: Innovative and Impactful Management Efficiency

1. Women's Voice and Leadership Project: Established a referral system for Paralegal Clinics and developed community by-laws in the FCT to improve access to justice for women and girls, with support from Action-Aid.

2. The Roles of Women in Conflict Resolution and Peace Building: Enhanced grassroots participation in peace-building in Plateau State and developed a security strategy for conflict mitigation, supported by the Canada Fund for Local Initiative (CFLI).

Outcome 3: Increased Access to Justice for Women and Children Including Persons Living with Disabilities

1. Strengthening Civic Advocacy and Local Engagement (SCALE) Project: Improved service delivery for SGBV, CEFM, and TIP through community leader capacity building and by-law development in Plateau, Bauchi, Katsina, Ebonyi, Delta, and Edo states, supported by Palladium Group.

2. United Nations Spotlight Initiative (UNSI) Project: Focused on eliminating violence against women and girls by working on legislative frameworks and establishing Special Courts across six states, supported by UN Women.

3. Engagement, Coordination, and Sharing of Lessons on GBV Prevention between Religious, Traditional, and Government Leaders in Nigeria: Promoted gender-sensitive communities and reduced VAWG through coordinated action and shared learning in Lagos, Ekiti, and Plateau states, supported by the Ford Foundation.

Outcome 4: Improved Participation in Governance

1. Enhancing Participation and Representation of Women and Women with Disabilities in Politics and Governance: Increased political involvement of women and women with disabilities and provided support for the Bayelsa State Gubernatorial Elections, supported by the Canada Fund for Local Initiative (CFLI).

2. Advancing Women's Political Participation Project: Boosted women's political engagement through training and support for election observers in Kaduna, Borno, Plateau, and Kwara states, supported by UN Women.

Outcome 5: Strengthened Grassroots Presence

1. Promoting Democracy and Good Governance through Participation: Enhanced awareness and participation in local governance processes among women and women with disabilities, supported by Goree Institute.

2. Mitigation of Gender-Based Violence through Training of Community Paralegals: Improved local access to justice and addressed gender-based violence by training community paralegals in the FCT, supported by the Swiss Embassy.

3. Addressing Social Norms Affecting Women's Status: Challenged social norms perpetrating violence against women through community leader

collaboration and grassroots advocacy, supported by the Ford Foundation. Overall, these interventions have advanced FIDA Nigeria's strategic goals, enhancing legal frameworks, management efficiency, access to justice, political participation, and grassroots presence.

Part C

Organizational Effectiveness

1. Statutory Meetings

All the governing bodies of FIDA Nigeria held their statutory meetings; Yearly Annual General Conference for all members, the Quarterly National Executive Council (NEC) and the National Executive Committee meetings held either virtually or in person to discuss the operations of the organization and branches in the quarter, challenges, and to also build the capacity of the council members as well as share best practices to support and boost the morale of challenged branches. Ahead of these NEC meetings, branches are required to send quarterly reports for review and discussion. These reports contain not only activities but also cases as handled by their free legal clinics.

2. Africa Regional Congress

The 2023 FIDA Africa Regional Congress (ARC) was successfully hosted in Abuja, Nigeria, from August 23rd to 27th, under the leadership of the Africa Regional Vice President, Mrs Joy Ejim. The event brought together participants from seven African countries, with FIDA Nigeria representing the largest delegation. The congress, themed "Digital Technology and Gender Equality: Maputo Protocol and African Women in Focus," featured discussions on leveraging technology for gender equality. FIDA Nigeria's Country Vice President, Amina Agbaje, was a panelist and presented the FIDA Nigeria Country Report, which was highly appreciated. The event was a testament to FIDA Nigeria's outstanding organizational efforts and hospitality.

3. Free Legal Representation and Clinics:

We continue to uphold our mandate by conducting free legal clinics from Mondays through Fridays, 9am–5pm with 24-hour hotlines running when the physical clinics are not open. Legal clinics are also conducted during outreaches; schools, communities, correctional centers, markets, rallies, etc. These operations are guided by standard operating procedures for case management.

4. Data Collection Platform:

FIDA Nigeria has developed and institutionalized a data collection site, enabling branches to regularly upload and report on the cases they handle. This system ensures streamlined case management and enhances our ability to monitor and track progress across all branches. Furthermore we have available data to analyze and learn from

Part D

Organizational Growth, Expansion, and Community Impact

FIDA Nigeria has significantly expanded its impact through initiatives like adopting medical wards in public hospitals to support indigent women and children. With 46 branches and over 6,000 members, FIDA ensures grassroots access to justice across the country. The organization actively involves female law students as paralegals, offering critical first-response services for gender-based violence in their communities. Additionally, FIDA has trained around 600 paralegals who serve as community responders, reflecting the organization's commitment to social welfare, justice, and human rights advocacy.

Part E

Training and Capacity Building for FIDA Nigeria Members

FIDA Nigeria remains dedicated to empowering its members to address human rights challenges, with a focus on protecting women and children. To achieve this, the organization provides comprehensive training programs, including quarterly Continuous Legal Education (CLEs), webinars, and annual Leadership Training Workshops. These initiatives enhance members' skills in legal advocacy, intervention, and social justice, equipping them to offer effective legal aid, support survivors of gender-based violence, and represent vulnerable women and children. Through these efforts, FIDA Nigeria ensures its members are well-prepared to meet the evolving legal needs of marginalized communities.

Part F

Legislative Advocacy and Walks

i. Legislative Engagement

FIDA Nigeria remains committed to ensuring that gender considerations are effectively integrated into Nigeria's legal frameworks. To achieve this, FIDA actively engages with legislative processes on gender-related issues, regularly participating in public hearings at both the national and state levels. During these hearings, FIDA presents memoranda to advocate for laws and policies that protect the rights and interests of women and children. By influencing legislation at every level, FIDA plays a pivotal role in shaping a more equitable and inclusive legal landscape for all.

ii. Strategic Advocacy Walk

FIDA Nigeria actively engages in strategic advocacy walks and public demonstrations to raise awareness on crucial issues affecting women, children, and vulnerable groups. These walks serve as a platform to highlight the need for reforms in gender-related legislation, combating gender-based violence, discrimination, and inequality. They also foster collaboration with

key stakeholders and reinforce FIDA's commitment to justice and equality. The "Occupy NASS" movement in 2022, FIDA led a peaceful 10-day occupation of the National Assembly, successfully pushing for the reconsideration of three key gender bills, underscoring its dedication to advancing women's rights in Nigeria.

Part G

Use of Technology and Media

FIDA Nigeria uses technology and social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube to enhance advocacy, increase public engagement, and raise awareness on women's and children's rights. Through press engagements, newsletters, and podcasts, FIDA educates the public on gender-based issues, aiming to shift societal attitudes and combat harmful practices like early child marriage and female genital mutilation. Additionally, FIDA is exploring AI to improve data management, streamline case handling, and enhance the efficiency of delivering legal assistance to indigent women and children.

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📌 FIDA Nigeria International Federation of Women Lawyers

Part H

FIDA Nigeria United Nations ECOSOC Status & Parallel Events at CSW

FIDA Nigeria proudly achieved ECOSOC status gaining recognition from both the United Nations and the African Union. This milestone allowed FIDA to participate in the 68th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) held in New York. FIDA Nigeria also hosted a parallel event titled "Impact of Legislation on Gender Equality in Society" on March 13, 2024, with key speakers discussing the role of civil society in ensuring effective gender equality laws. This event was attended by FIDA leaders and the FIDA International President.

Part I

FIDA Nigeria: Key Strategic Achievements, Limitations and Challenges, and Future Directions

Key Achievements:

FIDA Nigeria faces several challenges in advancing its mission. Resource constraints hinder the expansion of social welfare programs, which rely heavily on member contributions. Cultural and social barriers, particularly in rural areas, impede progress on gender equality and addressing gender-based violence (GBV). Additionally, FIDA's services remain inaccessible in some underserved and remote regions due to security concerns and limited geographic reach. Finally, sustaining key initiatives, like shelters and strategic litigation, requires more stable, long-term financial support to maintain effectiveness and impact.

Challenges and Limitations:

FIDA Nigeria faces several challenges in advancing its mission. Resource constraints hinder the expansion of social welfare programs, which rely heavily on member contributions. Cultural and social barriers, particularly in rural areas, impede progress on gender equality and addressing gender-based violence (GBV). Additionally, FIDA's services remain inaccessible in some underserved and remote regions due to security concerns and limited geographic reach. Finally, sustaining key initiatives, like shelters and strategic litigation, requires more stable, long-term financial support to maintain effectiveness and impact.

Future Plans:

FIDA Nigeria is set to expand its shelter services, increase paralegal training, and enhance legal aid programs, particularly in underserved areas. The organization plans to leverage digital platforms to improve access to legal services and expedite case responses. FIDA will continue advocating for gender equality through policy reforms and strengthen partnerships with government and international bodies. These strategic initiatives position FIDA Nigeria to further its mission of protecting women and children's rights, despite challenges in resources and geographic reach.

Conclusion

FIDA Nigeria has made significant progress in advancing the rights of women and children through the launch of a shelter, successful legal interventions, and expanded outreach programs. Despite challenges with resources and geographic reach, FIDA's proactive efforts in advocacy and capacity building demonstrate its commitment to overcoming these issues. Looking forward, FIDA's focus on expanding services, training paralegals, and using digital platforms positions the organization to continue making a meaningful impact.

FIDA – UGANDA REPORT

The Uganda Association of Women Lawyers (FIDA-Uganda) provides legal aid services in 20 districts in Uganda, working in 16 offices and five-justice desks. FIDA-Uganda's work is undertaken by lawyers, members, Community Legal Volunteers (CLVs), cultural leaders, and local authorities. FIDA-Uganda particularly focuses on assisting socially and economically disadvantaged women and children through legal assistance.

FIDA-Uganda's niche is rooted in promoting and protecting the rights of poor and vulnerable women, children and men. FIDA-Uganda addresses multiple dimensions of women's vulnerabilities through strategic partnerships with state and non-state institutions. Over the past four decades, FIDA-Uganda has actively worked to promote legal and policy reform on women's rights, making notable contributions to the passing of the Succession Amendment Act (2022), the Domestic Violence Act (2010), The Penal Code Amendment Act (2007), the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act (2010), the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (2009) and the Equal Opportunities Act (2007).

Against the backdrop of the COVID lockdown in 2020, the economic impact of the Russian-Ukraine war and insecurity fueled by inter-tribal conflicts within Uganda, FIDA-Uganda's operations in the Country were negatively impacted. The exit of the major funder for legal aid in Uganda, the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) from Uganda in 2022 also led to the temporary closure of FIDA-Uganda's legal aid clinics and the family justice desks in certain districts within the FIDA-Uganda area. While this meant a reduction in institutional funding during the reporting period, it is worth noting that the FIDA-Uganda secretariat aggressively fundraised in 2022 and had some grant renewals.

Notwithstanding the challenges and uncertainties within the reporting period, FIDA-Uganda continued to ensure access to justice for the poorest, vulnerable and marginalised individuals in the target districts. FIDA-Uganda also ensured that people who faced marginalization and exclusion were targeted in legal aid interventions and continued to provide holistic services to women by promoting their social and economic rights to reduce their vulnerability and powerlessness. To this end, FIDA-Uganda made deliberate efforts to strengthen the capacity of women in business through, among others, supporting them in registering their businesses and accessing finances. In 2022, FIDA-Uganda launched its flagship Leadership Academy to strengthen the capacity of FIDA-Uganda's membership, the internal institution, women's groups and other legal professions on women's rights, gender, access to justice, and the law to effectively handle the legal and rights challenges faced by women and girls. FIDA-Uganda also developed and launched its new Strategic Plan 2023-2027.

In line with its mandate and thematic areas, FIDA-Uganda undertook various interventions tailored towards enhancing access to justice for women, mainly by providing access to justice for survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). With support from UN Women, Gen-G and ASF, FIDA Uganda provided legal assistance to 580 female and 332 male SGBV victims in the period under review. Further to its mandate to reach vulnerable groups, it identified women with disabilities as a key target group for assistance, considering that they are severely disadvantaged and marginalised due to their disability, and provided access to justice for People with Disabilities (PWDs). In 2022, FIDA-Uganda provided specialized legal aid services to 1,452 (1,115F, 347M) PWDs and achieved a feat as it is the highest recorded number of PWDs served by FIDA-Uganda in one year since 1974. There was a 403% increase in cases reported by PWDs compared to 363 in 2021. In 7% of the cases received, clients were PWDs, while only 2% were PWDs in 2021. During the year, 81% of these cases were concluded.

In 2022, FIDA-Uganda, supported by UN Women, implemented a project aimed at enhancing access to quality essential legal aid and referral services for women and girls who experience violence and promoting sexual reproductive health rights. FIDA-Uganda provided legal aid in 71,545 cases; of these, 15,547 cases were concluded, with a conclusion rate of 74% for civil cases and 50% for criminal cases.

Other key achievements of FIDA-Uganda in the year under review include critical strategic litigation that halted the eviction of vulnerable women, influenced a change of discriminatory practice by Kampala International University that required female students to undergo a pregnancy test before sitting for Nursing examinations and continued advocacy on issues affecting women and children which enabled and improved better justice service delivery. FIDA-Uganda also contributed to strengthening linkages between formal and informal justice systems and successfully lobbied for the inclusion of CLVs and cultural leaders by empowering CLVs to take up various leadership positions within their communities. The relationship with state actors was also strengthened and enabled the expansion of its legal aid services to various communities.

To strengthen its institutional framework and capacity to champion gender justice and equality for women, FIDA-Uganda's Board provided oversight and strategic guidance to the organisation on behalf of the trustees and the general assembly of members. As a member-led organization, FIDA-Uganda has a diverse and intergenerational membership. During 2022, membership played a vital role in the organization's branding, programming, advocacy and impact. Members had a meaningful impact on the outcomes of FIDA's work through their participation in critical engagements. However, the FIDA-Uganda secretariat noted that there still exists low adherence to the requirement to pay annual membership subscription fees by members, even upon regular reminders. FIDA-Uganda has almost 800 members, but only about 100 members make yearly payments ahead of the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

During the period under review, FIDA-Uganda concluded the review of its previous Strategic Plan, which was in operation from 2015 to 2022. The review provided an opportunity to reflect on the key achievements of the organization for the past years, which included its success in lobbying for the establishment of SGBV Special Courts, halting the merger of UWEP with other wealth-creation funds and the creation of a database of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in the North of Uganda. FIDA-Uganda developed, reviewed and validated its new Strategic Plan for 2023 – 2027.

The current Strategic Plan retained Strategic Objectives I and III from the previous Plan, which relates to access to justice for women and the advancement of women’s economic justice. Two new Strategic Objectives were introduced: ‘to promote Gender Justice through strategic partnerships and collaborations’ and ‘to enhance the institutional capacity of FIDA-Uganda as a Centre for Legal Excellence for women lawyers’. The new Strategic Plan also changes FIDA-Uganda’s vision and mission to promote children’s rights explicitly.

FIDA-Uganda looks ahead to celebrating 50 years of its existence in 2024.

FIDA CAMEROON REPORT

FIDA is an international NGO with consultative status with ECOSOC since 1954. FIDA Cameroon is an affiliate of FIDA International. FIDA Cameroon was recently granted an Observer Status with the African Commission on Human and People's Rights during the 71th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (the Commission) which was held virtually from the 21 April to 13 May 2022. We are very active at the grassroots, national, regional and international levels. We focus on achieving gender equality and empowering women/girls. Our mission is to enhance and promote the welfare of women/girls, promote the principles and aims of the United Nations in their legal and social aspects, promote the aims and principles of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and promote the study of comparative law. We achieve our objectives through the following:

FIDA Activities:

1. Providing pro bono counseling and free Representation in court for indigent women and children.
2. Seek the passage of legislation for the advancement and protection of women, children and indigent.
3. Work for equal rights of women under the law in every state possible.
4. Provide an open forum for the discussion of all matters affecting women and children.
5. Further the dissemination of knowledge of national laws, regional and international treaties.
6. Strategic litigation
7. Fight violence against women and girls in the family, community and work place.

In her relentless efforts to fight Violence against Women and Girls, and help them achieve their full potentials in a violence-free society, the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Cameroon with the help of local and international partners, engaged in a range of activities in the year 2021 to 2022. FIDA Cameroon together with its staff and volunteers was able to mobilize participants, and together reach out to communities and institutions in Cameroon.

Despite the difficulties posed by the outbreak of the global pandemic (COVID-19) in 2020, FIDA was able to adjust and adapt to the new context and effectively forge ahead with her pursuit in line with the government's dispositions on safety and preventive measures to be observed by all Cameroonians. Thus, the International Federation of Women Lawyers was able to make significant strides in the fight against gender based violence in the years 2021 – 2022 regardless of the challenging context.

2. List of Governing Body Member

Name	Board Position	Gender	Address	Board Term
Gladys Mbuyah	President	Female	Libra Law Office Mutengene	09 YEARS
Elizabeth Atemnkeng	Vice President	Female	Atemnkeng & Associates law firm Buea	09 YEARS
Mary-Ann Ching Molo	Secretary	Female	Attorney General's Office Buea	09 YEARS
Rita Taka	Assistant secretary	Female	Taka Law Chambers Tiko	09 YEARS
Rose Nkamngoh	Treasurer	Female	President High Court of Tombel	09 YEARS
Elizabeth Enaka	Financial Secretary	Female	Ministry of Justice	09 YEARS
Caroline Time	Public Relations Officer	Female	KUMBA	09 YEARS
Elizabeth Finjap	Assistant P.R.O	Female	LIMBE	09 YEARS
Marian Weledji	Honorary life President/Director	Female	NGEDI Law Chambers Limbe	LIFE
Florence Rita Arrey	Adviser	Female	YAOUNDE	09 YEARS
Lucy Ashuagbor	Adviser	Female	YAOUNDE	09 YEARS
Tumnde Peter	Adviser	Male	LIMBE	09 YEARS

3. Organizational Structure

Women's rights are at the heart of everything we do in FIDA. Since we were founded in 1993 we have been entirely dedicated to promoting women/ girl's rights. We realize our dream of making women's rights a reality and bringing about long-lasting change for women; by campaigning for women's rights to be upheld at all levels. E.G:

1. We lobby and advocate for the state to put in place policies and laws that tackle discrimination and protect women.
2. Through our legal aid clinic we assist women get access to appropriate, quality services that protect and restore women’s rights and health.
3. We clamor for repugnant customary practices to be abolished so as to usher in social change that supports the rights of all women and girls.
4. We engage young women in our women’s rights trainings in order to develop a pipeline for new leadership.
5. We use the pro-feminist rationale and engage men and boys in violence prevention by recruiting HE4SHEs
6. We collaborate with other women’s rights groups and movements that share our vision to advance women’s rights. Etc.

Below is a recapitulative table of the team through whose collaboration changes in the narratives of GBV in Cameroon was initiated by FIDA Cameroon:

	Total number
Staff	04
Board members	12
Advisors	03
Volunteers	10
Members	60

4. List of Project Activities

FIDA Cameroon successfully implemented 2 projects in the years 2021- 2022 with funds and support from 2 Grant makers. Our strategic plan consisted mainly of awareness raising, advocacy, capacity building, and lobbying government, law/policy makers to influence legislations.

- i. *Making Violence against Women and Girls History in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon (UNTF)*

With the support of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and Girls, FIDA Cameroon could extend her reach to the North-West and South-West regions. Schools, Motor parks, churches, social meetings, and markets were engaged by FIDA staff and volunteers for massive sensitization and awareness raising with poster pasting. Various means were used within this project to reach the community, namely on-site interventions and radio and TV programs. Each of our interventions coined sensitization on issues related to violence against women and girls and the preventive measures against the COVID-19 pandemic. We equally mobilized volunteers in remote communities for easy identification of cases of violence and their referral to appropriate support services. This allowed us to keep track on cases of violence even during the lockdown period, and ensured access to justice. We

went further to organize four capacity building workshop with 108 [lawyers, judges, police officers] on the application of the CEDAW and MAPUTO Protocol. The objective is for these conventions to be called in aid by them to fill the gaps in our national laws. We also went ahead to organize training workshops for 102 paralegals on how to draft, lodge and follow up complaints on behalf of survivors and its aim was to equip them with the skills needed to assist survivors access justice. In this light Criminal procedure manuals were produced and distributed to paralegals as an aid for easy reference. FIDA also trained 76 customary court judges using promotional Human Rights laws in handling of SGBV/HP cases. The objective was to enable them use Human Rights-based approach in handling such cases and awareness raising campaigns on identifying/preventing GBV during crisis.

ii. Eradicating violence against Women and Girls in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon through Advocacy and Social Change (AWDF)

With funds from the African Women's Development Fund, FIDA Cameroon was able to further her endeavors in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon. The objectives of this project were stated as follows:

1. To sensitize the public about women's human rights so as to end discrimination, achieve gender equality and women's empowerment.
2. To raise awareness in communities on the general consequences of violence against women and girls and bring to focus the benefits of survivors getting psychosocial support.
3. To educate traditional authorities, custodians of customs, queen mothers and the public on the devastating health and economic consequences of harmful traditional practices on women/ girls.
4. To change mindsets of customary leaders and believers in such customs and encourage them to eradicate repugnant customs and bring about social change in the lives of women.
5. 5.) To advocate for law/policy review and for the state to give effect to its obligations under international human rights treaties ratified.
6. Sensitize social workers and judicial police officers and customary court judges to use human rights-based approach when handling cases of violence.
7. Raise public awareness and galvanize the community to support the fight to end violence against women.

Through this project, we were able to organize media and community awareness raising campaigns (through poster pasting and distribution of informative leaflets) on various forms of VAW/Gs and its consequences and also organize informative sessions on available laws, psychosocial support services, health care services and safe homes where they can refer survivors to.

A cartography of existing VAW/G service providers in the two project regions was compiled and distributed during awareness raising campaigns, to serve as a referral network of service providers.

We equally organized training workshops with 80 traditional leaders, customary court judges and queen mothers on the adverse consequences of discriminatory traditional practices and enlightened them on women's human rights and the importance of eradicating harmful traditional practices.

Also, we went ahead to train 50 women/girls [HIV+ refugees/internally displaced, detention, out of school and survivors of violence] as peer mobilizers towards service access and protection of rights.

FIDA also stretched to lobby at the level of the ministry of Justice, where 17 governments/lawmakers were lobbied for law/policy reform and for international conventions to be harmonized with national laws and implemented.

III. Inclusive Approach for the Protection and Promotion of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon with funds from (ARDF)

With the support of the Africa Regional Democracy Fund (ARDF) at the U S Embassy in Yaounde, FIDA Cameroon with Head Office in the South West Region could extend her reach to the North-West region. Various means were used within this project to reach the community, namely on-site interventions and radio and TV programs. Each of our interventions coined sensitization and advocacy on issues related to violence against women and girls with the overall goal to enhance access to justice and contribute to increase the respect for fundamental rights and freedom by building the skills of Lawyers, Magistrates, and civil society leaders on strategic litigations in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon.

We went further to organize capacity building workshop to train 40 Lawyers and 20 Magistrates on Strategic Litigation on the 15th and 22nd of February 2023 in the Northwest and Southwest Regions respectively. Three weeks to the first training, we submitted a letter to the Ministry of Justice requesting for designation of Magistrates for the trainings both in the Northwest and Southwest Regions. We equally identified and sent invites to Lawyers required for the training. Both workshops were held as planned with an attendance of 21 Lawyers and 9 Magistrates in the North West Region and 23 Lawyer and 9 Magistrates in the South West Region. In total, the workshop saw the participation of 44 Lawyers and 18 Magistrates. The workshop was very participatory and interactive as many Lawyers and Magistrates shared their concerns and were encouraged to file public interest cases in order to expose injustice and human right violation cases.

5. List of Organization's Achievements

Some of FIDA Cameroon's milestones in the years 2021 to 2024 include:

- Trained customary court judges, Traditional leaders and Queen mothers on how to use promotional Human Rights laws in the handling of GBV cases without being gender biased.
- FIDA Cameroon carried out awareness raising campaigns in four churches, two schools, four meeting houses, four TV stations and seven radio stations, sensitizing the population on VAW/G, its forms, root causes, consequences, existing laws guaranteeing equality, the existence of a law on Legal Aid and also sensitized them on how to advocate against and report cases of VAW/G.
- FIDA Cameroon also organized capacity building workshops for Lawyers and Magistrates on the handling of GBV cases and on implementing international Human Rights Conventions with the objective to enhance the knowledge of the lawyers, Magistrates and Police officers on the content of International Human Rights Conventions, encourage them to use human rights-based approach when handling cases of violence and also to cite and implement treaties that guarantee women equality with men before the law courts and in their judgments.
- Capacity building workshops with paralegals on how to draft, lodge and follow up complaints on behalf of survivors.
- Trained women/girls [HIV+ refugees/internally displaced, detention, out of school and survivors of violence] as peer mobilizers towards service access and protection of rights.
- Lobby government/lawmakers for law/policy reform and for international conventions to be harmonized with national laws and implemented.
- Elaborated a cartography of existing VAW/G service providers, which was distributed during awareness raising campaigns to serve as a referral network of service providers.
- Community awareness raising campaigns on identifying, preventing and responding to GBV during crisis.
- Finally, FIDA Cameroon made giant strides in the fight against GBV, as we were able to reach out to many Lawyers, Magistrates, parliamentarians, survivors of violence, IDPs, social and traditional meeting groups, faith-based groups, Customary Court Judges, Traditional leaders, Queen Mothers, volunteers, and the general population at large.
- Two capacity building workshops organized for 40 Lawyers and 20 Magistrates on Strategic Litigation
- Media coverage contracts signed with two television stations to cover capacity building workshops, broadcast to the general public and host live awareness raising campaigns on the importance of strategic litigation.
- Two capacity building workshops organized for 40 civil society leaders on how to access the African commission on human and people's rights with complaints.

- Two talk-shows (Media awareness raising campaigns) sensitizing the community on the importance of strategic litigation
- Awareness raising campaigns carried out in four schools, two local communities, Tiko council community radio sensitizing the population on ending VAW/G, awareness walk and one day seminar held in commemoration of 16days activism.
- A roundtable conference in commemoration of 16days of activism with the theme: **“Invest to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls”**
- Validated an ongoing monitoring and evaluation of activities.
- Validated the end line data collection process and an external evaluation perform on the years activities.

Finally, FIDA Cameroon made giant strides in the fight against GBV, as we were able to reach out to many more Lawyers, Magistrates, civil society leaders, survivors of violence, social and traditional meeting groups, schools, and the general population at large.

These milestones were achieved thanks to the support of our local and international partners.

Our special appreciation goes to:

- a. The United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women (UNTF),
- b. The African Women’s Development Fund (AWDF),
- c. Africa Regional Democracy Fund Program (ARDF),
- d. FIDA members and staff
- e. Regional and sub divisional delegation of Minproff
- f. Ministry of Justice
- g. Libra Association for Widows,
- h. Footsteps for Women and Children (FOWEC-CAM)
- i. Hi Television, Buea
- j. CAM 1 Tv, Limbe
- k. Radio Bonakanda, Buea
- l. Eternity Gospel Radio Limbe
- m. Ndefcam radio Bamenda
- n. Star Tv Bamenda
- o. Sky spot radio Bamenda
- p. My Media Prime Television (MMP) Douala
- q. Eargles’ Eye Africa (EEG) Bamenda

IMPLEMENTATION SUMMARY SHEET 2021

ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED	REGION OF IMPLEMENTATION	PLACE	DATE	TARGET	NUMBER OF PERSONS REACHED
Organize training workshop with traditional leaders, customary court judges and queen mothers on the adverse consequences of discriminatory traditional practices and enlighten them on the advantages of respecting women's human rights and eradicate harmful traditional practices.	Southwest	Holiday Inn Resort Limbe	Feb 19 th , 2021	40	40
	Northwest	Immaculate Conception Nazareth Home (ICONAH) Bamenda	Feb 26 th , 2021	40	40
Lobby at the level of the ministry of Justice, government/lawmakers for law/policy reform and for international conventions to be harmonized with national laws and implemented	Centre	Conference Hall, Ministry of Justice Yaounde	May 10 th , 2021	30	17
Train 50 women/girls [HIV+, refugees/internally displaced, detention, out of school and survivors of violence] as peer mobilizers towards service access and protection of rights.	Southwest	Holiday Inn Resort Limbe	May 12 th , 2021	25	25
	Northwest	Immaculate Conception Nazareth Home (ICONAH) Bamenda	May 15 th , 2021	25	25
Organize two capacity building workshop with 50 [lawyers, judges, police officers] on the application of the CEDAW and MAPUTO Protocol. The objective is for these conventions to be called in aid by them to fill the gaps in our national laws.	Southwest	Holiday Inn Resort Limbe	22 nd June 2022	25	25
	Northwest	Immaculate Conception Nazareth Home (ICONAH) Bamenda	24 th June 2021	25	33

Organize training workshop for 50 Paralegals on how to lodge, draft and follow up complaints on behalf of survivors. The objective is to equip them with the skills needed to assist survivors access justice.	Northwest	Immaculate Conception Nazareth Home (ICONAH) Bamenda	Aug 25 th , 2021	25	25
	Southwest	Holiday Inn Resort Limbe	Sept 3 rd , 2021	25	24
Awareness raising campaign on identifying, preventing and responding to GBV during crisis	Southwest	Mile 17 Park, Buea Mile 4 park, Limbe	Oct 9 th , 2021	30	33
	Northwest	Ntarinkon Market	Oct 27 th , 2021	30	31
Train 40 customary court judges using promotional Human Rights Laws in handling of SGBV/HP cases. The objective is to make them use Human Rights-based approach in handling such cases henceforth.	Southwest	Holiday Inn Resort Limbe	5 th Nov, 2021	20	16
	Northwest	Immaculate Conception Nazareth Home (ICONAH) Bamenda	29 th Oct, 2021	20	20
Continuous awareness raising campaigns on communication	Northwest	Likomba Tiko Roundabout	02/12/2021	20	20
channels including traditional/social meeting groups ,schools, motor parks, churches etc of the existing laws guaranteeing equality and condemning violence to encourage survivors use these laws and access justice and also give visibility	Southwest	Ntarinkon Market Bamenda	17/12/2021	20	20

2022

ACTIVITY IMPLEMENTED	REGION	PLACE	DATE	TARGET	NUMBER OF PERSONS REACHED
Organize training workshop for 50 Paralegals on how to lodge, draft and follow up complaints on behalf of survivors. The objective is to equip them with the skills needed to assist survivors access justice.	SOUTHWEST	Holiday Inn Resort Limbe	Feb 23 rd , 2022	25	28
	NORTHWEST	Immaculate conception Nazareth home, Finance Junction	18 th Feb, 2022	25	25
Women's Week Symposium	SOUTHWEST	Holiday Inn Resort Limbe	4 th March 2022	60	49
Organize two capacity building workshop with 50 [lawyers, judges, police officers] on the application of the CEDAW and MAPUTO Protocol. The objective is for these conventions to be called in aid by them to fill the gaps in our national laws.	Northwest	CWA, ICONAH, Finance junction	27 th May 2022	25	25
	Southwest	HOLIDAY INN RESORT	14 th June 2022	25	25
Train 40 customary court judges using promotional Human Rights Laws in handling of SGBV/HP cases. The objective is to make them use Human Rights-based approach in handling such cases henceforth.	Southwest	Holiday Inn Resort	7 th Oct, 2022	20	20
	Northwest	Immaculate Conception Nazareth home, finance junction	14 th Oct, 2022	20	20
Continuous awareness raising campaigns on communication channels including traditional/social meeting groups, schools, motor parks, churches etc of the existing laws guaranteeing equality and condemning violence to encourage survivors use these laws and access justice and also give visibility	SOUTH WEST	OIC MARKET BUEA	8th/10/2022	20	20
	NORTH WEST	BAMBILI SQUARES AND MARKET	15/10/2022	20	20
Roundtable Conference Discussion on the theme: Unite! Activism to end violence against women and girls.	SOUTHWEST	CHIEF PALACE MUDEKA	30/11/2022	150	201

SUMMARY OF 2023 RESULTS ACHIEVED

ACTIVITY IMPLEMENTED	REGION	PLACE	DATE	TARGET	NUMBER OF PERSONS REACHED
Sign media coverage contracts with two television stations to cover capacity building workshops, broadcast to the general public and host live awareness raising campaigns on the importance of strategic litigation.	Northwest	Eagles' Eye Africa	Jan 18 th , 2023	1	1
	Southwest	My Media Prime	Jan 18 th , 2023	1	1
Organize Two (2) Capacity building workshops for 60 Lawyers and Magistrates on strategic litigation	Northwest	Regional Council Hall Up-Station Bamenda	Feb 15 th , 2023	30	30
	Southwest	Holiday Inn Resort Limbe	22 nd Feb, 2023	30	32
Organized two capacity building workshops for 40 civil society leaders on how to access the African commission on human and people's rights with complaints.	Northwest	CWA, ICONAH, Finance junction	20 th April 2022	20	20
	Southwest	HOLIDAY INN RESORT	12 th May 2022	20	22

Organized two talk-shows (Media awareness raising campaigns) sensitizing the community on the importance of strategic litigation.	Northwest	Eagles' Eye Africa	July 21 st , 2023	1	1
	Southwest	My Media Prime	September 7 th , 2022	1	1
Organized sensitization talks on GBV in commemoration of 16days activism	Southwest	Tiko council community radio	November 21 st , 2023	1	1
Participated in an awareness walk for the official Launch of 16days of activism.	Southwest	Tiko round about to holfort field	November 25 th , 2023	15	11
Visited two schools in the Mutengene zone	Southwest	REPACOL and FETCOL	November 30 th , 2023	2	2
Community visits for sensitization.	Southwest	Likombe	December 5 th , 2023	1	1
Round table discussion on the theme "invest to prevent violence against women and girls".	Southwest	Batoke Chief Palace	December 9 th , 2023	150	59
Organized a Seminar on the theme "invest to prevent violence against women and girls".	Southwest	Tiko council hall.	December 10 th , 2023		

SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION/FIDA S. A. REPORT

Introduction

Since our establishment more than 18 years ago it has been our vision to pull together our resources to advance the promotion of gender equality and human rights in the legal services sector and society. Regardless of the challenges in the process, we have remained steadfast in our efforts to provide support to our members as well as serving the community with a focus on women and children.

SAWLA Development Fund

Having received more and more concerns from members regarding lack of funding due to not meeting the requirements of financial institutions, President Nomaswazi Shabangu-Mndawe came up with an idea to establish a development fund in a form of a trust. Amongst other things the development fund is to assist our members with start-up equipment (laptop, printer, software etc) to those who are struggling to acquire same. The trustees are to come up with terms and conditions of the needed assistance. The fund is also to be used for outreach and various empowerment workshops for women and children.

Bursary Fund

President Nomaswazi Shabangu-Mndawe initiated a bursary fund to assist in contributing towards tuition fee for needy students who are pursuing their legal studies. Our Bursary Fund has since been registered as a Non-Profit Company (NPC) with its directors being: Puleng Keetse; Pertunia Thulare; and Nomaswazi Shabangu-Mndawe. We are in talks with different organisations with similar objectives and those which can be in a position to donate funds.

In this financial year through the assistance of SAWLA Development Fund we managed to contribute towards tuition fee of four (4) students. Each student was assisted with R10 000 (Ten Thousand Rands only). Since its inception in 2022 the bursary fund has assisted seven (7) students thus far.

ACTING JUDGES Having realised that opportunities are mostly given to male legal practitioners to act as Judges in preparing them to be appointed permanent Judges, SAWLA has approached Judge Presidents in different courts with a proposal of having women legal practitioners to be considered for this opportunity.

In the first year of introducing this project, we had twenty-three (23) women legal practitioners who got opportunity to act in different high courts in South Africa. The number is growing every year. This project has bear fruits in that in October 2022 one of our members was appointed a permanent Judge. In April this year, two of our members through this project were also appointed as permanent Judges. In October again one member was appointed as a permanent Judge. We believe that, through this project, we will have many more members who will be appointed as permanent Judges breaking disparity in the judiciary.

Pro Bono Work

SAWLA is engaged in pro bono work assisting women who find themselves on the wrong side of the law while protecting themselves against gender violence inflicted on them. Members are also encouraged to do watch-in-brief in matters where an accused on a gender-based violence case is appearing before court.

Our members in the Eastern Cape represented a 23-year-old female student from WSU, who was arrested on 10 September 2020, for having assaulted a man (who later died) whom she caught attempting to rape her sister's one-year old baby girl who was left in her care at her home in King William's Town. SAWLA, EC Executive members acted promptly during the weekend by contacting the investigating officer, holding consultations and preparing for bail application. With the assistance of SAWLA bail was secured at R500.00 of which SAWLA members came together and paid the bail money.

SAWLA members continue to provide pro bono work to women and children. We are in discussion with pro bono.org to collaborate with them in providing services to society, particularly women and children.

Mental Health Wellness

The Mental Health Wellness project was piloted in the Eastern Cape. Numerous sessions took place with panellists being experts in the topic. Participants were allowed to find themselves and delt with their fears.

We are ready to roll out the project to all provinces with Adv. Tozama Mqobi heading this project. We have since approached Lifeline South Africa to collaborate with us. We are in the process of putting together a list of experts who will be in our panel and members will be able to consult at a minimal fee. Members will also be able to make use of Lifeline South Africa's experts.

Legal Sector Code

The Legal Practice Council has established the Legal Sector Code: Steering Committee. The President of SAWLA has since been invited to be part of this committee.

South Africa has a policy called Broad – Based Black Economic Empowerment however the legal profession does not benefit on it. It is on this reason that the Legal Practice Council established Legal Sector Code to deal with parity in the legal profession in particular in sharing the work equally amongst black or white and men or women legal professionals. The Minister of Trade and Industry has accepted the code and it is on its way to be gazette.

Unemployed Women Law Graduates

The unemployment rate of law graduates is growing by day. This is a concern to all of us. Statistics shows that female students are many at the university but few women legal practitioners. The question is where are they?

As SAWLA we have established a committee that will collect and create a

database of unemployed women law graduates. We are engaging with institutions and law firms to take the graduates on internship program so to assist them in acquiring the necessary experience that is required.

Gender-Based Violence And Femicide

This is an area of concern for all women living in South Africa. Strides have been made in combating this gruesome act of gender-based violence however this barbaric act continues showing its ugly head. Around May 2022 in the province of the Northern Cape a pregnant woman was killed by her partner. This is not an isolated case as many women are still being raped and killed, children are still getting missing and found raped and killed days after. However, this incident happened days before our general meeting in Kimberly. We collaborated with SAPS, NGOs and the community to have a prayer and lay a wreath where the woman took her last breath. It was a touching moment to see the minor children of the deceased. We further donated food parcels to three families.

On 23 September 2023 we woke up with devastating news that Magistrate Mamello Thamae was killed and her body was found in a boot of the motor vehicle of her husband in Botswana. The man had guts to put a lifeless body in a car and cross the border to Botswana.

SAWLA felt that enough was enough that women are being killed like animals every day in South Africa. A candlelight in memory of Magistrate Thamae took place on 28 September 2023 in all nine province high courts sittings with the main one in the Constitutional Court. This unity of women from all walks of life in South Africa was to register our concerns with the government that something must be done in combating this barbaric act against women.

The husband was arrested in Botswana and he has since been extradited to South Africa to stand trial. On 13 December 2023 the Parole Board was to decide on the application by Marius van der Westhuizen to be released on parole. He had only served one third of his prison term for killing three of his children in front of their mother and lock her for a night in that room with lifeless bodies of her children. He knew that the mother loves her children and to inflict a pain into her was to take what she loves most, her children.

SAWLA wrote a letter to the Parole Board opposing the release of Marius van der Westhuizen on parole. We also did a petition and collected signatures from concerned individuals. The parole hearing was postponed to 6 June 2024. In June the Parole Board granted Marius parole but the pressure from all of us made the Parole Board to change its mind and withdrew the parole. Marius van der Westhuizen is back in prison serving his term.

March Against Gender-Based Violence

On 7 December 2023 SAWLA organised a march to the Union Building to raise their concerns regarding the layback attempts in dealing with gender-based violence.

Amongst other things we demanded that gender-based violence cases must be attended with speed. We need specialized investigating officers to investigate these cases. That perpetrators must not be granted bail and must not be eligible for parole.

The memorandum did not reach the Security Cluster Ministers and the President of the country. It is for the current NEC to see to it that the demands of the women of South Africa reach those in government leadership. Our fight against gender-based violence is still on until we prevail.

Sexual Harassment in the Legal Profession

It has become prevalent that young women legal practitioners will be victims of sexual harassment in the hands of senior male legal practitioners. SAWLA has decided to dedicate this year in fighting and exposing senior legal practitioners who sexually harassed women legal practitioners.

We collaborated with Democratic Governance and Rights Unit (DGRU) in fighting this monster called sexual harassment. On 29 June 2024 all members of the executive and members of gender-based violence committee from all nine provinces met with DGRU in solidifying the relationship in fighting sexual harassment in the legal profession. In 2023 a case of sexual harassment was reported to the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) against the Judge President. There was a dragging of feet in attending this case in that instead of suspending the judge he was given a long leave. SAWLA challenged the JSC and demanded answers as to why the judge was not suspended and when is the enquiry going to begin. We looking forward on the findings of the enquiry as the date has been announced.

100 YEARS CELEBRATION OF WOMEN LEGAL PRACTITIONER 2023 was the year of celebrating hundred (100) years of women legal practitioners. Before 1923 women were not allowed to practice law, they were not 'persons' in the eyes of the law. Judges would refuse to admit woman as an attorney but would be willing to admit black male attorney. The courts refused Wookey's application for articles of clerkship, holding that the term 'person' excluded women. Today we are looking on how history has shaped our past, present and our future as women leaders and lawmakers. Members of SAWLA from all corners of South Africa gathered in Emperors Palace, Gauteng for three (3) days in celebrating 100 years of being recognized as persons before the law and allowed to be legal practitioners. The celebration took place on 30 March to 01 April 2023. We had Justice M Victor, Justice Yvonne Mogoro and MEC Mazibuko as our guest speakers.

The trailblazers were recognized and honored for their resistance of making sure that they make it possible for the next generation to have a leveled field to be the best legal practitioners.

Throughout the year we had special sittings in all our high court divisions including Supreme Court of Appeal and the Constitutional Court in celebration of the centenary of women legal practitioners.

SAWLA was instrumental and made history in putting pressure to the President of the country to confer a silk status to the first black woman who was admitted as an Advocate, Adv. Nona Goso. The event took place in the High Court, Mthatha, EC on 8 September 2023. This was indeed historical and a well-thought idea of honoring her while still alive.

Women in Leadership Positions

In 2020, we had only two women who were head of courts, one Judge President and the President of the Supreme Court of Appeal.

SAWLA played a crucial role in seeing that women take leading positions in law firms, judiciary and government institutions. We are taking part in nominating and comment in the appointment of the Judges. In this financial year we saw the appointment of the first women Deputy Chief Justice.

We saw the number of women head of courts increasing, we currently have five (5) women head of courts and we pride ourselves in having played a roll. SAWLA also nominated and supported the appointment of the Public Protector who was also a member of SAWLA.

We also celebrated the appointment of two (2) Human Rights Commissioners who are also our members. The President of Sawla, Nomaswazi Shabangu-Mndawe was appointed to serve in the Judicial Service Commission. We agree that strides have been made but there is still a lot to be done. We are working on having the first woman Chief Justice.

Brigitte Mabandla Justice College

Our Patron and the first woman Minister of the department of justice and who was instrumental in establishing SAWLA was honoured by the department for having named the Justice College after her.

24 May 2024 was when the college was renamed after our Patron. It was on this day that our organization was offered an office at the Brigitte Mabandla Justice College. We have been also offered to be furnished with staff members who are to be paid by the department of justice at the College. We appreciate the leadership of the college and the department of justice.

This college will help in mitigating the unemployment of our women graduates and those who want to enter the legal profession as interpreters.

Appointment of the First Woman Chief Justice

History has been made in our life time where we saw the appointment of a black woman to the highest office of judiciary in South Africa. SAWLA was instrumental in her appointment by supporting her appointment and being vocal in all media platform. 101 years since women were allowed to be legal practitioners we saw the appointment of one of us, Justice Mandisa Maya as Chief Justice. It took long but the fight was not in vain. We looking forward to a justice system that takes women as capable legal practitioners.

Memorial Candlelight: In Memory of Honourable Late Justice Mogoro

We wish to take a deep breath and a moment of silent in remembrance of our leader, amongst others, the stalwart, mentor and icon late Justice Yvonne Mogoro. Justice Mogoro was the first woman to be appointed a Constitutional Court Justice by the then President Mandela. She was involved in a car accident after having celebrated with us 100 years of women legal practitioners and having accepted our request to be SAWLA Patron. We had the memorial candlelight in different universities throughout the country. We appreciate the support we have received at the time we needed it the most from all provinces in joining us in hosting a memorial candlelight for our icon on 15 May 2024.

Law Clinic

Finally, after hard work the SAWLA Law Clinic will be launched through the development fund on 23 November 2024. The first law clinic will be launched at the Northern Cape as the rate of gender-based violence is high. The clinic will focus on gender-based violence cases and any other cases against women and children.

Mentoring Program

We have collaborated with Vance Center in their two-year project entitled Advancing Women in the Workplace. This project is supported by the US Embassy in Pretoria. This project is aimed at addressing the gender gap in legal leadership positions in South Africa. It also includes a mentorship program, gender diversity and inclusion survey and other activities.

Each year, the project will pair 20 mentees from all provinces with mentors to guide and support them as they navigate their career paths and enhance their professional and leadership skills. We are grateful that our members responded to the call which saw some of them being selected as Mentors and others as part of the Mentorship Support Committee.

Collaborations

We continue collaborating with other institutions as we believe that combining efforts collaboratively can result in bigger achievements as compared to each organization working separately on its own.

“When women work together history is made”

N Shabangu-Mndawe

Nomaswazi Shabangu-Mndawe

SAWLA President

13th September 2024

ZANZIBAR FEMALE LAWYERS ASSOCIATION (ZAFELA)

1. Background information

a) History and overview

Zanzibar Female Lawyers Association (ZAFELA) was founded in 2003 and officially registered in 2005 as an Association under The Societies Act (No. 6 of 1995). It worked with that status until 2022 when the BPRA Act No. 12 of 2022 was introduced with the effect of directing all institutions with Non-Government Organization (NGO) activities to be registered under the BPRA. ZAFELA went through the compliance process as enshrined in the Act No. 12 of 2022 and re-registered with Registration No. Z000018430.

The aims and objectives of the organisation are to advocate for gender equality, promotion of human dignity and gender justice through policy, legal and institutional reforms, community action and media engagement.

b) Geographical Coverage

From 2003, ZAFELA's physical presence has remained at its headquarters in (UNGUJA) although it was serving the whole of Zanzibar Unguja and Pemba. However recently, ZAFELA managed to open sub office at Pemba.

c) Strategic objectives

1. Enhanced promotion of legal reforms and enforcement of implementation of 60% of Law and Regulations Governing women and Children's rights in Zanzibar.
2. Enhanced knowledge of Civil Rights and Awareness of Legislative Procedures by 60% of women and children in Zanzibar.
3. Enhanced provision of legal and human rights issues through effective legal aid service provision by various institutions by 65% in 2028.
4. To strengthen the dissemination of policy materials on laws, regulation and guidelines governing women and children's rights by 60% in 2028.

2. Contribution of ZAFELA to the Sustainable Development Goals

The following values govern our work, as we strive to achieve ZAFELA's mission:

GOAL 1: No Poverty: End Poverty in all its forms everywhere.

ZAFELA's programs contribute to this SDG by ensuring women have equal rights to economic resources, ownership and control over land, inheritance, natural resources and contribute to improvements of livelihood. Access to decent, safe and affordable housing program equally responds to initiatives to eliminate poverty.

GOAL 5: Gender Equality: achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;

Substantive part of ZAFELA's activities contribute to this SGD through advocating for women's rights to access, own and use land, intervention to ensure women's active and effective participation in leadership at all levels

of decision-making as well as ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health rights for women of reproductive age.

ZAFELA's day to day work on legal aid provision contributes to the realization of this goal through its contribution to reduction and elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and young children by ensuring access to justice, raising awareness on women and children's legal rights, and to ensure that discriminatory and harmful practices are eliminated.

GOAL 16: Peace, Justice and Strong institutions

ZAFELA's contribution to this goal is reflected through a program contributing to strengthened CSOs for enhanced democratic and inclusive electoral processes and more accountable leadership in Zanzibar and Tanzania during and after the 2020 general elections, by which promotion of accountable leadership and peaceful environment in post-electoral Tanzania has been a priority.

3. Advanced gender equity through programmes that promote accountability, progressive laws, transparency, and access to justice

a) Sustainable Access to Justice and Legal Aid

ZAFELA continues to provide legal aid services and counselling at its main office in Unguja. For the year 2022 a total number of 386 new clients visited ZAFELA's office. Successfully finalized cases, including maintenances cases, custody, inheritance, divorce and winning them has proven to be advantageous in providing financial Support, to entitled individuals particularly children, which can be utilized to meet their fundamental requirements such as food, medical care and education.

b) Self-representation training

ZAFELA through its legal aid clinics conducted training on how clients can represent themselves before courts of law/tribunals. The purpose of these trainings is to impart knowledge and skills to legal aid clients on how to represent and defend their cases before courts of law and tribunals. A total of 150 clients were trained and their capacity to represent themselves in the courts of law and tribunals were increased.

c) Reconciliation

As an experienced legal aid provider, ZAFELA normally assesses the disputes reported by clients in its legal aid clinics and facilitates reconciliations through separate sessions with both parties to the disputes and other necessary individuals before embarking on court processes. This strategy is voluntary and has facilitated harmonious resolutions to several disputes. This also saves resources and public time which could be wasted if court processes are opted for. In 2022 a total of 362 civil cases filed for reconciliation and 300 cases were successfully settled out of court while 62 reconciliations failed and further legal processes were opted. While a

number of 24 criminal cases (including rape, defilement, Sodomy and dissent assault) were scheduled for follow up at the Police stations, DPP office and Courts.

d) Pro-Bono Sevince

ZAFELA members who subscribe to ZAFELA's objectives have been offering legal aid services through a Pro-Bono Scheme established since 2003. In the year 2022, a total number of cases were represented in various judicial forums through ZAFELA Pro-Bono Scheme in Zanzibar.

e) Mobile legal aid

In ensuring that legal aid services reach a wide range of community, ZAFELA conducted several mobile legal aid sessions and reached more than 3000 community members in the Unguja and Pemba. These sessions were held along celebrations of law week and International Women's Day, and monthly community meetings.

f) Legal education

ZAFELA in collaboration with different stakeholders including the judiciary, Zanzibar Law Society (ZLS), social welfare offices, police, gender and children's desks and government officials through Legal Aid Department in the commemoration of Legal aid week under the theme "Legal Aid for a Just and Inclusive Society" from 1-8 March 2022 Unguja and Pemba. ZAFELA provided legal education in probate, matrimonial, civil, GBV and land issues and more than 1000 people were reached.

g) Paralegal services

In the quest to ensure access to justice, all paralegal services which ensure access to legal aid services in nearby communities remained imperative. In the year 2022, ZAFELA continued to partner with paralegal units by offering capacity building opportunities to paralegals and strengthening working relationships and referral mechanisms.

4. Strengthening Women's Participation and Representation in decision-making process in Tanzania

a. Women's Access to justice in administrative Kadhis Court Act no. of 2018

Zanzibar has adopted a very progressive legal framework on women's access to justice through Kadhis Court, whereby women are legally entitled to access, own, and use matrimonial properties directly; however, a gap between the narration of the law and practice has existed since then. Thus, ZAFELA's work on women's rights has been to address the gap through capacity building for women and decision makers to remedy the knowledge gap.

Further, ZAFELA innovatively takes advantage of the opportunities in the legal framework to translate and extend legal avenues ensuring women's access to their matrimonial properties and initiating public dialogues aiming to diminish harmful practices sidelining women from the full enjoyment of their

property rights. Realising all the above narrations, projects on Legal Empowerment & Access to Justice Programme, Strengthening Women's Participation in Leadership and Empowering Community to End GBV in Zanzibar were implemented in 2022.

b) Psychosocial support for GBV victim program

Psychosocial support program is an essential building block to achieving gender equality, with special focus on the reduction of the trauma for gender-based violence victims. It is from that context that ZAFELA continues to advocate for advancing psychosocial support for women and children especial SGBV victims. In so doing, several interventions were implemented including training for Social workers on provision of psychosocial support which aimed at increasing awareness and service provision.

c) Gender Equality and GBV

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a serious violation of human rights and a life-threatening health and protection issue in our society. It is estimated that one in three women will experience sexual or physical violence in their lifetime. It is from that context that, ZAFELA with other partners including Zanzibar Women with Disability (JUWAUZA), Tumaini jipya from Pemba (TUJIPE), Zanzibar Women with disability organization and Tanzania Media Women Zanzibar branch (TAMWA) through fighting against GBV program for women, children and people with disability continues to implement various interventions to combat GBV in Unguja and Pemba with advocacy activities at national level. This includes ensuring timely provision of legal aid services to victims of GBV, media campaign reporting to GBV victims, building capacity of law enforcers, especially Police Gender and Children Desks and NPA/VAWC Committees in responding to GBV incidents, building community awareness on GBV and reporting mechanisms.

d) Women and Youth Political Representation and Leadership

Low representation of women and young people in leadership and decision-making structures at different levels has continued to be a barrier against efforts challenging the structures and frameworks nursing or perpetrating GBV. This underrepresentation demonstrates the tale of GBV existence in our communities. Various initiatives including raising community awareness through community brigades and male champions on inclusion of women and youth, enactment of gender sensitive and youth focused bylaws on village governance, mentorship programmes on leadership, review of the existing laws on the women position in decision-making have been conducted. All these continued to challenge the status quo and changing negative societal attitudes against women and youth.

Recently, ZAFELA in collaboration with TAMWA through Strengthen Women in Leadership program (SWIL) which aim to increase the participation of women in democratic processes from local and national level through training session to the aspirant's young women on the importance of gender

mainstreaming women agenda in Parliament, about 138 journalist trained on reporting women stories. The engagement expected to increase representation of women at national level and Parliament as well as enhancing a more enabling national policy and legislative environment for gender equality.

e) Stakeholders Engagement, Partnership, Collaboration and Networking

Stakeholder engagement is the process by which an organisation involves people who may be affected by the decisions it makes or can influence the implementation of its decisions. ZAFELA engaged with different stakeholders by attending various forums such as ‘Validation Meeting of the Child Justice Forum – the 2nd five-year strategy for progressive reform’ hosted by Ministry of Constitutional and Legal Affairs in Dodoma. ZAFELA also took part on ‘Stakeholders’ forum on the Universal Periodic review’ hosted by the Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance (CHRAGG) in Dodoma. ZAFELA also conducted Shehia level meetings (local government) with various community stakeholders to make a general proposal on gender sensitive bylaws and managed to identify gaps.

On the other hand, ZAFELA in collaboration with the United Nation High Commission for Human Rights organised a two-day workshop for lawyers and Human Rights CSOs in Zanzibar to support judicial institutions in Tanzania. The workshop was based on straightening women’s access to Justice in Zanzibar.

f) Governance and Rule of Law

Good governance and the rule of law are essential preconditions for the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as they are prerequisites to peace and stability without which societies cannot function, let alone flourish. The commitment to good governance and promotion of the rule of law enhanced ZAFELA to facilitate enactment of gender sensitive and youth focused by-laws to strengthen women and young people’s voices and participation in governance. From that context, ZAFELA supported reviewing of the number of laws and policies including Kadhi’s court Act, Media Laws, Political Party law. The purpose of facilitating the reviewing was to increase women and young people’s voices and participation in governance of community affairs from the local to national level. The reviewed laws address structural barriers that limit effective participation of women and youth in key decision-making structures. The reviewed laws also touch various sectors including land, water, natural resources, pastoralism, and agriculture and try to bridge the gap in terms of what is provided within national laws and policies with practice on the ground which hinder democratic rights.

g) Research and Evidence Based Advocacy

To facilitate research and evidence-based advocacy, ZAFELA engaged a consultant to review Zanzibar policies and laws to highlight the discriminatory nature of the women’s rights to participate in leadership and decision-making positions with the view of generating evidence to be used

as an advocacy tool in engagement with relevant authorities. A report was used to engage different stakeholders including Law Reform Commission, MOCLA and Parliament in the quest to challenge discriminatory rules in leadership laws. The Zanzibar Women Parliamentary Wing has registered its commitment to work on the identified challenges. To establish the starting point of the project and assess the situation on the ground, a baseline survey was conducted to ascertain the number of women in leadership position and democratic process, before implementation of the Strengthen Women in Leadership program (SWIL) and Together for Peace Activity. The findings of the survey were used to establish targets in different areas which the activity is addressing. The survey was conducted in collaboration with TAMWA and KAS. The findings indicate several gaps whereby several councils/tribunals and committees do not have requisite number of women and in certain places they are made of individuals with other conflicting roles. ZAFELA has been engaging LGAs to address such anomalies and advocate for inclusion of younger people in the said structures

5. Strengthened ZAFELA Brand and Visibility

ZAFELA is an organisation with wide membership rights and obligations articulated in the constitution. The existing members have technical capacities to support women and communities to access justice through diverse approaches. TAWLA continues to implement its programme with the objective to retain, utilise and increase members' participation and ownership of the organisation for effective delivery of TAWLA mission

a. ZAFELA rebranding

Membership Growth, Engagement and Networking
Membership Growth, Engagement and Networking

Member engagement in ZAFELA planned activities

Members handling ZAFELA clients cases

b) Media Engagement and Communication

ZAFELA in promoting its branding and communication use both social media, broadcasting and printing media to explore the number of its interventions. ZAFELA use media as means of communication with the community and the way of reporting what has been done or to be done in the future. In doing so ZAFELA is creating the enabling environment for journalists to make sure they report the accuracy and timely information regarding women in leadership, economic empowerment and GBV incidences.

However, ZAFELA with the collaboration with other partners builds capacity of journalists through awareness trainings and workshops. Also, ZAFELA motivates journalists via media awards and recognitions for those who featured good reports on Gender and good governance during the 16 days of activism.

6. Achievements

- ZAFELA has successfully facilitated the enactment of the gender sensitive and the division of matrimonial assets after divorce law which is known as Kadhis Court Act.
- Increased collaboration with other women's rights organizations and other human rights organizations.
- ZAFELA has magnanimously continued to provide legal assistance to vulnerable women and children.

7. Challenges

- With the decline of funding to CSO's, the organization has continued to operate with minimal resources to cater for operations to support execution of its mandate. However, different efforts including forging partnership with other organizations have been put in place for sustainability of the organization and its activities.
- There are increased demands for legal representation in the organization's legal aid and clinic. Few registered advocates working with the organization as employee and established Pro-Bono Scheme clients cannot meet the present demand. The organization has continued to reach out to its members and law firms to seek a hand of support in the provision of legal aid, especially through court representation.

8. Conclusion

This report has highlighted the engagement made by ZAFELA in the year 2022 in line with her Strategic Plan. ZAFELA appreciates the support from the Government, Development partners, Private organizations, as well as ZAFELA members, The Board Members, the Board of Directors, staff, and all beneficiaries including the public who all together, made possible the implementation of ZAFELA objectives.

Thank you!

Jameela Mahmood
FIDA Zanzibar/ZAFELA

ASSOCIATION DES FEMMES JURISTES COTE D'IVOIRE (AFJCI) REPORT

Association Des Femmes Juristes, Cote d'Ivoire (AFJCI) is the Association of Women Lawyers of Cote D'Ivoire, established in 1984. The Certificate of Registration was received on the 14 February 1986, amended in 2006 and 2014.

From 1984 to date, nine presidents have succeeded each other while Mrs. Francine AKA-ANGHUI assumed the Office of President in March 2022 and is the incumbent. The members of AFJCI may be women with a Master's Degree in law or women who operate in the legal field or have had a legal career. Also, male law graduates or members of associations of lawyers may be admitted as associate members.

Objectives and Missions

Our mission is:

- To contribute to the promotion of women, family and child's rights, as well as the development of law in general;
- To promote law in rural and semi-urban areas, in particular by raising public awareness;
- To contribute in creating equal justice for all;
- To promote good governance;
- To contribute to improving access to justice for all;
- To work towards the consolidation of peace and security;
- Our Beneficiaries: AFJCI's actions target vulnerable populations: Women, men, young people and children.

Our objectives and mission revolve around the promotion of women, family and child rights with a view to creating equal justice for all towards the consolidation of peace and security.

Administrative Structure:

For efficiency in organization and operation, AFJCI is led by a Board of Directors and various Committees.

AFJCI's has adopted good governance tools such as a charter of good conduct, a policy of gender promotion, non-discrimination, human resources management, recruitment and evaluation of staff, which is included in a procedural manual, a policy of protection against exploitation, sexual abuse and harassment, a policy on anti-corruption, etc.

Its core values include respect for others, non-discrimination, integrity, professionalism and transparency. AFJCI's own financial resources come from the payment of membership fees, annual contributions, grants, donations, legacies, etc. We receive external financing for the completion of large-scale projects.

Our Activities

AFJCI contributes to the development of law in Cote d'Ivoire through various means: publicising legal cases/judgments through awareness raising, training, providing legal and judicial assistance, providing support for legal documentation, design of information, brochures, manuals and legal guides, visiting prisons and correction centers, training courses, animation of radio and TV programmes.

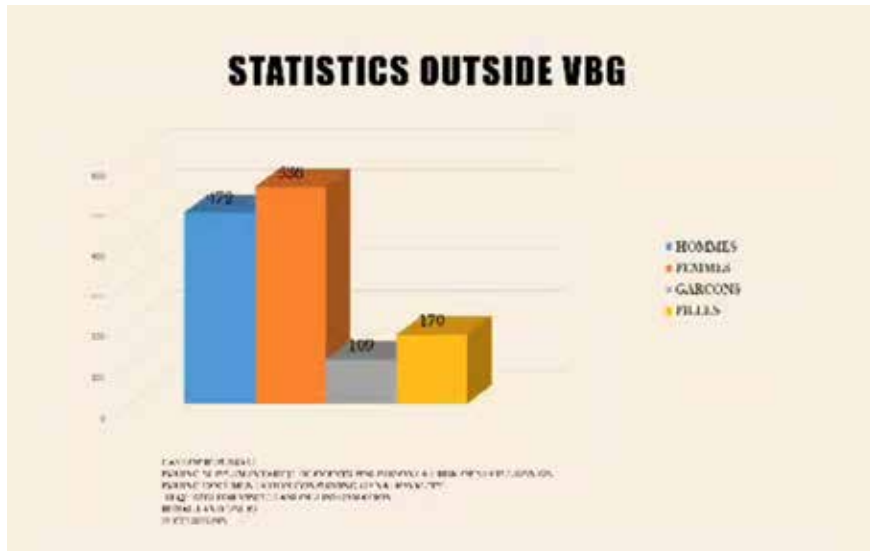
This is done in Abidjan and in the hinterland. We run thirteen legal clinics, eleven fixed legal clinics and two mobile track legal clinics. We have had various legislative advocacies that led to the adoption of laws on matrimonial causes, marriage and tax matters.

GBV Data in 2022

Through our legal clinics, AFGCI was able to train more than 5000 people, sensitize nearly 50,000 people on sexual assault, physical aggression, early and forced marriages, denial of resources and opportunities, psychological and emotional abuse, all GBV.



These are the statistics on actions outside GBV, including case of referrals, issuing supplementary judgments for a person at risk of statelessness, issuing documentation, confirming of nationality, request for miscellaneous information, rural land issues and succession.



The status report of the implementation of the Maputo protocol in Cote d'Ivoire.

ON PROGRESS-MAPUTO PROTOCOL

Le Protocole de Maputo, ratifié par la Côte d'Ivoire, reconnaît l'accès à l'avortement comme un droit humain.

Article 12.1 du Protocole de Maputo

Les États s'engagent, avec les partenaires concernés, à se doter d'un cadre juridique qui leur permette de garantir le droit d'accéder à l'avortement en toute sécurité, en tenant compte des besoins et des intérêts des femmes et des filles, ainsi que de la santé sexuelle et reproductive, et de la dignité humaine.

Les États doivent prendre toutes les mesures appropriées pour reconnaître et protéger les droits reproductifs des femmes, particulièrement en matière de consentement médicalisé, de cas d'urgence sexuelle, de viol, d'inceste et lorsque le processus peut en danger la santé sexuelle et reproductive de la femme ou de la fille ou de la mère ou du fœtus.

Qu'est-ce que le Protocole de Maputo ?

C'est un accord international adopté le 11 juillet 2003 qui vise à promouvoir **les droits des femmes en Afrique**.
 Il favorise l'émancipation économique et politique, ainsi que l'autonomie des femmes dans les décisions concernant **leur santé sexuelle et reproductive**.

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pays ratificateurs

On the progress side, the Maputo protocol was ratified by Cote 2022. The adoption of the treaty was a very important event in the fight for women's rights in terms of recognition and promotion of their rights. Cote D'Ivoire stepped in with a vast reform of legal test of laws right after the ratification of the said protocol.

First, since 2019, major changes have been adopted in the law on marriage, filiation and inheritance, in order to strengthen equality between men and women and to balance relations between spouses and with regards to children.

Change is also in the area of violence against women, peace and security, socio-economic empowerment, food security and nutrition, political participation of women, the law on the 30% quota for women.

In addition, socio-cultural patterns and models of behaviour for men and women have been modified by pre-public education and the implementation of information.

Thank you!

Francine Aka Anghui
President, Association of Women Lawyers of Cote D'Ivoire
(October, 2024)

FIDA GHANA REPORT

TRANSFORMATIVE ACTION ON GENDER EQUALITY (TAGE) PROJECT

Summary of Project

A 30-month partnership between FIDA-Ghana and Action Aid Ghana (2021-2024) to empower 6,400 women and girls most at risk from gender-based violence to know their rights, to understand and recognize all forms of domestic violence. It was intended to also seek protection for women with disabilities and defend themselves, within 64 communities of four regions in the country.

Activities included tracking the 2022, 2023 and 2024 National budgets to advocate for increased resources to the Ministry of Gender and the Domestic Violence Fund, which the ministry has oversight of.

Impact of Budget Analysis

- An increase of funds to the Gender ministry by x% , the DV fund by 0.5% from 0.12%. Gaps still exist in the delays of allocation but it is a good start and has provided FIDA Ghana with new areas for increased advocacy.
- The increased funding has provided more resources for to provide training for staff of the Gender ministry and the DV secretariat under the ministry of gender's supervision.
- Expanded support services has been made available to survivors of domestic violence including psycho- social services

SIGN LANGUAGE TRAINING OF LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS AND THE IMPACT

Sign Language Instruction

This was an innovation of the project to ensure that law enforcement officers are disability aware and have the relevant skills to provide targeted services for women and girls with disabilities.

According to one officer

"This has been very instructive, as it has enhanced our skill to communicate at a basic level with both women and men with disabilities" (DOVVSU Staff, Volta region.)

Finally, it has promoted diversity and inclusivity in the practices of Law enforcement agencies.

COMMUNITY OUTREACHES AND THE IMPACT

Community outreaches have always been one of FIDA Ghana's strategic approaches to increase awareness of legal rights and avenues to access justice. The target of reaching 6,400 was exceeded by forty percent, as community response teams were able to use their own initiatives to reach out to other communities outside the targeted intervention sites.

I was glad that the community teams were able to bring information to our doorsteps" As I shared my challenge of my husband's refusal to provide child care support for my three children, one with disability, the team members visit to our home, and the education provided to my husband has brought a change in attitude." My children are now enrolled in school and my daughter who is deaf is now in a special needs school." (Community member, Adaklu Volta Region).

Change Stories

Child Support Provided for 2-Year-Old

A girl aged 22 years had a child aged 2 years and the man never named the child even though the man showed up during pregnancy to claim responsibility. Since then, he has never taken care of the child. Her case was to be referred to Social Welfare.

At the Social Welfare office, the woman was told that since the father had been present during the pregnancy and claimed responsible, he is also legally responsible for providing financial support for the child. He must pay a monthly fee to the single mother to cover major expenses for taking care of the child.

Unfortunately, the man refused to pay the maintenance fees owed to the woman and her child. The community responsive teams followed up on the case until the social welfare officer, himself a trained community responsive team member decided to take the matter to Court. The court ruled that the man must pay a minimum of Ghs 300 monthly for the care of the child subject to review.

Now, with adequate support, the woman is able to complete more daily tasks and take proper care of her child. She is able to buy supplies, and save some money for the child's education as well.

Woman Receives

Hajia visited FIDA to complain that her husband who resides in the US had refused to maintain her and their daughter because she reported her stepson to the police for stabbing her daughter's hand with a knife. Hajia was the second wife of her Muslim husband and had assisted her husband to construct a 6-storey apartment.

She reported that her husband was so angry at her for reporting the case to the police that he refused to accept paternity of their daughter and stopped maintaining them since the incident took place two years ago.

When the invitee (husband) was invited to FIDA he refused to accept the child they both have as his. FIDA referred the case to court, and the court ordered that a DNA test be done. The results proved that the daughter was indeed theirs. He was ordered to begin paying child support from the time he stopped making the payments two years ago.

After this, the case was referred to court again for Hajia Asia since invitee insisted that he no longer wanted her as his wife and was ejecting her from their family home.

Hajia was assisted by the Legal Aid officer to claim part of the property as she had devoted her time to supervising the construction of the building and could not have held down a job. The court ruled in favor of Hajia and ruled that she be given 500 million Ghana cedis, and an apartment. In her own words she gave testimony that "FIDA had done so well for her, I did not have any money, but the FIDA lawyer assisted me paying for filing all the necessary court documents." "Now I have a house and some funds that can cushion me for some time whilst I set myself up in business."

Safe Project

GBV/ Domestic violence in the fishing communities.

This was the first time that FIDA Ghana was supported under a USAID project known as the Ghana Fisheries Recovery Activity to address Domestic violence, child labor and child trafficking in selected fishing communities.

The SAFE project responded to the worsening incidence of GBV in selected fishing communities and districts due to deteriorating catches experienced within the fishing communities. Evidence based information highlights the vulnerability of female partners of men often with multiple partners to GBV/DV. Furthermore, child labor and trafficking have long been challenges characteristic of fishing communities, putting both young girls and boys at risk.

Community Outreach

Conversations around GBV/DV and child labor /Child trafficking in the fishing communities in the Volta & Greater Accra region.

Community Trainings

Empowering Child Community Protection Committees to address child labor and Domestic Violence in fishing communities.

Impact of Activities

- Increased awareness of the laws and consequences of child labor/ child trafficking.
- These spirited conversations, helped communities to identify strategies that could be introduced to reduce this practice.
- One fisher man proposed the construction of specialized training schools from primary to secondary level in the fishing communities to provide instruction on scientific approaches to fishing.
- Another proposed that teenage children be provided with a card akin to a driving license that will ensure that children are not trafficked and exploited to engage in fishing that will endanger their lives and halt their education.

- There was a total of 150 reported cases of domestic violence, which indicated an increase in reporting of cases of DV.
- Community Protection teams reported a reduction of incidence in some communities as a result of their intervention.
- Over 6,000 women, men, net owners, canoe owners and women in the fish smoking business benefited from the community activities.
- There has been an increased awareness of the issues of Domestic violence in the targeted communities of Greater Accra and Volta region on the importance of community support for survivors of domestic violence.

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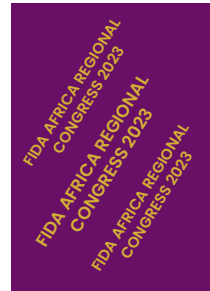
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VOTE OF THANKS

Dear FIDANs,

Participating in the Africa Regional Congress, 2023, gave me great pleasure.

First of all, I would like to congratulate my counterpart, **Mrs Joy (Ezeigbo) Ejim**, for organising this high-level and successful engagement platform for FIDANs all over Africa.

I thank our FIDA sisters from all walks of life who joined us over three days to share their profound insights, analyses and expertise as well as experience in an enabling and constructive environment.

The issues analysed and recommendations forged through dialogue respond to women's lived realities, interests and concerns.

Furthermore, they spoke to the FIDA we want to see and our aspiration for a better future for African women.

We left the Africa Regional Congress feeling inspired, resolved and re-energised.

We look forward to bigger and better breakthroughs in promoting the rights of women and girls in Africa through our concerted, informed, strategic and collective efforts.

Here's to the FIDA we want!!!

Laura Nyirinkindi
Regional Vice President Africa (East & Southern Region)

REPORT *of*
**AFRICA REGIONAL CONGRESS
2023 ABUJA, NIGERIA**

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