

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN LAWYERS (FIDA)
FEDERATION INTERNATIONALE DES FEMMES JURISTES
FEDERACION INTERNACIONAL DE ABOGADAS

**Report
on the**

FIDA AFRICAN REGIONAL CONGRESS (EKO 2004)

Held in Lagos Nigeria From June 7-11, 2004

Presented By Mrs. Veronica Odunuga FIDA Regional Vice President (Africa)

Pursuant to my election as Regional Vice President (Africa) at the FIDA Biennial Convention held in Manaus, Brazil from September 5th to 9th 2002, I was charged with the responsibility of organising a Congress within the African Region.

The FIDA African Regional Congress tagged “**EKO 2004**” was successfully held between Monday June 7 and Friday June 11, 2004 at the Nigerian Institute International Affairs in Lagos, Nigeria.

Theme

The theme of the Congress was “**Women's Rights - From Awareness to**

Implementation”. The choice of this theme was borne out of the realisation of the fact that partly on account of FIDA activities, much awareness had been created on the issues affecting women in Africa. In several African countries today, various gender-sensitive laws have been passed.

Unfortunately, non-adherence to these laws by the relevant government agencies and individuals as well as their ineffective and inefficient application, have rendered the benefits meant to be attained therefrom, a mirage. It was realised that this situation was as true in Nigeria as in other parts of Africa, even if in varying degrees.

In view of the foregoing, we realised that the main challenge was how to move from creating awareness to the phase of implementation.

The programme for the Congress featured

Presentation of papers by various speakers, Courtesy Visits, A Rally, A cocktail party and Dinners.

Topics, Papers and Speakers

The following topics/papers were presented by the underlisted speakers and deliberated upon by the delegates to the Congress:

Girl Child Education

* Ensuring Access to Justice for the Girl Child through Education
Mr. Vincent Del Buono -
Coordinator, Access to Justice
Program of the British Council

*FIDA Regional Vice President (Africa)
Mrs Veronica Odunuga*



- * UNICEF Intervention in Girl Child Education in Nigeria (with special reference to B Zone Office) **Mrs. Justina Onifade** UNICEF Program Officer, Education
- * Universal Basic Education (UBE) program as a tool for promoting Girl Child Education **Mrs. Marie Sojinrin**, Principal, Holy Child College, Lagos
- * A consultative Forum on Girl Child Education featuring presentations by Various NGOS involved in promoting Girl Child Education:
 - v Education for All
 - v Action Aid
 - v African Network coalition on Education for All
 - v Global Campaign on Education
 - v Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All

International Conventions, National Policies and the Status of Women

The Nigerian Experience **Prof. (Mrs). Grace Uzodike**, Professor of Law, University of Lagos
 A UNIFEM Perspective **Mrs. Florence Butegwa** Country Director, UNIFEM

The Woman at Work Challenges in the Workplace

- UK Experience: **Mrs. Boma Ozobia** National Vice Chairman, Association of Women Solicitors (UK)
- * Human Resources Practitioner: **Mrs. Amina Oyagbola** Head, HR Strategy, Standards & Business Planning, Shell Petroleum Development Company, Nigeria
- * Banker: **Chief (Mrs.) Christy Okoye**, Executive Director, First Bank of Nigeria Plc, Nigeria

**Economic Empowerment of Women
 The HIV/AIDS Impediment**

An Overview of the National Policy on HIV/AIDS in Nigeria and Implications for Women's Economic Rights - **UNDP Resident Representative**

National Policy on Women in Nigeria and the HIV/AIDS Pandemic **Engr. Jerry Okwuosa** Director Project for Human Development a Nigerian NGO

Culture and Women's Rights

The Interface between Culture and the Rights of Women a Malaysian Experience **Puan Sri Datin Seri N. Saraswathy Devi**

Culture and the Rights of Women - A Judicial Response **Hon. Justice Mrs Rahila Cudjoe OFR** Chief Judge of Kaduna State of Nigeria

Impact of Culture on the Rights of Women **Mrs. Margaret Opara** Legal Practitioner (currently a Judge of the High Court of Rivers State of Nigeria) and wife of the Hon. Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nigeria

Country Experiences Cameroon, Ghana and Uganda.

Maternal Health Rights and HIV/AIDS The Red and White Ribbon Alliance

Hon. Justice (Mrs.) Mary Odili - Judge of the Nigerian Court of Appeal and wife of the Governor of Rivers State of Nigeria, Founder, The Adolescent Project (TAP), Rivers State

HIV/AIDS Responding to the Needs of the Infected and Affected **Engr. Jerry Okwuosa**
Mrs. Jummai Dakuk PLWHA (Infected and Affected)

Maternal Mortality: The Importance of the White and Red Ribbon Symbol for Safe motherhood **Prof. Mrs. P.K. Makinwa Adebuseye** Country Director, CEDPA Nigeria

Rally on Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV/AIDS (PMTCT)

Owing to a general strike in the Country at the time, which hampered free movement in Lagos, the session on International Conventions had to be cancelled and the sessions relating to HIV/AIDS merged.



Courtesy Visit to the Formal Hon. Attorney General and Minister for Justice Chief Akinola Olujimi SAN.

Commencement

Monday June 4, 2004 was reserved for arrivals, registration of participants and a cocktail party. A courtesy visit was also paid on the His Royal Majesty Alaiyeluwa Oba Rilwan Akiolu I - the Oba of Lagos at the Oba's palace Iga Idungaran, Lagos, by a delegation of FIDA members including the FIDA International President Puan Sri Saraswathy Devi

An impressive formal Opening Ceremony was held on Tuesday June 5, 2005; Prof. Ignatius A. Ayua, SAN OFR - Solicitor General of the Federal Republic of Nigeria delivered an address and declared the Congress open on behalf of His Excellency Atiku Abubakar, the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The ceremony featured welcome addresses by FIDA International President Puan Sri Saraswathy Devi and Regional Vice President (Africa) Mrs Veronica Odunuga. Goodwill messages were also received from Chief Akinlolu Olujimi SAN (Hon. Attorney General of the Federation and Minister for Justice); Chief Mrs. Oluremi Tinubu - wife of the Governor of Lagos State (represented by Mrs. Gbajabiamila) and Chief Wole Olanipekun the President of the Nigerian Bar Association

Mrs. Elsie Thompson Country Vice President of FIDA Nigeria, (currently a Judge of the High Court of Rivers State of Nigeria) delivered the keynote address titled - *An Overview of Women's Rights in Nigeria*.

Other dignitaries at the opening ceremony were Prof. Mrs. U. Joy Ogwu Director General of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs; Dr. Mrs. Bolere Ketebu-Nwokeafor National President, National Council of Women Societies; His Royal Majesty Alaiyeluwa Oba Rilwan Akiolu I - the Oba of Lagos and some members of his Council of Traditional White cap Chiefs.

The sessions were chaired by Chief Mrs. Priscilla Kuye -Papal medallist, Past Regional Vice President (Africa) and Past President General, Nigerian

Bar Association; Prof. Mrs. U. Joy Ogwu; Chief Mrs. Stella Ugboma - Past Country Vice President, FIDA Nigeria and Past Director, FIDA International; Hon Justice (Mrs.) Ifeyinwa Nzeakor - Judge of the Federal Court of Appeal.

Participants

Participants were drawn from the FIDA Cameroon (Mrs. Betty Luma and Justice Helen FonAchu), FIDA Ghana (Mrs. Gladys Attobrah), FIDA Uganda (Norah Matovu Winyi - (Chairperson) and Annet Koote) and members from various state branches of FIDA Nigeria.

Also in attendance were Nigerian Female lawyers, members of the National Council of Women Societies, the Police Officers' Wives Association, Women from faith based Associations and others. Officers and members of the Nigerian Bar Association were also present, thus ensuring participation by both sexes and in this case, relevant stakeholders. Country Experiences and papers presented by these participants helped in enriching the quality of the discourse at the Congress.

Closing

The final day of the Congress featured a press Conference at which a Communiqué was issued, as well as a rally, which focused on the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV/AIDS. The day was rounded off with the grand finale, which was a **Black and White Ball** at the Golden Gate Restaurant, Ikoyi, Lagos. This event also served as a forum for the formal presentation of the **Global Villager Award** to Her Excellency Chief (Mrs.)



Mrs Akran displaying the FIDA Global Villager Award received on behalf of Her Excellency Amina Titi Abubakar Wife of the Vice President of Nigeria



RVP with Betty Luma and Helen Fon Achu delegates from Cameroon.



Press Conference PMTCT Rally



PMTCT Rally



FIDA International President- Puan Sri Saraswathy Deri, Regional Vice President (Africa) Mrs Veronica Odunuga and Members of FIDA Nigeria with His Royal Majesty, the Oba of Lagos..



RVP Mrs Veronica Odunuga and FIDA CVP Mrs Flsie Thompson at the Press Conference



Prof. I. Ayua Representing the Vice President of Nigeria with Mrs Veronica (RVP) Mrs Stella Ugboma and some Members of FIDA Nigeria.



RVP presenting a gift to Prof. P.K. Makinwa-Adebusoye CEDPA Country Dire



RVP (Africa) - Mrs Veronica Odunuga, Members of FIDA Nigeria and Hon. Attorney General and Minister for Justice after the Courtesy Visit



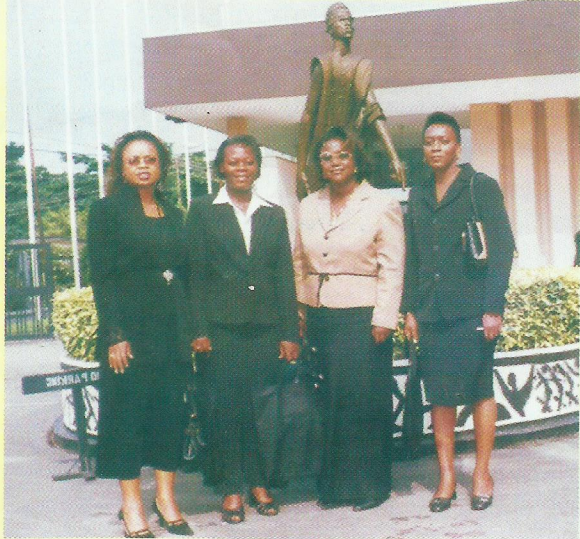
Odunuga,



FIDA members with Puan Sri. Saraswathy Devi. prior to her departure.



FIDA President and Members of FIDA Nigeria at the FIDA Nigeria Congress Eko 2004.



Delegates from Cameroon and Uganda at the FIDA Regional Congress Eko 2004



Prof. (Mrs) U. Joy Ogwu, Mrs Veronica Odunuga, Chief Wole Olanipekun SAN and the Oba of Lagos.



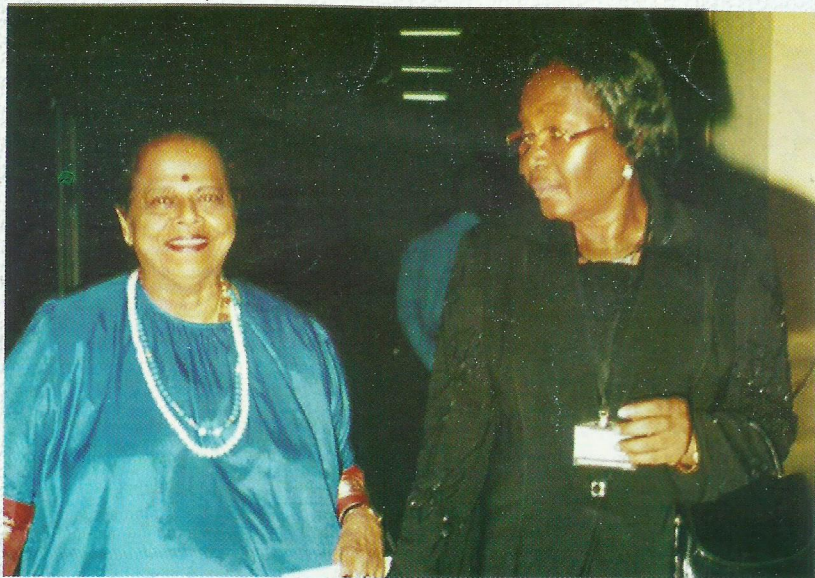
RVP being decorated with the Adolescent Project (TAP) Scarf by Mrs Suzette Nyesom- Wike-Representative of Hon. Justice Mrs Mary Odili Founder (TAP)



Mrs Veronica Odunuga and His Royal Majesty Alaiyeluwa Oba Rilwan Akiolu I the Oba of Lagos.



RVP- Mrs Veronica Odunuga and some Members of the Congress Organising Committee-Mrs Elizabeth Akah and Mrs Ezinwa Okoroafor in a discussion.



Puan Sri. Saraswathy Devi and RVP Mrs Veronica Odunuga

Amina Titi Abubakar - the wife of the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Founder of Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF), who was represented by Mrs Akran. It will be recalled that the award, received on her behalf at the last FIDA International Biennial Convention in Brazil, was made in recognition of her excellent work in the prevention of trafficking in women and Child Labour.

Planning Committee

The Planning Committee, which worked very hard to ensure the success of the Congress, was made up of the following members of FIDA Nigeria:

Mrs. Lizzy Akah; Mrs. Modupe Albert, Mrs. Roli Craig - National Publicity Secretary, FIDA Nigeria, Miss Lilian Ekeanyanwu - Assistant National Secretary FIDA Nigeria, Ms. Grace Egbagbe, Mrs. Joy Ezeigbo - Secretary, FIDA Nigeria Lagos State Branch, Mrs. Adaeze Ikedianya - Deputy Country Vice President, FIDA Nigeria, Mrs. Chinelo Iriele - National Secretary, FIDA Nigeria, Mrs. Eliana Martins - Publicity Secretary, FIDA Nigeria Lagos State Branch, Mrs. Helen Mbakwe, Ugoeze Pauline Njemanze - Past Chairperson, FIDA Nigeria Imo State Branch, Miss Chiemeka Nwosu, Mrs. Ezinwa Okoroafor - Past National Secretary, FIDA Nigeria and Chair, Regional Congress Planning Committee, Hon. Justice (Mrs.) Elsie Thompson - Country Vice President, FIDA Nigeria, Mrs. Sylvia Shinaba - Chairperson, FIDA Nigeria Lagos State Branch.

Conclusion

This report cannot be concluded without acknowledging the collaboration and support of many organisations such as UNICEF, UNDP, CEDPA, British Council, The Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, TAP, WOTCLEF and several other Civil Society Organisations. This resulted in the successful execution of the Congress.

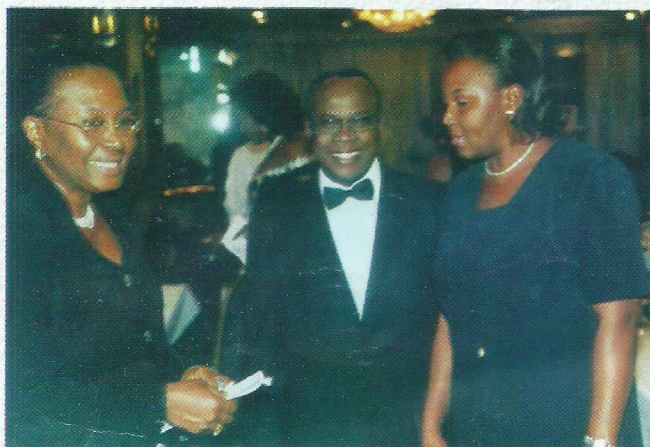
The support of companies such as Shell Petroleum Development Company, First Bank of Nigeria Plc, Citizens International Bank Plc, Nigerian Bottling Company Plc, Global Energy Company Limited, Frigoglass Industries Limited, Consolidated Breweries Plc, Leadway Assurance Co. Ltd, AllCO Insurance Plc, Industrial and General Insurance Company Limited, Ordrec Investments Limited, Foundation Chambers, and individuals are also duly and gratefully acknowledged.

The benefit of synergy arising from useful cooperation between the Regional Vice President and the Country Branch in the interest of the Association both nationally and internationally cannot be overemphasized. It is hoped that FIDA International will continue to provide the enabling environment for such cooperation in future.

I wish to thank FIDA Nigeria and FIDA International for the opportunity afforded me to serve the organisation in this capacity and wish FIDA every success in the years ahead.

Thank you.

Veronica O. Odunuga (Mrs.)



FIDA RVP with Maritime Lawyer Mr. Chidi Ilogu and his Wife, Helen at the Black and White Ball.



RVP and Mrs. Rachael Nsofor - Chairperson FIDA Nigeria Imo State



MS Grace Egbagbe, RVP, and FIDA Nigeria CVP- Mrs Thompson with Mrs Boma Ozobia -Vice Chair Association of Woman Solicitors (UK) being made an honorary Member of FIDA Nigeria.



Chief (Mrs) Priscilla Kuye Mrs Akran (Representing Her Excellency Mrs Amina Titi Abubakar) RVP- Mrs Veronica Odunuga and Chief (Mrs) Yessa Ikimi.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

Quotable Quotes from papers presented at the FIDA African Regional Congress EKO 2004

"Be it resolved that we shall work tirelessly to ensure that all laws, directives and protocols for equitable treatment of women and children that currently exist in all the countries of Africa are implemented and enforced. Moreover, we African Women will work diligently to ensure that countries are accountable for the lawful implementation of these

laws for the betterment of society"

Culled from *The Abuja Accord ratified at the African Woman 2004 International Conference on the African Woman and Gender Development*

The contribution of the womenfolk as a procreative medium in the annals of the human race imposes a duty on mankind to accord to that special breed of homo sapiens a dignity and respect for which advanced culture provides a model worth emulating per *Olagunju JCA in Muojekwu v Ejikeme*

Culled from Culture and the Rights of Women - A Judicial Response presented by **Justice H. A. L. Balogun**

In order to ensure access for Girl Child education FIDA must ensure the enforcement of existing legislations on free and compulsory basic education of good quality

Justice Egware Policy Advisor - Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All (CSACEFA)

We at CEDPA can attest to the contributions made by the state branches of FIDA in Fighting for the rights of women...Long live the good work FIDA Nigeria is doing to protect women's rights! ...More health to Nigerian Women!

Prof. P. K. Makinwa Adebuseye, Country Director, CEDPA Nigeria

QUOTABLE QUOTES

Culture in itself is not bad as long as it enhances humanity... As we advocate for more stringent statutory laws and the abolition of obnoxious and discriminatory customary practices, the woman through constant education should be made to avail herself of the existing laws enacted in her favour

FIDA Cameroon

The future of the world depends on how we treat our women and children today. All of us have an important role in shaping a more equitable and responsive society for the women and children.

Puan Sri Saraswathy Devi

The pursuit of Women's Rights in Africa must be undertaken in a manner which respects the positive cultural values in our respective societies and sees women's issues not in an isolationist manner, but as part of a wider socio-political struggle by all persons of goodwill for a more just and equitable society

Atiku Abubakar,

Vice President of Nigeria

"The White and Red Ribbon Alliance is a workable one and NGOs are encouraged to participate. These issues are social and not health ones. We can use our diverse skills to save womanhood... Childbearing is a gift,

dying not the price"

Hon. Justice

(Mrs.) Mary Odili

"The conflict between women's actual status and their legal position is partially a result of the prevalence of customary law regarding women. Passing of legislation favourable to women has helped to overcome some of the injustices they face, but it is clear that the real position of women will not be improved until traditional mores and customs are re-examined."

FIDA Uganda

"Women and indeed the citizenry are now aware of the existence of "Women's Rights as Human Rights". The issue is lack of economic empowerment to assert the right. How do you encourage a poor hungry woman to challenge a bad custom in court?"

Hon. Justice (Mrs.) Elsie Thompson

"Women make up half the population and yet they are not involved in Governance. We cannot have good governance and accountability without women."

Culled from "An Overview of Women's Rights in Nigeria"

"In spite of all the awareness created, a lot of ignorance or outright non-recognition of these rights still exists ...even where the appropriate legislation and policies exist, there has been no concerted effort to ensure their implementation".

Mrs. Veronica Odunuga

"Nearly a billion people, two thirds of them women, will enter the 21st Century unable to read a book or sign

their name, much less operate a computer or understand a simple application form ... they will live, as now, in more desperate poverty and poorer health than those who can".

Mrs Justina Onifade, UNICEF

"Concerted efforts are required to eliminate or control abuses and violence against women. These efforts not only have to be spearheaded by women themselves, community groups, NGOs and professional groups; but also by the legislative Authorities, governmental heads, the so called people in power who have the resources and willingness to put in place laws and programs as a top down initiative too achieve this mission for the betterment of women."

Puan Sri Saraswathy Devi

"Women cannot maximise their potential as human beings and members of society unless all the challenges they face in the path to their self-actualisation, particularly in the workplace, are conclusively addressed ... we are all individually and collectively responsible for making a difference".

Amina Oyagbola

"The international instruments the African Charter on Human Rights and the Rights of Women and the 1992 Constitution of Ghana forbid inhuman cultural and religious practices against women which constitute violence and human rights violation of their dignity ... The problem is the ineffective enforcement of these laws due to silence on the part of the victims and their families, and the culture of non-cooperation of the Police due mainly to apathy and bias against women"

FIDA Ghana



Some Members of the Traditional Council of White Cap Chiefs of the Oba of Lagos at the Regional Congress.



FIDA International President and the Oba of Lagos.