



FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF LAFIA

INAUGURAL LECTURE SERIES NO. 26

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES,
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**



ADVANCING GENDER JUSTICE AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH POLITICAL ECONOMY OUTLOOK

Prof. Linda Kwon-Ndung
Professor of Political Economy and
Development Studies

March 13, 2025



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DEDICATION

To God Almighty and all Nigerian girls and Women.

THE PRESENTER



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Protocol

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Head of Department of Political Science and other HODs and Heads
of Administrative Units

All Security Chiefs here present

Our revered traditional rulers here present

Members of the University Information Unit

Other Staff of FULAFIA

My Beloved family, friends and special invited guests

Great Nigerian Students

Gentlemen of the press

Distinguished ladies and Gentlemen

How it all Began

The desire to study Political Economy and Development Studies was stimulated by the interesting and interactive encounters during my undergraduate days at the University of Jos, with my erudite and accessible scholar Professor Sam Egwu. His academic mentorship as a BSc Project Supervisor did not only lay the foundation and the inspiration for me to develop interest in Political Economy but later to study it. My interest was further aroused to women economic empowerment from 2007-2008 when I worked as a Program Officer for the Grassroots Health Organization of Nigeria (GHON), a Non-Governmental Organization in Abuja. GHON was located at the National Council for Women Societies Secretariat, Area 11 Garki, Abuja. The thematic focus of GHON was on Reproductive Health and Economic Empowerment and the Executive Director, Dr. Amina Esther Sambo, a former NCWS President pushed for women empowerment initiatives. The economic empowerment aspect was an enabler to access reproductive health services. The responsibility of a Programs Officer exposed me to women in the rural communities in the Federal Capital Territory. The major target communities were Burum and Kabusa, situated in the Abuja Municipal Area Council. The women in these communities recorded impressive livelihood outcomes, as we recorded tangible transformation of the material conditions of the women who had access to micro-credit. Ford Foundation enabled GHON to provide micro-credit to women. The access to micro-credit and trainings on entrepreneurial and business management skills such as savings, record keeping, and weekly contributions transformed the socio-economic well-being of the women. The access to the micro-credit served as an entry point of financial empowerment for the women as they seamlessly took decisions to visit the health facilities and accessed safe mother hood products without waiting for their husbands to provide money for transport and drugs.

The women in Burum and Kabusa through the support from GHON were subsequently encouraged to access the micro-credit funds from a formal micro-credit institutions within their reach to further expand and grow their businesses as most of them expanded their entrepreneurial activities.

My enrolment in a PhD study in 2010 at the University of Abuja was with an intention to investigate the political economy of the women and I proposed a research study on Microfinance and Poverty Reduction amongst Women in Burum and Kabusa communities of Abuja Municipal, Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory.

At this period I was a member of the Faculty in the Department of Political Science at Nasarawa State University Keffi, and a return to study the impact of microfinance on the women in Burum and Kabusa communities of AMAC was a great delight. The PhD research provided me an opportunity to investigate further the socio-economic dynamics of women at the rural communities who make up to 70% of the population of women in Nigeria. The intellectual skills of my main Supervisor Prof. Kabir Mato, excited my quest in this study which revealed my clearer understanding that the political economy of women is focused on the distribution of rights, power and resources as well as the barriers to access power, rights and resources.

Almost two decades down history, my research remained focused on the process of women empowerment and ways to improve their material conditions. This is because gender dis-aggregated data has always shown women to be disadvantaged and marginalized in terms of access to Power, Resources, and Rights. Women in Nigeria are adjudged to wear the face of poverty which is part of the very critical contemporary gender issues in addition to gender based violence.

There is a perpetual imbalance on the scale of gender parity in terms of access to economic opportunities and financial inclusion, political participation and social empowerment, my modest contributions focused on bridging the imbalance from a political economy perspective

Background

The title of this Inaugural Lecture displays the interdisciplinary approach and complex intersection between political, economic, and social factors that prolong gender inequalities and hinder sustainable development. The dynamics in the pursuit of women's rights, distribution of resources and power within the context of sustainable development is central to this lecture. The quest of gender justice and women's empowerment has been a long-lasting goal in the pursuit for human rights and sustainable development. Despite noteworthy improvement in recent decades, women and girls continue to face daunting barriers to achieving their full potentials and make contributions to societal development. Some of the barriers are rooted in colonial legacies, which imposed western values and systems that undermined the traditional roles, rights, and freedom of women, patriarchal systems, cultural, structural and legal barriers.

Gender equality, empowerment and full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls are universal goals in their own right. They are set out in Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 5 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (OECD, 2022).

Similarly, it is enshrined in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution as amended ,2021 National Gender Policy, 2015 Violence Against Persons Prohibition Acts 2015 and other sectoral gender policies aimed at mainstreaming gender and empowering girls and women for sustainable development.

The economic, political and social empowerment of women are critical to the advancement of women in all societies, it also ensures their contributions to inclusive and sustainable development. This supports the 1994 Jakarta declaration that women empowerment is a necessary pre-condition for sustainable and economic development of societies.

In global, regional and national contexts, women's access to education, healthcare, politics and economic opportunities are limited by discriminatory laws, social norms, and cultural practices. The unpaid

care economy, disproportionately falls on women's shoulders, this further constrains their ability to participate in the formal economy and engage in political decision-making.

However a revolution is unfolding globally and in Africa, this revolution is driven by women, empowered by progressive policies, economic inclusion, and social transformation. According to World Economic Forum Gender Gap Report 2024, European nations dominate the top rankings, with Iceland leading for the 15th consecutive year, having closed 93.5% of its gender gap. Other notable countries include Finland (87.5%), Norway (87.5%), and New Zealand (83.5%) Sweden also ranks highly with an 81.6% closure rate. These figures underscore the significant strides these countries have made in promoting gender equality across various sectors.

In Africa, where tradition and modernity often dance in subtle accord. It is increasingly acknowledged that the pathway to sustainable development lies with inclusive policies that promote women empowerment to drive sustainable growth. For Instance, according to WEF 2024 report, Namibia ranked 8th globally, with a gender parity score of 80.5% Namibia has implemented legal frameworks that promote, enforce, and monitor gender equality, scoring 88.9% in this area. In political empowerment, women hold 44.2% of seats in parliament, indicating significant progress in political representation. Also in education, Namibia has made strides in education, with a high proportion of girls and women accessing education, although there's still room for improvement. While in economic participation, women's participation in the economy is massively encouraged. 80.4% of women in their reproductive age have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods, Namibia has implemented policies to address healthcare disparities, including reducing maternal mortality rates and increasing access to reproductive healthcare.

Rwanda, is often hailed as a beacon of gender equality, stands at the forefront of this movement. In the wake of its painful history, the nation rebuilt itself with a commitment to inclusivity. Today, women make up over 60% of its parliament, the highest in the world. This representation is not just symbolic; it has translated into policies that prioritize healthcare, education, and economic opportunities for women.

Through initiatives like the Gender Monitoring Office and the Women's Guarantee Fund, Rwanda has created an ecosystem where women can thrive as entrepreneurs, policymakers, and changemakers. The WEF 2024 report ranks Rwanda 39th, with gender parity score of 75.7% and, Senegal is ranked 109th, with gender parity score of 67.9% has pushed for women empowerment through legal and economic reforms. The country's gender parity law ensures greater female representation in government, while initiatives such as the Women's Agricultural Entrepreneurship Program provide financial support and training for women in agribusiness. With a strong network of women-led cooperatives, Senegalese women are driving food security, climate resilience, and economic stability in their communities.

South Africa is ranked 18th with a gender parity score of 78.5% in the WEF 2024 report, South Africa has codified gender equality into its constitution, making it one of the most progressive African nations in terms of women's rights. From the business sector to politics, women hold key leadership roles, shaping the nation's policies on economic growth, education, and healthcare. The government has invested in programs like the Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Policy, which supports female entrepreneurs and ensures equal access to resources. Additionally, the fight against gender-based violence has been amplified, recognizing that sustainable development cannot exist without a society free from oppression.

Ethiopia's ranking is 79th with a gender parity score of 70.9%, and has broken barriers with women in leadership, including the appointment of its first female president, Sahle-Work Zewde, and a gender-balanced cabinet. The government has focused on economic empowerment through microfinance initiatives, ensuring women can start businesses, own land, and access education. With programs such as the Women Entrepreneurship Development Project (WEDP), thousands of women have received funding to scale their businesses, fostering economic resilience.

Mauritius is ranked 107th with a gender parity score of 68.3% in the 2024 WEF GGP report, the economic progress in Mauritius is a function of gender inclusivity. Women have taken prominent roles in business, politics, and technology, aided by strong policies that

promote equal pay and entrepreneurship. The government has invested in STEM education for young girls, ensuring that the next generation of women leads innovation in the digital economy.

The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2024 provides a comprehensive analysis of gender parity across 146 countries, evaluating disparities in Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment. As of 2024, the global gender gap is 68.5% closed, indicating that, at the current rate, it will take approximately 134 years to achieve full gender parity. These countries illustrate the undeniable truth of the gains of empowering women, for nations prosper and achieve sustainable growth.

This inaugural lecture examines the complex interplay between political economy factors and women's empowerment, with a focus on gender equality and sustainable development. It explores the ways in which power dynamics, policy and legal frameworks, and economic systems can be transformed to promote gender equality and empower women for the maximization of their potentials, ensure inclusive and sustainable development. This Inaugural Lecture is a resounding call to the Federal, Sub-National Governments, policy actors, Development Partners and other elements in the Gender empowerment Ecosystem to note that gender equality as not just a moral imperative but an economic necessity.

The lecture also resonates with the 2025 Theme for International Women's Day Celebration which is “Accelerate Action”.

Some Key Elements to this Perspectives are:

1. Structural Inequalities: A political economy perspective recognizes that gender inequalities are often rooted in broader structural issues within society. This includes economic systems, labor markets, legal frameworks, and political institutions that can either reinforce or challenge gender disparities. This form of inequalities can stand for systemic inequality.

2. Political Systems and Policies: Examining the role of political systems and policies is crucial. This involves analyzing how laws,

regulations, and political decision-making processes either support or hinder women's empowerment. Policies related to education, healthcare, employment, and political participation play a crucial role in shaping gender dynamics.

3. Economic Participation: Economic empowerment is a key aspect of gender equality. A political economy perspective would scrutinize issues such as access to economic resources, entrepreneurship opportunities, financial inclusion, unpaid labor and the impact of macroeconomic policies on women's economic agency.

4. Labor Market Dynamics: Understanding how women participate in the labor market is essential. This includes analyzing the types of jobs available to women, gender pay gaps, their representation in various industries, and the existence of barriers to entry and advancement in the career.

5. Social Norms and Cultural Factors: Social norms and cultural practices significantly influence gender roles and expectations. A political economy analysis would explore how these factors intersect with political and economic structures, either reinforcing or challenging traditional gender norms.

6. Globalization and Trade Policies: In an increasingly interconnected world, examining the effects of globalization and international trade policies on women is vital. This includes understanding how global economic trends and trade agreements impact women in different regions and sectors.

7. Intersectionality: A political economy perspective emphasizes the importance of considering intersectionality – the interconnected nature of various social categories such as gender, race, class, and ethnicity. Understanding how different forms of inequality intersect is essential for developing comprehensive strategies for empowerment.

8. Policy Recommendations. Based on the analysis, policy recommendations are formulated to address specific structural barriers and promote gender-sensitive and gender transformative development policies. These may include reforms in education, electoral processes, healthcare, legal frameworks, and economic policies.

By adopting a political economy perspective, scholars, policymakers, and activists can gain a deeper understanding of the systemic forces shaping gender inequality and work towards more inclusive strategies for women's empowerment and sustainable development

Operationalizing Major Concepts

Gender Justice

The concept of gender justice is variously conceptualised. According to (Fraser, 2008), gender justice is a principle of social justice that requires the dismantling of institutionalized obstacles that prevent individuals from full participation in economic, political, and social life based on gender. According to (Para-Mallam, 2017) gender justice focuses on addressing ingrained institutional barriers that prevent individuals and particularly women complete participation in all sectors of the economy on the basis of gender.

(Razavi, 2009) opines that gender justice involves not only achieving gender equality in rights and opportunities but also addressing the power imbalances that perpetuate gender-based inequities. It requires a transformation of societal structures to enable women and men, particularly those from marginalized communities, to have equal access to resources and power.

Empowerment: The concept of empowerment is viewed as a channel to easily overcome gender inequality (FAO, 2012). The conceptualization of empowerment varies widely. Mehra (1997) cautions that effort must be made to ensure the definition of empowerment is quantified according to specific contexts. Literature shows that many scholars accentuate 'agency' as an essential element of empowerment, although they use different terms (Kabeer, 2001; Abu-Lughod, 2009) To define empowerment as a concept is often has broad terms, and is often situated within two concepts – process and agency. With respect to women empowerment, empowerment as a process is seen as the development of policies and programmes that will enable girls and women to challenge current norms and change conditions. While development as an agency, according to Amartya (1999) is the capability of individuals, particularly women, to act and bring about change in their own lives and in society. Women's empowerment, in this view, is about enhancing their ability to pursue valued goals and challenge systemic barriers.

Mehra (1997) also notes that 'the definition of empowerment should include the expansion of choices for women and an increase in women's ability to exercise choice'. (Kabeer 2001:) defines empowerment as "the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them". The positions of Malhotra, Vanneman, & Kishor (1995) concurs with the definition by emphasizing that the definition highlights a transition from relative powerlessness to greater equity in the exercise of power and as such differentiate "empowerment" from the general concept of "power", as espoused by dominant individuals or groups. They argue further that to be considered 'empowered', women themselves must be significant actors in the process of change. That is, women must engage in agency. For example, health and development strategies may support or enable women's empowerment, but they cannot provide empowerment as if they were health services or commodities themselves.

Empowerment is a social action process that promotes participation of people, organizations, and communities in gaining control over their lives in their community and larger societies.

Women Empowerment: Women empowerment can be defined as promoting women's sense of self-worth, their ability to determine their own choices, and their right to influence social change for themselves and others. Women empowerment is the process of empowering women. Empowerment helps to raise the status of women through education, awareness, literacy, and training. Women empowerment refers to the process by which women gain control over their own lives, enhance their capacities, and access resources, opportunities, and decision-making power to achieve autonomy and influence societal structures. It involves addressing gender-based inequalities and fostering an environment that enables women to participate fully in economic, political, social, and cultural life (Kabeer, 1999; Malhotra ,2002).

According to (Kabeer ,1999), empowerment is defined as "the expansion of people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them." In the context of women, empowerment means gaining agency in areas such as

education, employment, political representation, and social relationships.

Key Components of Women Empowerment

- 1. Economic Empowerment:** The ability of women to access and control financial resources, participate in the labor market, and achieve economic independence (Sen, 1999).
- 2. Social Empowerment:** Enabling women to challenge cultural norms and discriminatory practices that restrict their roles in family and society (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015).
- 3. Political Empowerment:** Increasing women's representation in political decision-making processes and leadership positions (UN Women, 2020).
- 4. Educational Empowerment:** Providing equal access to quality education, which enhances women's skills, confidence, and opportunities for upward mobility (Stromquist, 1995).
- 5. Health and Reproductive Empowerment:** Ensuring women's access to healthcare and control over their reproductive rights (WHO, 2019).

According to (Griffen, 1987) Women Empowerment means:

- i. Having control, or gaining further control;
- ii. Having a say and being listened to;
- iii. Being able to define and create from a women's perspective;
- iv. Being able to influence social choices and decisions affecting the whole society (not just areas of society accepted as women's place)
- v. Being recognized and respected as equal citizens and human beings with a contribution to make.

Types of Women's Empowerment

There are three forms of women's empowerments which are core to the advancement and ensuring gender parity, these forms of empowerment

are core parameters in assessing the advancement and progress of women in most societies. They include:

Economic empowerment: Women's economic empowerment includes women's ability to participate equally in existing markets; their access to and control over productive resources, access to decent work, control over their own time, lives and bodies; and increase voice, agency and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels from the household to international institutions. Women economic empowerment is essential economic growth and development.

Political empowerment: This form of empowerment focuses on women's representation on elected bodies. Political empowerment is a road to women's equality, rights and fulfillment, involvement in political matters and process. It is a major path to women's political participation and in the decision-making process.

Social empowerment: Social empowerment includes equal access to education and health care for women. It mitigates gender gaps in human development across nations. The social empowerment of women influences greatly on human capital development and the productivity of nations.

Dimensions of Empowerment

Jo Rowlands 1997 Identified three Dimensions of Empowerment:

1. **Personal:** Developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity, and undoing the defects of internalized oppression.
2. **Rational:** Developing the ability to negotiate and influence the nature of a relationship and decisions made within it.
3. **Collective:** This includes involvement in political structures, but might also cover collective action based on co-operation rather than competition.

Approaches to Women Empowerment

Welfare Approach: This approach considers women as the workforce and target for development. Women are beneficiaries but not active participants in development.

Efficiency Approach: This approach considers women, essentially, not as beneficiaries of intervention, but as major resource in development. If development is more efficient, it must include the participation of women. It keeps women into the mainstream of development and assumes that if they participate, they will automatically benefit.

Equity Approach: This approach wants promoting women's status, power and control so that they can be effectively equal with men. It seems women equal right.

Empowerment Approach: Feminists seek to empower themselves through greater self-reliance. Women seek to influence their own change and the right to determine their own choices in life.

Gender and Development Approach: It recognizes the active involvement of women in development by utilizing the capacity of women at the optimum level. It can be achieved by planning and implementation of the programs.

Gender Inequality

Gender inequality often refers to the unequal treatment, access, or opportunities experienced by individuals based on their gender. It encompasses systemic disparities in rights, resources, responsibilities, and opportunities between men, women, and gender-diverse individuals. Gender inequality is rooted in social, cultural, economic, and political structures that perpetuate power imbalances and discriminatory practices (Connell, 2005; Ridgeway, 2011).

According to Kabeer (1999), gender inequality reflects "the unequal distribution of material and non-material resources, opportunities, and capabilities between men and women, which often intersects with other forms of disadvantage, such as class, race, or ethnicity." This multidimensional concept is manifested in areas such as education,

employment, political representation, healthcare access, and unpaid domestic labor (UNDP, 2020).

Key Aspects of Gender Inequality

1. Economic Inequality: Women and gender-diverse individuals often face wage gaps, limited access to high-paying jobs, and fewer opportunities for economic advancement (World Economic Forum, 2022).

2. Educational Disparities: Gender inequality persists in educational attainment, particularly in low-income countries, where cultural norms or resource constraints often limit girls' access to schooling (UNESCO, 2021).

3. Political Representation: Women remain underrepresented in decision-making positions across governments, parliaments, and corporate leadership (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2022).

4. Health Inequality: Disparities exist in access to healthcare, reproductive rights, and protection against gender-based violence (WHO, 2021).

5. Social and Cultural Norms: Deeply embedded patriarchal systems and gender stereotypes reinforce societal expectations that limit the roles and behaviors deemed acceptable for individuals based on their gender (Lorber, 1994).

Gender Equality

According to the United Nations, "Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys." (UN Women)

2. World Health Organization views "Gender equality as the absence of discrimination on the basis of a person's sex or gender in opportunities, resources, services, benefits, and treatment." (WHO)

3. According to (Ritzer, 2017) "Gender equality refers to the social, economic, and political equality of women and men, and the elimination of gender-based discrimination and violence."

Development

Development according to (Dudley,1969) is when a country experiences a reduction or elimination of poverty, inequality and unemployment. Development therefore represents absence of inequality which leads to progress of all citizens irrespective of gender sex, and race.

In the opinion of (Todaro, 2001), Development is not purely economic but rather a multidimensional process involving major changes and reorganization of an entire economic and social systems or structures. Development means improvement in people's quality of lives with focus on three important aspects of development namely:

1. Raising peoples living levels through (a)Incomes and consumption levels
(b) Medical services (c)Education through relevant economic growth processes
2. Creating conditions conducive to the growth of people's self- esteem through the establishment of socio, political and economic systems and institutions which promote human dignity and respect
- 3.Increasing people's freedom to choose by enlarging the range of their choice variables e.g. increasing the variety of consumer goods and services.

(Owens, 1987) opines that development is when there is development of people (human development) and not development of things.

Development as Distributive Justice

(Cohen 194 and Martya 1933) have argued that Development as distributive justice basically views development as improving basic needs, it emphasis the importance of equity in the distribution of resources, opportunities and benefits in the development process, DDJ focuses on:

1. Nature of goods and services provided by governments;
2. Matter of access of these public goods to different social classes;
3. How burden of development can be shared among these classes.

Key Principles of Development as Distributive Justice

- i. **Redistributive Justice:** Reducing economic and social inequalities by redistributing wealth, income, and power from the privileged to the disadvantaged.
- ii. **Fairness and Equity:** Ensuring development policies and programs prioritize the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups, promoting equal access to opportunities and resources.
- iii. **Human Rights:** Recognizing development as a human right, ensuring all individuals and groups have the right to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from development process.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development (SD) is a paradigm that seeks to balance environmental, economic, and social objectives to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This definition, popularized by the 1987 Brundtland Commission Report ("*Our Common Future*"), highlights three core dimensions such as environmental, economic and social sustainability.

The United Nations (UN) also defines sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This definition was first articulated in the landmark report *Our Common Future* (1987) by the World Commission on Environment and Development (commonly known as the Brundtland Commission).

The UN emphasizes that sustainable development is grounded in three interconnected dimensions:

1. **Economic Development:** Promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth to create decent work and reduce inequalities. The UN highlights the importance of fostering innovation, industrialization, and infrastructure to improve living standards and economic resilience.
2. **Social Development:** Ensuring equitable access to education, healthcare, housing, and social justice while reducing poverty and hunger. Social sustainability requires empowering marginalized groups, promoting gender equality, and building inclusive societies that respect

diversity and human rights.

- 3. Environmental Protection:** Managing natural resources responsibly to mitigate climate change, reduce biodiversity loss, and maintain ecological integrity. The UN advocates for the adoption of clean energy, sustainable agriculture, and conservation initiatives to preserve the planet for future generations.

The UN operationalizes these principles through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015. This agenda includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 targets, serving as a global framework to eradicate poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all by 2030. The SDGs emphasize partnerships, inclusivity, and the need for urgent action to address challenges such as climate change, inequality, and unsustainable consumption patterns.

Key documents like the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) and the *Paris Agreement* further outline the global commitment to sustainable development, focusing on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and fostering climate-resilient communities.

For the UN, sustainable development is not just an ideal but a necessity to achieve a just and equitable world while preserving the Earth's ecosystems for future generations.

Some Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Focused on Achieving Gender Equality and Women Empowerment.

1. **SDG 1: No Poverty:** This goal aims to eradicate poverty, which disproportionately affects women.
2. **SDG 2: Zero Hunger:** This goal includes targets related to improving agricultural productivity and promoting sustainable agriculture, which can benefit women farmers.
3. **SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being:** This goal includes targets related to maternal health, reproductive health, and the prevention of violence against women.
4. **SDG 4: Quality Education:** This goal aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all, including women and girls.

5. **SDG 5: Gender Equality:** This goal aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. **SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation:** This goal includes targets related to promoting access to clean water and sanitation, which can benefit women's health.
6. **SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth:** This goal includes targets related to promoting full employment and decent work for all women.
7. **SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure:** This goal includes targets related to promoting access to financial services, which can support women's entrepreneurship.
8. **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities:** This goal includes targets related to promoting social, economic, and political inclusion of all, including women.
9. **SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities:** This goal includes targets related to promoting safe and inclusive public spaces, which can benefit women.
10. **SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions:** This goal includes targets related to promoting access to justice and protecting human rights, including those of women.

The SDGs provide a comprehensive framework for promoting gender equality and empowering women. By addressing the social, economic, and environmental determinants of women's empowerment, the SDGs can help create a more just and equitable world for all.

GLOBAL AND NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND PROPOSED BILLS ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN NIGERIA

These policies, laws, and proposed bills reflect Nigeria's ongoing efforts and challenges in advancing gender equality and protecting women's rights.			
S/N	LEVEL	NAME	OBJECTIVE
1.	National Policies	National Gender Policy (2006)	This policy promotes gender equality and women's empowerment across various sectors. It replaced the previous Women's Policy to address systemic gender inequalities.
		Revised National Gender Policy (2021 – 2026)	An updated framework to further integrate gender considerations into national development plans, emphasizing eliminating discriminatory practices against women.
2.	National Laws	Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (2015)	A federal law that criminalizes various forms of violence, including gender-based violence, and protects victims.
		Child Rights Act (2003)	This act incorporates the rights of children as enshrined in international conventions, addressing issues such as child marriage and exploitation, which disproportionately affect girls.
During the 9th National Assembly, several gender -related bills were introduced but faced challenges in passage:			
3.	Proposed Bills (Not Yet Passed)	Expansion of the Scope of Citizenship by Registration (Bill 45)	Seeks to amend Section 26 of the Constitution to grant citizenship to foreign husbands of Nigerian women, aligning with provisions for foreign wives of Nigerian men.
		Special Seats for Women in the National and State Houses of Assembly (Bill 47)	Aims to create additional seats to enhance women's representation in legislative bodies.
		Affirmative Action for Women in Political Party Administration (Bill 48)	Proposes that women occupy at least 35% of political party leadership positions.
		Indigeneship Rights for Women (Bill 49)	Seeks to amend Sections 31 and 318 of the Constitution to allow women to claim indigeneship of their husband's state after marriage.
		Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill	Designed to eliminate discrimination against women and provide equal opportunities in employment, education, and inheritance. It has faced multiple rejections in the Senate.

Several Nigerian states have enacted laws to protect women's rights and promote gender equality:			
4.	Sub-National Initiatives	Prohibition of Infringement of a Widow's and Widower's Fundamental Rights Law (2001) – Enugu State	Protects widows from discriminatory practices.
		Gender and Equal Opportunities Laws	States like Ekiti and Lagos have enacted laws to promote equal opportunities and address gender-based discrimination.
Nigeria is a signatory to several international and regional frameworks aimed at promoting gender equality:			
5.	International Commitments	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	Commits to eliminating discrimination against women in all forms.
		African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights	Includes protocols on the rights of women in Africa.
Nigeria has implemented various sector -specific, gender -targeted initiatives to promote gender equality and empower women across different domains. Notable initiatives include:			
6.	Sector- Specific Interventions		
	Education Sector	National Policy on Gender in Education (Revised in 2021)	The National Policy on Gender in Education serves as a comprehensive framework guiding Nigeria's efforts toward achieving gender equality in the educational sector, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to learn and succeed regardless of gender. Its main strategies engender Curriculum Development, Teacher Training and Monitoring and Evaluation.
	Information, Technology and Communication (ICT)	Gender Issues & Information Communication Technology for Development (ICT4D)	Addressing the digital gender divide, this policy focuses on empowering women through ICT, ensuring equitable access to technology and related opportunities.
	Private Sector Engagement	Nigeria2Equal Program	Launched in partnership with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Nigerian Exchange Limited (NGX), this program aims to reduce gender gaps in leadership, employment, and entrepreneurship within the private sector. It encourages companies to implement gender - responsive policies and practices, fostering an inclusive business environment.

	Private Sector (Procurement)	Gender-Responsive Procurement Initiatives	UN Women Nigeria has collaborated with the private sector to promote gender -responsive procurement policies. These efforts aim to increase women's participation in supply chains and ensure that procurement processes are inclusive and equitable.
	Financial Inclusion	Women's World Banking Initiatives	Addressing the financial inclusion gender gap—where only 35% of women compared to 55% of men have access to financial services —Women's World Banking has implemented strategies to drive savings mobilisation, leverage remittances, provide capital to women -owned enterprises, and support resilience through insurance. These efforts have led to a historic milestone, with women holding CEO positions in eight out of Nigeria's 24 commercial banks as of 2022.
		Framework for Advancing Women's Financial Inclusion in Nigeria	The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has developed this framework to reduce the gender gap in financial inclusion. It aims to increase women's access to financial services through targeted policies and programs, recognising that financial inclusion is crucial for women's economic empowerment.
		Increasing Women's Access to Finance	The CBN has implemented initiatives to enhance women's access to finance, acknowledging that women constitute a significant portion of the rural labour force. These efforts include providing financial literacy programs and facilitating access to credit for women entrepreneurs.
	Renewable Energy Sector	Women in Renewable Energy Baseline Report	Recognising the underrepresentation of women in Nigeria's electrification sector, this initiative emphasizes the need for increased gender focus in designing and implementing electrification projects that target women and vulnerable populations. It also advocates for mainstreaming women in professional roles across the electricity industry.
	Political Participation	INEC Gender Policy (2021–2025).	Developed by the Independent National Electoral Commission, this policy focuses on implementing gender equity principles in electoral processes and enhancing women's representation in democratic governance
		Affirmative Action Bills	The Nigerian government has proposed affirmative action bills to enhance women's representation in political offices. For instance, a bill advocating for additional seats for women in the National Parliament is under consideration, aiming to ensure women's full and effective participation in political decision-making.

	Health Sector	Nigeria for Women Project (NFWP)	Launched with support from the World Bank, this initiative aims to improve women's livelihoods by enhancing their access to health services, among other resources. The program mobilises women into affinity groups, providing platforms for health education and services, thereby improving health outcomes for women and their families.
	Agricultural Sector	National Gender Policy in Agriculture	Developed by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, this policy addresses gender disparities in agriculture by ensuring equitable access to resources, training, and decision-making processes for women farmers. It aims to enhance productivity and livelihoods for women in agriculture.
		Gender-Equitable Agricultural Programs	The Nigerian government is adopting gender -equitable budgeting approaches to address disparities in the agriculture sector. These initiatives focus on providing women farmers with equal access to resources, training, and support to enhance productivity and economic outcomes.
	Environmental Sector	National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change (Yet to be implemented)	This action plan aims to integrate gender considerations into climate change policies and programs, ensuring that women's unique experiences and contributions are recognised in environmental strategies.
	Economic Sector	National Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Policy (2023)	This strategic framework aims to address the unique challenges faced by Nigerian women, promoting their economic inclusion and enhancing their contributions to the country's socio -economic development. Sub -national adoption is ongoing in Plateau, Kaduna, Akwa -Ibom Kano and Lagos States in collaboration with NIPSS.

Source: (Compiled, 2024).

Developmental Plans and Gender Mainstreaming in Nigeria

Globally, developmental plans are strategic policies and programmes for the socio-economic advancement of citizens and nations at large. A developmental plan is a strategic framework designed to guide and oversee the advancement and expansion of a nation in a number of areas. It delineates precise aims, targets, and measures to foster the advancement of social, economic, and infrastructural development. Over a predetermined time frame, these strategies seek to solve present issues, take advantage of favorable circumstances, and accomplish sustained advancement.

Nigeria has had several developmental plans over the years, aimed at driving economic growth, reducing poverty, and improving the overall well-being of its citizens. Developmental plans prioritize long-term, capacity-building, and institutional development efforts.

The process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programmes, in any area and at all levels, is how the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC, 1997) describes gender mainstreaming. Global support has been shown for gender mainstreaming as a means of promoting gender equality.

A number of development plans have been implemented to promote growth and mainstream gender. Many African nations have developed long-term strategies and vision documents, such as Vision 2030 or National Development Plans, which outline economic, social, and infrastructure goals. They have also developed sector-specific plans, which frequently focus on infrastructure, agriculture, health, and education, addressing critical areas for development. All of these plans are in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include a focus on gender equality and empowerment. Rebuilding and growing the economy after independence in Nigeria and the civil war was the main goal of the First National Development Plan (1962–1968) and the Second National Development Plan (1970–1974). These early ideas did not give gender concerns much of a focus.

The military administration in the mid-1980s adopted the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). SAP sought to promote privatization, reduce government spending, and restructure the economy. But throughout this time, there was a noticeable rise in inequality and poverty, which had a detrimental effect on women and other vulnerable groups.

Maryam Babangida launched the Better Life for Rural Women Programme in 1987, which was one of the first attempts to clearly address women's issues with a focus on the empowerment of rural women.

In 1995, Nigeria took part in the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, which resulted in the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action. Nigeria's dedication to gender mainstreaming was greatly impacted by this incident; it pushed for the inclusion of gender perspectives in legislation and initiatives.

The National Policy on Women was created in 2000 under President Olusegun Obasanjo's government. It was later updated and renamed the National Gender Policy in 2006. The goal of this policy was to advance women's empowerment across a range of industries and gender equality.

The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), introduced in 2004 by former president Olusegun Obasanjo, is one of the effective programmes and endeavors. The objectives of NEEDS were to enhance governance, lessen poverty, and encourage economic progress. It placed special emphasis on governance changes, infrastructural development, and private sector growth.

President Musa Yar'Adua launched Vision 20:2020 in 2009. The objective of Vision 20:2020 was to place Nigeria in the top 20 economies by 2020; the main focus areas were infrastructure development, economic diversification, and human capital enhancement. Gender equity was also incorporated into its plans for human capital development.

The Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) 2017-2020 was put into action by President Muhammadu Buhari, with a focus on growth, diversification, and inclusivity. The ERGP aimed to revive the economy after a recession. It included infrastructure, industrialization, and agricultural development projects, all of which indirectly supported gender equity by giving women opportunities and jobs.

President Muhammadu Buhari launched the National Development Plan (2021–2025). NDP focuses on goals such as social development, infrastructure development, and economic growth with an emphasis on lowering inequality and poverty. The plan includes tactics for enhancing employment, education, and health, all of which are essential for achieving gender equality.

Furthermore, the concept and application of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) entail creating and carrying out budgets with an awareness of the disparities in their effects on men and women. It seeks to guarantee that funds are allotted to address gender inequities and that government budgets support gender equality.

The National Social Investment Programmes (NSIPs) are specific initiatives that focus on targeted interventions that empower individuals and communities to generate income, enhance human capital, and break the cycle of poverty (National Social Investment Office, 2016). SIPs in Nigeria are part of a deliberate strategy to promote economic inclusion and capacity-building through the following:

Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (CCTP): This initiative provides financial support to the most vulnerable households, with a focus on women. By offering cash transfers, the programme seeks to reduce poverty, improve nutrition, and enhance self-sustainability among women, thereby promoting gender equality.

Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP): GEEP targets entrepreneurs, including women, by providing no-cost loans to reduce the start-up costs of business ventures. This program includes components like TraderMoni, MarketMoni, and FarmerMoni, which specifically support market women and female farmers, fostering economic empowerment.

National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP): Aimed at increasing school enrollment and nutrition among children, this program also empowers women by employing them as cooks. By engaging local women in meal preparation, NHGSFP promotes women's economic participation and community involvement.

These programs align with Nigeria's National Gender Policy, which emphasizes mainstreaming gender concerns in all social protection policies and programs. The policy advocates for eliminating discriminatory practices and ensuring that women have equitable access to resources and opportunities.

Additionally, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, established in 1989, plays a crucial role in coordinating and monitoring women's programs, providing technical and financial support to women's organizations, and promoting women's economic empowerment through various initiatives.

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) program aims to improve girls' education. The program's efforts are geared towards reducing gender disparities in education and have increased girls' enrollment and retention rates in schools.

The Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC) is to assist women in growing their enterprises and making a positive economic impact, even as they offer market access and training to female entrepreneurs. Despite the strategies implemented to mainstream gender in developmental plans, gender-disaggregated data show wide gender disparity with deep-seated systemic barriers that have fostered under patriarchy; women are marginalized in all sectors of the Nigerian economy despite the fact that women make up about 50 percent of Nigeria's population. This underscores the need to implement policies that promote the empowerment process of women empowerment because of the implications for sustainable development.

The Nigerian government has initiated plans to mainstream gender and ensure women's empowerment; however, deep-seated systemic barriers have fostered patriarchy. This has perpetually kept women marginalized in all sectors of the Nigerian economy despite the fact that women make up 50 percent of Nigeria's population. This demographic disparity has implications for the economic growth and sustainable development of Nigeria.

TRAJECTORY OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES IN NIGERIA

National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS)

The National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS) was established in 1958. The founding leaders of NCWS were a group of visionary women who came together to form a unified voice for women in Nigeria. Some of the notable founding members include Mrs.

Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, a pioneering feminist and women's rights activist; Lady Oyinkan Abayomi, a women's rights activist and founder of the Nigerian Women's Party; Abibat Mogaji, a women's rights activist and community leader; Tejumade Alakija, a women's rights activist and educator; and Professor Felicia Adetowun Ogunshye, a founding member and one of the pioneers of the NCWS. NCWS is a non-governmental organization that aims to promote women's empowerment, gender equality, and social justice. The specific objectives of NCWS include:

1. Promote women's empowerment: NCWS works to empower women economically, socially, and politically.
2. Advance gender equality: The organization advocates for gender equality and challenges discriminatory practices against women.
3. Support women's health and well-being: NCWS promotes women's health and well-being through initiatives on maternal health, reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS.
4. Foster women's education and skills development: The organization supports women's education and skills development through training programs, scholarships, and mentorship initiatives.

The activities of the council have expanded to the thirty-six states in Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory, and they focus on:

1. Advocacy and lobbying: NCWS advocates for policy changes that promote women's rights and empowerment.
2. Capacity building: The organization provides training and capacity-building programs for women, including leadership development, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills training.
3. Community development: NCWS works with local communities to promote women's empowerment and social justice, including initiatives on education, healthcare, and economic empowerment.
4. Research and documentation: The organization conducts research and documents best practices on women's empowerment and gender equality.

Over the years, the programs of the council have impacted women's agency and the process of women empowerment; specifically, it has improved women's empowerment across Nigeria. The organization has influenced policy changes that promote women's rights and

empowerment. On health matters, NCWS has improved women's health and well-being through initiatives on maternal health, reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS.

NCWS is a leading organization in Nigeria's women's movement, and its work has contributed significantly to promoting women's empowerment and social justice in the country.

Country Women Association of Nigeria (COWAN)

The Country Women Association of Nigeria (COWAN) was initiated by Chief (Mrs.) Ogunleye in 1982. COWAN adopted a “bottom-up” approach to the empowerment of rural women (Arum, 2010). The constitution of the Board of Directors was from the rural women. (The Guardian 28 September, 2005). Its main goal is to empower rural women towards achieving self-sufficiency.

COWAN is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that aims to empower rural women and improve their socio-economic well-being. The specific objectives of COWAN are:

1. **Economic Empowerment:** COWAN works to improve the economic status of rural women through income-generating activities, entrepreneurship, and vocational training.
2. **Health and Nutrition:** The organization promotes health and nutrition among rural women and children, with a focus on maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS, and malaria.
3. **Education and Literacy:** COWAN provides educational opportunities for rural women and girls, including literacy programs, adult education, and vocational training.
4. **Advocacy and Human Rights:** The organization advocates for the rights of rural women, including their rights to land, inheritance, and social justice.

The activities of COWAN have been comprehensive, targeted at empowering the rural women, and they have focused on the following activities:

1. **Vocational Training:** COWAN provides vocational training in areas such as agriculture, crafts, and small-scale entrepreneurship.
2. **Microfinance:** The organization offers microfinance services to rural

women, including loans, savings, and credit facilities.

3. **Health Services:** COWAN provides health services, including maternal and child health care, HIV/AIDS counseling and testing, and malaria prevention and treatment.
4. **Advocacy Campaigns:** The organization conducts advocacy campaigns to promote the rights of rural women and to raise awareness about issues affecting them.

The impact of COWAN's programs has improved the livelihoods of thousands of rural women, enabling them to generate income and support their families. The organization's educational programs have increased access to education for rural women and girls, empowering them to make informed decisions about their lives. On health outcomes, COWAN's health programs have improved health outcomes for rural women and children, reducing maternal and child mortality rates and improving overall well-being, and the organization's advocacy efforts have empowered rural women to demand their rights and to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Women Research and Documentation Center (WORDOC)

This was also formed in the early 80s. Its main aim is to coordinate research and documentation efforts of various women research groups. This organization has succeeded in encouraging documentation on women's issues in Nigeria (Arum, 2010). The Women's Research and Documentation Center (WORDOC) is a Nigerian research center that focuses on promoting gender equality, women's empowerment, and social justice. Specific objectives of WORDOC include:

1. **Conduct research:** WORDOC conducts research on women's issues, gender relations, and social justice.
2. **Document women's experiences:** The center documents women's experiences, achievements, and challenges to promote learning and advocacy.
3. **Provide training and capacity building:** WORDOC offers training and capacity-building programs for women, girls, and other stakeholders to enhance their skills and knowledge.
4. **Advocate for policy changes:** The center advocates for policy changes and reforms that promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

WORDOC has, over the years, focused on issue areas such as:

1. Gender-based violence: WORDOC works to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, and trafficking.
2. Women's economic empowerment: The center promotes women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship, skills development, and access to resources.
3. Women's political participation: WORDOC supports women's political participation and leadership, including voter education and civic engagement.
4. Girls' education: The center advocates for girls' education and works to address barriers to girls' education, including poverty, cultural norms, and lack of access to schools.

WORDOC has recorded tangible impacts in its research and documentation efforts; there has been improved knowledge and awareness about women's issues and gender relations in Nigeria.

The center's training and capacity-building programs have empowered women and girls to take control of their lives, make informed decisions, and demand their rights. Also, WORDOC's advocacy efforts have contributed to policy changes and reforms that promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Nigeria.

Women in Nigeria (WIN)

This organization emerged in 1982. It was formed by a group of women academics, the majority at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. This feminist organization aims to promote women's rights, empowerment, and social justice in Nigeria. The organization was founded to address the specific challenges faced by women in Nigeria, including poverty, lack of education, and limited access to healthcare. Since its inception, WIN has worked tirelessly to promote women's empowerment and social justice through various programs and activities, including:

1. Research and advocacy: WIN conducts research on women's issues and advocates for policy changes that promote women's rights and empowerment.
2. Capacity building: The organization provides training and capacity-building programs for women, including leadership development, entrepreneurship, and vocational skills training.

3. **Community development:** WIN works with local communities to promote women's empowerment and social justice, including initiatives on education, healthcare, and economic empowerment.

WIN has been a leading voice on women's issues in Nigeria and has contributed significantly to promoting women's empowerment and social justice in the country. WIN's achievement has been profound in raising consciousness among people about the subordinate position occupied by women in Nigeria. WIN argues that the only way the position of women can be improved is through the transformation of the social system (Arum, 2010).

Nigerian Women Trust Fund (NWTF)

The Nigerian Women Trust Fund (NWTF) is an independent, non-partisan, and non-governmental organization established in 2011 to address the under-representation of women in governance and decision-making processes in Nigeria. The NWTF aims to advance gender equality by empowering women politically, economically, and socially through funding, capacity-building, and advocacy.

Major Objectives of the NWTF

1. **Promoting Women's Political Participation:**
The NWTF provides financial and technical support to women aspiring to political office, addressing barriers such as campaign funding and capacity gaps.
2. **Capacity - Building and Training:**
The organization offers training programs to enhance women's leadership skills, communication strategies, and electoral campaign techniques.
3. **Research and Advocacy:**
The NWTF conducts research on barriers to women's participation in governance and advocates for policies that promote gender equity in politics and public life.
4. **Addressing Structural Barriers:**
By engaging stakeholders, the NWTF seeks to eliminate systemic challenges such as cultural norms, discriminatory laws, and limited access to resources that hinder women's representation.

The Nigerian Women Trust Fund plays a pivotal role in advancing women's rights and representation in Nigeria's political and decision-making spaces. By addressing financial, societal, and systemic barriers, the NWTf is a critical force in promoting gender equity and empowering women to contribute meaningfully to national development.

INITIATIVES BY FIRST LADIES

Maryam Babangida

The Better Life Programme for Rural Women (BLPRW) was birthed by the late Maryam Babangida, wife of the military head of state, in September 1987. It was one of the first attempts to clearly address women's issues with a focus on the empowerment of rural women.

In 1995, Nigeria participated in the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, which resulted in the Beijing Platform for Action's adoption. Nigeria's dedication to gender mainstreaming was greatly impacted by this incident, which pushed for the inclusion of gender viewpoints in legislation and initiatives. The initiative created a lot of pet projects across the country and gave prominence to the office of the First Lady and also became recognized as a crucial contributor to the country's political economy and sustainability of job creation (Iheanacho, 2016). The BLPRW was targeted at the transformation, empowerment, and development of the vulnerable women in the country, especially those in the rural areas. By November 1993, when the administration of President Babangida came to an end, the BLPRW had succeeded in establishing 9,492 cooperative societies for women to have access to finance and sundry resources; 1,435 cottage industries; 1,784 farms and gardens; 495 shops and markets; 1,094 multipurpose women centers for skills acquisition; and 135 fish and livestock farms (Iheanacho, 2016).

The Family Support Programme (FSP) was established in 1994 as a direct response to the International Year of the Family as declared by the UN; it tried to address the plights of Nigerian women within the context of family life, and later the Family Advancement and Empowerment Programme (FAEP) of 1993-1998 was launched by Maryam Abacha (Harrison, 2018).

Justice Fati Lami Abubakar (1998-1999)

Justice Fati Lami Abubakar set up the Women's Right Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) 1998-1999. She was the First Lady to register her foundation as a non-governmental organization (NGO). WRAPA was registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission of Nigeria with registration number RC 11814 as an NGO in March 1998. WRAPA focused on the legal rights of women irrespective of color, creed, or social status and rendered services to women to ensure the actualization of these rights (WRAPA Newsletter, 2002). This organization indeed succeeded in empowering Nigerian women through the enlightenment of women regarding their legal rights, offering of free legal services, and empowerment of women in vocational skills. WRAPA remained active even when the First Lady left office. Within the period 2004-2006, WRAPA successfully handled 494 cases of women's rights abuse and successfully provided support to them (WRAPA Newsletter, 2006).

Stella Obasanjo's Child Care Trust (CCT) of 1999-2007

As Nigeria's First Lady from 1999, Stella Obasanjo, the wife of former President Olusegun Obasanjo, established the CCT in 2000 and made significant contributions to women's empowerment and social development. Her initiatives primarily focused on promoting gender equality, addressing societal issues affecting women and children, and advocating for improved health and education. Her initiative, although focused on children, indirectly empowered women by providing support and training to mothers of children with disabilities, helping them manage caregiving responsibilities while remaining economically productive. Stella Obasanjo was a vocal advocate for women's rights and gender equality, encouraging Nigerian women to play active roles in politics, business, and community development. She supported efforts to eliminate harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage, advocating for policies that promote women's dignity and well-being. Similarly, her initiative promoted improved healthcare for women, particularly in maternal and reproductive health. She advocated for better access to quality healthcare services for pregnant women, helping to address Nigeria's high maternal mortality rate. The former First Lady also supported economic empowerment schemes such as vocational training programs for women, providing them with skills to achieve

economic independence. Women from underserved communities were trained in trades such as tailoring, baking, and crafts and were provided with resources to start their businesses.

Stella Obasanjo advocated for girl-child education and worked to increase awareness about the socio-economic benefits of girl-child education. She supported campaigns to reduce the dropout rate among girls, particularly in Northern Nigeria, where cultural and economic barriers often limited girls' access to education. The CCT initiative embarked on massive awareness in the fight against HIV/AIDS. She worked to reduce stigma and promote preventive measures, particularly among women and young people. The efforts included collaboration with international organizations to provide education and resources for managing the disease. Stella Obasanjo campaigned against gender-based violence (GBV), including domestic violence and abuse. She worked to sensitize communities about the negative impacts of GBV and advocated for stricter laws to protect women. She promoted strong family values as a panacea for societal growth, and she encouraged Nigerian women to take leadership roles within their families and communities while balancing professional and domestic responsibilities.

Hajia Turai Yar'Adua (2007-2010)

Hajiya Turai Yar'Adua, the wife of late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, established the International Cancer Center Abuja (ICCA) and also played a significant role in advocating for women's empowerment and addressing social issues affecting women, children, and vulnerable groups. Her initiatives focused on health, education, and improving the overall welfare of women across Nigeria. Notable achievements of her initiative were the massive cancer awareness and advocacy. This initiative aimed to improve cancer awareness, screening, and treatment, particularly for women suffering from breast and cervical cancer. She worked to raise awareness about the importance of early detection and access to quality healthcare, empowering women to take charge of their health. She also focused on advocacy on maternal and child health, recognizing the high rates of maternal and infant mortality in Nigeria. She supported initiatives to improve access to antenatal care, skilled birth attendance, and healthcare facilities for women in rural and underserved communities.

She was an advocate for girl-child education, emphasizing its importance in breaking the cycle of poverty and empowering women. Hajiya Turai Yar'Adua worked with organizations and stakeholders to promote policies and programs aimed at increasing access to education for girls, especially in Northern Nigeria.

Similarly, economic empowerment initiatives were designed to help women gain financial independence through skills acquisition and vocational training. She facilitated the creation of opportunities for women in small and medium enterprises (SMEs), particularly in rural areas, by providing resources such as loans and grants. As First Lady, she used her platform to speak out against gender-based violence (GBV), advocating for stronger laws and policies to protect women from abuse. She encouraged collaboration with civil society organizations to provide support and justice for victims of GBV.

Hajiya Turai Yar'Adua actively campaigned for increased awareness and prevention of HIV/AIDS, particularly among women and children. She partnered with local and international organizations to promote education about the disease and reduce stigma against those living with it.

Also, recognizing the impact of conflict on women, particularly in Northern Nigeria, she advocated for women to be included in peace-building and reconciliation processes. Her efforts encouraged women to take active roles in fostering harmony in their communities.

Hajiya Turai Yar'Adua's tenure as First Lady was marked by her quiet but impactful approach to addressing issues affecting women and children. Her focus on health, education, and economic empowerment left a positive mark on many lives, particularly in the areas of cancer awareness and maternal health advocacy. While her initiatives were often understated, they laid the groundwork for continued efforts to improve the welfare of women in Nigeria.

Dame Patience Jonathan (2010-2015).

Dame Patience Jonathan, as Nigeria's First Lady, launched the Women for Change Initiative to empower women across the country and promote their active participation in politics, leadership, and decision-

making. Her initiative drove the process of ensuring women's empowerment and social welfare. Her programs and initiatives focused on improving the lives of women, children, and vulnerable groups, particularly in the areas of economic empowerment, education, health, and advocacy for women's rights. On political empowerment, through this initiative, she advocated for increased representation of women in government, calling for the fulfillment of the 35% affirmative action quota for women in political appointments. Similarly, the initiative provided leadership training for women, encouraging them to run for political offices and take on leadership roles in their communities. She was a strong advocate for women's rights, particularly in combating gender-based violence, child marriage, and discrimination against women. She used her platform to raise awareness about issues affecting women, emphasizing the need for stronger laws and policies to protect women's rights. For economic empowerment programs, she supported initiatives to equip women with skills for economic independence. She facilitated vocational training programs for women in various fields such as tailoring, catering, hairdressing, and crafts.

Many women who participated in these programs received startup grants and tools to establish their own businesses, thereby promoting financial inclusion and reducing poverty.

The initiative often targeted rural women, providing them with resources and training to improve their livelihoods. She advocated for agricultural initiatives that empowered rural women farmers with tools, seedlings, and financial support to boost their productivity and income. Dame Patience Jonathan championed the cause of girl-child education, particularly in regions where cultural and socio-economic factors hindered access to education for girls. She collaborated with various organizations to promote campaigns that encouraged parents to send their daughters to school and supported scholarship programs for underprivileged girls.

Also on health campaigns for women, she promoted initiatives aimed at reducing maternal and child mortality rates in Nigeria. She advocated for better access to healthcare services for pregnant women and children. The initiative supported campaigns on issues such as

breast cancer, HIV/AIDS, and reproductive health, urging women to seek medical care and take preventive measures. She actively campaigned against violence and conflict in Nigeria, particularly in the Niger Delta region. She encouraged women to play active roles in peace-building and conflict resolution.

Similarly, she also provided support to women and children affected by insurgencies, such as those displaced by the Boko Haram crisis. Widows and vulnerable women were also targeted; she launched programs aimed at providing financial assistance, food supplies, and skill acquisition opportunities to widows and other vulnerable women. Her initiatives focused on reducing the socio-economic challenges faced by these groups and ensuring their inclusion in national development.

Generally, her tenure as First Lady was marked by her commitment to improving the lives of women and promoting their active participation in politics, the economy, and society. While her style and approach sometimes sparked debate, her initiatives had a tangible impact on women's empowerment and left a legacy of advocacy for gender equality in Nigeria.

Aisha Buhari, First Lady (2015-2023)

Aisha Buhari, the wife of former President Muhammadu Buhari, launched the Future Assured in 2015. The initiative focused on improving the lives of women and the vulnerable through advocating for women's empowerment and social development. Her passion was on addressing issues affecting women, children, and vulnerable groups in Nigeria. Specifically, Future Assured Centers on economic empowerment initiatives partnered with governmental and non-governmental organizations, and she supported initiatives to promote women's entrepreneurship and financial inclusion. The initiatives helped create opportunities for women to access microcredit schemes, start small businesses, and gain skills in various trades. Future Assured also championed advocacy for women's health, especially reproductive and maternal health, raised awareness about the challenges of maternal mortality, and advocated for improved healthcare services for women and children in Nigeria.

In addition, Aisha Buhari championed cancer awareness campaigns and provided support for initiatives promoting breast and cervical cancer screenings. Through her health interventions, the initiative provided free medical outreach programs, including healthcare services, medications, and health education. While for the empowerment programs, Future Assured facilitated vocational training and entrepreneurship programs aimed at equipping women with skills to achieve economic independence. She equally campaigned against gender-based violence and called for stiffer laws to protect women and girls. She supported efforts to address issues such as rape, domestic violence, and child marriage, emphasizing the need for justice for victims and firmer penalties for perpetrators. She drove the goal of the initiative and advocated for increased representation of more women in politics and leadership roles. She emphasized the importance of women having a voice in decision-making processes at all levels of governance. Furthermore, she advocated for the education of the girl child; she promoted access to education for girls, particularly in Northern Nigeria, where challenges such as poverty, insecurity, and cultural norms limit educational opportunities for girls. She worked with various organizations to campaign for policies and programs that promote girls staying in school and receiving quality education. Similarly, she raised awareness on the dangers of drug abuse, particularly among youths and women; she supported rehabilitation programs and called for increased efforts to combat the drug crisis in Nigeria. It is on record that during the COVID-19 pandemic, she distributed palliatives, including food items and medical supplies, to vulnerable communities and supported campaigns encouraging adherence to safety measures and the importance of vaccination.

Aisha Buhari collaborated with global organizations such as the United Nations (UN), World Health Organization (WHO), and other international bodies to drive initiatives aimed at improving the welfare of women and children in Nigeria and her efforts left a noteworthy impact on women's empowerment in Nigeria.

Senator Oluremi Tinubu (2023-date)

Senator Oluremi Tinubu, the wife of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, a former First Lady of Lagos State and a three-term senator representing the Lagos Central Senatorial District, is making notable contributions

to women's empowerment in Nigeria. Her initiatives and programs reflect her commitment to improving the lives of women and advocating for gender equality.

The "Renewed Hope Initiative" (RHI), a program aimed at empowering women farmers and promoting agricultural development in Nigeria.

The RHI aims to empower women farmers, enhance their productivity, and contribute to national food security and also promote agricultural development, reduce poverty, and improve the livelihoods of women farmers and their families

The RHI focuses on key initiatives such as:

1. Agricultural Support Programme: The RHI provides financial support to women farmers, with 20 women farmers in each state receiving ₦500,000 (approximately \$1,200 USD). each year.
2. Training and Empowerment: The program also offers training on produce preservation, cultivation, and other agricultural skills to enhance the capacity of women farmers.

The RHI has partners with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture to empower potential farmers, with a focus on young female farmers (75%) and young male farmers (25%).

The program is being implemented in various states, including Ogun, Ekiti, Lagos, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo, with the support of the state first ladies.

Some of her landmark contributions are advocacy for women's rights and gender equality. As a legislator, she actively championed policies and legislation aimed at advancing women's rights. She supported bills that promoted the protection of women and children, including laws addressing gender-based violence and enhancing women's participation in governance. She has been a vocal advocate for increasing the representation of women in politics and leadership roles and has a mentoring scheme for young women interested in public service and has encouraged inclusive participation in governance.

As the First Lady of Lagos State (1999–2007), Senator, she initiated several community development projects focused on improving the

quality of life for women and families. She worked to create safe spaces for women through community centers where they could receive support, training, and counseling services. In 2000, Oluremi Tinubu founded the *New Era Foundation*, a non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting youth development, gender equality, and social empowerment. Through the foundation, she organized skills acquisition programs, vocational training, and financial literacy workshops for women to promote economic independence. The foundation also emphasized the importance of girl-child education, providing scholarships and mentoring programs to encourage girls to pursue education. The foundation also focuses on economic empowerment programs for women, especially the underserved communities, promotes and facilitates vocational training in areas such as fashion design, catering, hairdressing, and crafts to help women gain practical skills for self-reliance. Many beneficiaries of these programs were provided with startup kits to establish small businesses.

Similarly, the First Lady recognizes the challenges faced by widows and vulnerable women; she initiated an empowerment scheme that has supported widows to establish small-scale businesses and gain economic stability. The First Lady has facilitated scholarship programs for indigent students, with a focus on ensuring that young girls have access to quality education. Through her interventions, many underprivileged girls have been able to complete their education and pursue their aspirations. Similarly, she focused on health campaigns targeting women, particularly on issues like breast cancer awareness, reproductive health, and maternal care. Her programs often provided free medical checkups, health education, and subsidized treatments for underserved women.

The First Lady's contributions to women empowerment reflect her unwavering dedication to fostering an inclusive society where women have equal opportunities to thrive. Her efforts have positively impacted countless women, promoting economic empowerment, education, and advocacy for gender equality across Nigeria.

From all these accounts, the initiatives of the various First Ladies collaborated with notable organizations such as the United Nations,

African Union, UNICEF, and World Health Organization (WHO), and they have at different times represented Nigeria in many international fora where they advocated for gender equality and women's empowerment in key areas such as health, education, and economic and political participation. All these aligned with global initiatives aimed at improving the status of women globally.

However, current disaggregated data show wide gender disparity in terms of access to economic resources, health care, education, and political participation. For instance, Nigeria has a population of 211 million people, out of which 101.6 million are women and girls. Poverty rate in Nigeria is surprisingly very high. The National Bureau of Statistics' MPI survey reports that 133 million Nigerians are multi-dimensionally poor. According to the World Bank, close to 90 million people are extremely poor, and women are 70% of the figure, i.e., 63 million. Similarly, UNICEF reports on girl child education in Nigeria show that 7.6 million girls are out of school, 3.9 million at primary school while 3.7 million at junior secondary level, and more than 50% of girls are not attending school at the basic education level. Furthermore, 1 million girls' dropped out between the first and last years of primary school, 0.6 million between primary 6 and JSS 1, 48% of out-of-school girls are in the North-West and North-East, and 9% of girls from poor homes attend secondary school compared to 81% from rich homes. The 2023 WEF Global Gender Gap index ranks Nigeria 142nd out of 146 countries, with Afghanistan at the bottom. While the 2024 WEF Global Gender Gap index ranks 125 out of 146, While this appears to be an improvements on the previous rankings, Nigeria is placed 29th in the sub- Saharan region behind Burundi, Rwanda, South Africa, Namibia and Mozambique which hold top positions in terms of gender parity.

Nigeria is among the lowest-ranked countries for women's political participation, standing at 184th out of 193 countries. The 2023 elections witnessed 19% decline in women representation in the national assembly women occupy only 3% of the seats in the Senate and 4% in the House of Representatives in the 10th National Assembly. This justifies the quest for multisectoral, comprehensive approaches to address the gender inequity in Nigeria.

OVERVIEW OF FEMINIST MOVEMENTS

In order to challenge the longstanding inequality globally, radical movements emerged at different periods to confront cultural norms and systemic barriers to meet the strategic and personal needs of women in society. They are issues that bother on the rights of women, which are human rights.

The Various Waves of the Feminist Movement

There are revolutionary movements that shaped women's issues and have influenced gender dynamics globally. There are four waves of feminist movement. The first wave occurred in the 19th and early 20th century movement for women's right to vote. The second wave in the 1960s and 1970s moved for equal legal and social rights. The third wave, which began in the 1990s, refers to a continuation and reaction to the second wave.

The fourth wave that began in 2012 and continues till now talks about women's empowerment. The fourth wave seeks greater gender equality by focusing on gendered norms and the marginalization of women in society.

Traditionally, women are considered a marginalized group, especially women of color and transgender women. Fourth-wave feminist advocates, such as----they advocate for greater representation of these groups in politics and business and argue that society will be more equitable if policies and practices incorporate the perspectives of all people.

The fourth wave of feminism argues for equal pay for equal work and the equal opportunities sought for girls and women and to overcome gender norms, for example, expressing emotions and feelings freely, expressing themselves physically as they wish, and seeking justice against gender-based violence.

Frameworks for Gender and Development

The historical evolution of Gender and Development started around 1962 when the United Nations General Assembly called for the Commission on the Status of Women to collaborate with the Secretary and other UN sectors to develop a longstanding program dedicated to women's advancement in developing countries. By 1970, Ester

Boserup's pioneering book on Women's Role in Economic Development fundamentally shifted the perspective of development and contributed to the birth of what eventually became the gender and development field.

Gender and development are strictly an economic approach to development using the feminist lens to understand and address the impact that economic development and globalization have on people based on their gender, class, status, location, and other socio-political identities. The models include the following:

- i. Women in Development (WID) Framework;
- ii. Women and Development (WAD) Framework;
- iii. Gender in Development (GID) Framework;
- iv. Gender and Development (GAD) Framework;
- v. Women in Development (WID) Framework

Women in Development is an approach that brought about the integration of women into the global economies by improving their status and assisting in total development. This approach focused on adding the women components to projects and programs or calling for treatment of women's issues in development projects.

The term “women in development” was originally coined by a Washington-based network of female development professionals in the early 1970s who sought to question trickle-down existing theories of development by contesting that economic development had indistinguishable impacts on men and women. The Women in Development movement (WID) gained momentum in the 1970s, driven by the resurgence of women's movements in developed countries, and particularly through liberal feminists striving for equal rights and labor opportunities in the United States. The liberal feminist postulates that women's disadvantages in society may be eliminated by breaking down customary expectations of women by offering better education to women and introducing equal opportunity programs, which had a notable influence on the formulation of the WID approaches.

The focus of the liberal feminist movements and their repeated calls for employment opportunities in the development agenda meant that particular attention was given to the productive labor of women, leaving aside reproductive concerns and social welfare. This approach was pushed forward by WID advocates, reacting to the general policy environment maintained by early colonial authorities and post-war development authorities, wherein inadequate reference to the work undertaken by women as producers was made, as they were almost solely identified with their roles as wives and mothers. The WID's opposition to this “welfare approach” was in part motivated by the work of Danish economist Ester Boserup in the early 1970s, who challenged the assumptions of the said approach and highlighted the role of women in the agricultural production and economy.

Reeves and Baden (2000) point out that the WID approach stresses the need for women to play a greater role in the development process. According to this perspective, women's active involvement in policy-making will lead to more successful policies overall. Thus, a dominant strand of thinking within WID sought to link women's issues with development, highlighting how such issues acted as impediments to economic growth; this “relevance” approach stemmed from the experience of WID advocates, which illustrated that it was more effective if demands of equity and social justice for women were strategically linked to mainstream development concerns; development agencies took up the goals of WID.

The Women in Development approach was the first contemporary movement to specifically integrate women into the broader development agenda and acted as the precursor to later movements such as the Women and Development (WAD) and, ultimately, the Gender and Development approach, departing from some of the criticized aspects imputed to the WID.

Women and Development Framework

Women and development (WAD) is a theoretical and practical approach to development. It was introduced into gender studies scholarship in the second half of the 1970s, following its origins, which can be traced to the First World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975, organized by the UN. It is a departure from the previously

predominant theory, WID (Women in Development), and is often mistaken for WID but has many distinct characteristics.

For this framework, WAD arose out of a shift in thinking about women's roles in development and concerns about the explanatory limitations of modernization theory. While previous thinking held that development was a vehicle to advance women, new ideas suggested that development was only made possible by the involvement of women, and rather than being simply passive recipients of development aid, they should be actively involved in development projects. WAD took this thinking a step further and suggested that women have always been an integral part of development and did not suddenly appear in the 1970s as a result of exogenous development efforts. The WAD approach suggests that there be women-only development projects that were theorized to remove women from the patriarchal hegemony that would exist if women participated in development alongside men in a patriarchal culture, though this concept has been heavily debated by theorists in the field. In this sense, the theoretical framework upon which WAD is built distinguishes it from WID. Rather than focus specifically on women's relationship to development, WAD focuses on the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism. This theory seeks to understand women's issues from the perspectives of neo-Marxism and dependency theory.

For the practical approach, the WAD paradigm stresses the relationship between women and the work that they perform in their societies as economic agents in both the public and domestic spheres. It also emphasizes the distinctive nature of the roles women play in the maintenance and development of their societies, with the understanding that the integration of women into development efforts would reinforce the existing structures of inequality present in societies that are overrun by patriarchal interests. In general, WAD is thought to offer a more critical conceptualization of women's position compared to WID. The WAD approach emphasizes the distinctive nature of women's knowledge, work, goals, and responsibilities, as well as advocating for the recognition of their distinctiveness.

Gender and Development Framework

This approach was majorly influenced by the writings of leading scholars such as Gayle Rubin, an American anthropologist, whose influential essay "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex" in 1975 argued that the social relationship between men and women has systematically subordinated women, and economist scholars Lourdes Benería, a Spanish economist and feminist who has written on gender and development, globalization, and labor markets in 2003. and Amartya Sen, 1981 Nobel laureate, who assess the impact of colonialism on development and gender inequality. Similarly, the influential book of Ester Boserup, a Danish economist who wrote "Woman's Role in Economic Development" (1970), is a landmark work that challenged traditional views on women's roles in economic development, Amina Mama, a Nigerian-British feminist scholar who has written on gender, development, and women's rights in Africa. The Gender and Development (GAD) approach is both strategic and practical as it focuses on the investigation of issues of power, decision-making, work allocation, ownership, and control of resources. This approach also acknowledges that to address women's concerns and needs, development assistance must take account of both women's and men's roles and responsibilities within the community and their relationship to each other, as well as the active participation of men and women, in order to raise the status of women and bring about sustainable development. The Gender and Development (GAD) approach focuses on the socially constructed differences between men and women, the need to challenge existing gender roles and relations, and the creation and effects of class differences on development. The scholars posit that colonialism imposed more than a 'value system' upon developing nations; it introduced a system of economics 'designed to promote capital accumulation, which caused class differentiation.'. GAD departs from WID, which focused on women's subordination and lack of inclusion in discussions of international development without examining broader systems of gender relations. Influenced by this work, by the late 1970s, some practitioners working in the development field questioned focusing on women in isolation. GAD challenged the WID focus on women as an important 'target group' and 'untapped resources' for development. GAD marked a shift in thinking about the need to understand how women and men are socially constructed and how

'those constructions are powerfully reinforced by the social activities that both define and are defined by them.' GAD focuses primarily on the gendered division of labor and gender as a relation of power embedded in institutions. Consequently, two major frameworks, 'gender roles' and 'social relations analysis,' are used in this approach. 'Gender roles' focuses on the social construction of identities within the household; it also reveals the expectations from 'maleness and femaleness' in their relative access to resources. 'Social relations analysis' exposes the social dimensions of hierarchical power relations embedded in social institutions, as well as its determining influence on 'the relative position of men and women in society.' This relative positioning tends to discriminate against women. Unlike WID, the GAD approach is not concerned specifically with women but with the way in which a society assigns roles, responsibilities, and expectations to both women and men. GAD applies gender analysis to uncover the ways in which men and women work together, presenting results in neutral terms of economics and efficiency. In an attempt to create gender equality (denoting women having the same opportunities as men, including the ability to participate in the public sphere), GAD policies aim to redefine traditional gender role expectations. Women are expected to fulfill household management tasks, home-based production, as well as bearing and raising children and caring for family members. The role of a wife is largely interpreted as 'the responsibilities of motherhood. Men, however, are expected to be breadwinners, associated with paid work and market production. In the labor market, women tend to earn less than men. For instance, 'A study by the Equality and Human Rights Commission found massive pay inequities in some of the United Kingdom's top finance companies; women received around 80 percent less performance-related pay than their male colleagues.' In response to pervasive gender inequalities, the Beijing Platform for Action established gender mainstreaming in 1995 as a strategy across all policy areas at all levels of governance for achieving gender equality. GAD has been largely utilized in debates regarding development, but this trend is not seen in the actual practice of developmental agencies and plans for development. Caroline Moser claims WID persists due to the challenging nature of GAD, but Shirin M. Rai counters this claim, noting that the real issue lies in the tendency to overlap WID and GAD in policy. Therefore, it would only be possible if development agencies fully adopted GAD language

exclusively. Caroline Moser developed the Moser Gender Planning Framework for GAD-oriented development planning in the 1980s while working at the Development Planning Unit of the University of London. Working with Caren Levy, she expanded it into a methodology for gender policy and planning. The Moser framework follows the Gender and Development approach in emphasizing the importance of gender relations. As with the WID-based Harvard Analytical Framework, it includes a collection of quantitative empirical facts. Going further, it investigates the reasons and processes that lead to conventions of access and control. The Moser Framework includes gender roles identification, gender needs assessment, disaggregating control of resources and decision-making within the household, planning for balancing work and household responsibilities, distinguishing between different aims in interventions, and involving women and gender-aware organizations in planning.

OTHER APPROACHES ON DEVELOPMENT

Gender and Neoliberal Development Institutions

Neoliberalism consists of policies that will privatize public industry, deregulate any laws or policies that interfere with the free flow of the market, and cut back on all social services. These policies were often introduced to many low-income countries through structural adjustment programs (SAPs) by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Neoliberalism was cemented as the dominant global policy framework in the 1980s and 1990s. Among development institutions, gender issues have increasingly become part of economic development agendas, as the examples of the World Bank show. Awareness by international organizations of the need to address gender issues evolved over the past decades. The World Bank and regional development banks, donor agencies, and government ministries have provided many examples of instrumental arguments for gender equality, for instance, by emphasizing the importance of women's education as a way of increasing productivity in the household and the market. Their concerns have often focused on women's contributions to economic growth rather than the importance of women's education as a means for empowering women and enhancing their capabilities. The World Bank, for example, started focusing on gender in 1977 with

the appointment of a first Women in Development Adviser. In 1984 the bank mandated that its programs consider women's issues. In 1994 the bank issued a policy paper on Gender and Development, reflecting current thinking on the subject. This policy aims to address policy and institutional constraints that maintain disparities between the genders and thus limit the effectiveness of development programs. Thirty years after the appointment of a first Women in Development Adviser, a Gender Action Plan was launched to underline the importance of the topic within development strategies and to introduce the new Smart Economics strategy. Gender mainstreaming mandated by the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action integrates gender in all aspects of individuals lives in regards to policy development on gender equality. The World Bank's Gender Action Plan of 2007-10 is built upon the Bank's gender mainstreaming strategy for gender equality. The Gender Action Plan's objective was to advance women's economic empowerment through their participation in land, labor, financial, and product markets. Financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank support capitalist ideals through their means of economic growth of countries globally and their participation in the global economy and capitalist systems. Their roles in the economy reflect neoliberal principles, and they contribute to the creation of policies and aid with gender-related outcomes. An argument made on the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development is that it creates a neoliberal dominance that continues the construction and reconstruction of gender norms by homogenously categorizing women rather than the gender disparities within its policies. However, scholars like Harvey (2010) have argued that neoliberalism is a distinct form of capitalism that has led to the restoration of class power, increased economic inequality, and the erosion of democratic institutions. Chomsky (1998) also critiqued that neoliberalism is a form of class war that has led to increased economic inequality and social injustice and its impacts on democracy, inequality, and global power dynamics.

Women and MicroFinance

Women have been identified by the United Nations as a critical variable to sustainable development in all societies; similarly, some development institutions also identify women as key to successful development. According to Kwon-Ndung & Mato (2015),

microfinance operations are a veritable source of promoting financial inclusion, economic development, and poverty alleviation. It primarily serves individuals and small businesses that lack access to traditional banking services and positions itself as an entry point for women's economic empowerment and poverty alleviation. The Grameen Bank model of Prof. Muhammed Yunus of Bangladesh has made significant contributions to poverty alleviation in the rural communities, especially with women. The model provides microcredit, providing small loans to poor people, especially women, to start or expand their businesses through group lending, where borrowers form groups to guarantee each other's loans, promoting social collateral and peer pressure, and enabling financial inclusion. Microcredit is giving small loans to people without collateral, and the model maintains very simple operations. Studies by Yunus (1983) show that women are more likely to repay their debt than men, and the Grameen Bank focuses on aiding women. This financial opportunity allows women to start their own businesses for a steady income. Women have been the focus of microcredit for the overall well-being of the home, and this aligns with global and World Bank assertions. Studies carried out in Tanzania about the correlation of the role of savings and credit cooperative organizations and the economic development of the country revealed that the microfinance policies were not being carried out in the most efficient ways due to exploitation. One case study went a step further to claim that this financial service could provide a more equal society for women in Tanzania if carried out effectively. While there are cases in which women were able to lift themselves out of poverty, there are also cases in which women fell into situations in which they were unable to repay their loans. It is even said that microcredit is actually an "anti-developmental" approach. In South Africa, unemployment is high due to the introduction of microfinance; this was more under apartheid. Microcredit intensified poverty in Johannesburg, South Africa, as poor communities, mostly women, who needed to repay debt were forced to work in the poorly remunerated informal sectors. In Nigeria, where the informal sector contributes to 58% of GDP (ILO, 2010), women working within this sector cannot access microcredit because of the high demand for loans triggered by high unemployment rates. Microfinance bridges this gap as the operations of microfinance serve as an opportunity for women to access microcredit. Microfinance operations in Nigeria are regulated by the Central Bank of Nigeria

(CBN), which provides guidelines for the establishment and functioning of microfinance banks (MFBs). The Microfinance Policy, Regulatory and Supervisory Framework, introduced in 2005 and revised in 2011, governs the sector. The policy aims to create a sustainable microfinance system to serve the unbanked population. Over the years, the operations of microfinance in Nigeria increased access to credit. Enabling women to access credit, which has enabled them to invest in their businesses and improve their livelihoods, has improved the economic empowerment of women, enabling them to make financial decisions and improve their overall well-being. Similarly, microfinance has also improved the social status of women in Nigeria, enabling them to participate in decision-making processes and assert their rights. Despite the growth of microfinance institutions in Nigeria, many women still lack access to financial services, particularly in rural areas; also, the high interest rates make it difficult for women to repay their loans.

Gender, financial crises, and neoliberal economic policy

The global financial crisis and the following politics of austerity opened up a wide range of gender and feminist debates on neoliberalism and the impact of the crisis on women. One view is that the crisis has affected women disproportionately and that there is a need for alternative economic structures in which investment in social reproduction needs to be given more weight. The International Labour Organization (ILO) assessed the impact of the global financial crisis on workers and concluded that while the crisis initially affected industries that were dominated by male workers (such as finance, construction, and manufacturing), it then spread over to sectors in which female workers are predominantly active. Examples for these sectors are the service sector or wholesale-retail trade. There are different views among feminists on whether neoliberal economic policies have more positive or negative impacts on women. In the post-war era, feminist scholars such as Elizabeth Wilson criticized state capitalism and the welfare state as a tool to oppress women. Therefore, neoliberal economic policies featuring privatization and deregulation, hence a reduction of the influence of the state and more individual freedom, were argued to improve conditions for women. This anti-welfare state thinking arguably led to feminist support for neoliberal ideas, embarking on a macroeconomic policy level deregulation and a

reduced role of the state. Therefore, some scholars in the field argue that feminism, especially during its second wave, has contributed key ideas to neoliberalism that, according to these authors, create new forms of inequality and exploitation. As a reaction to the phenomenon that some forms of feminism are increasingly interwoven with capitalism, many suggestions on how to name these movements have emerged in the feminist literature. Examples are 'free market feminism' or even 'faux-feminism.'

Smart Economics

Smart Economics, advocated chiefly by the World Bank, is an approach to define gender equality as an integral part of economic development, and it aims to spur development through investing more efficiently in women and girls. It stresses that the gap between men and women in human capital, economic opportunities, and voice/agency is a chief obstacle in achieving more efficient development. As an approach, it is a direct descendant of the efficiency approach taken by WID, which “rationalizes 'investing' in women and girls for more effective development outcomes.” As articulated in the section of WID, the efficiency approach to women in development was chiefly articulated by Caroline Moser in the late 1980s. Continuing the stream of WID, smart economics' key unit of analysis is women as individuals, and it particularly focuses on measures that strive to narrow down the gender gap. Women are a relatively underinvested source of development, and it defines gender equality as an opportunity for higher return investment. “Gender equality itself is here depicted as smart economics, in that it enables women to contribute their utmost skills and energies to the project of world economic development.” In this term, smart economics champions a neoliberal perspective in seeing business as a vital vehicle for change, and it takes a stance of liberal feminism. The thinking behind smart economics dates back, at least, to the lost decade of the Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) in the 1980s. In 1995, the World Bank issued its flagship publication on gender matters of the year, *Enhancing Women's Participation in Economic Development* (World Bank 1995). This report marked a critical foundation to the naissance of Smart Economics; in a chapter entitled 'The Pay-offs to Investing in Women,' the Bank proclaimed that investing in women “speeds economic development by raising productivity and promoting the more efficient use of resources; it

produces significant social returns, improving child survival and reducing fertility, and it has considerable intergenerational pay-offs.” The bank also emphasized its associated social benefits generated by investing in women. For example, the bank turned to research by Whitehead that evidenced a greater female control of household income is associated with better outcomes for children's welfare, and Jeffery and Jeffery, who analyzed the positive correlation between female education and lower fertility rates. In the 2000s, the approach of smart economics came to be further crystallized through various frameworks and initiatives. A first step was the World Bank's Gender Action Plan (GAP) 2007-2010, followed by the “Three Year Road Map for Gender Mainstreaming 2010-13.” The 2010-13 framework responded to criticisms for its precursor and incorporated some shifts in thematic priorities. Lastly but not least, the decisive turning point was 2012, marked by its publication of “World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development.” This bank's first comprehensive focus on the gender issues was welcomed by various scholars and practitioners as an indicator of its seriousness. For example, Shahra Razavi appraised the report as 'a welcome opportunity for widening the intellectual space.' Other international organizations, particularly UN families, have so far endorsed the approach of smart economics. Examining the relationship between child well-being and gender equality, for example, UNICEF also referred to the “Double Dividend of Gender Equality.” Its explicit link to a wider framework of the Millennium Development Goals (where Goal 3 is Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment) claimed a wider legitimacy beyond economic efficiency. In 2007, the bank proclaimed that “the business case for investing in MDG 3 is strong; it is nothing more than smart economics.” In addition, “Development organizations and governments have been joined in this focus on the 'business case' for gender equality and the empowerment of women by businesses and enterprises that are interested in contributing to social good.” A good example is the “Girl Effect initiative” taken by the Nike Foundation. Its claim for economic imperative and a broader socio-economic impact also met a strategic need of NGOs and community organizations that seek justification for their program funding.

Thus, some NGOs, for example, Plan International, captured this trend to further their program. The then-president of the World Bank, Robert B. Zoellick, was quoted by Plan International as stating, “Investing in adolescent girls is precisely the catalyst poor countries need to break intergenerational poverty and to create a better distribution of income. Investing in them is not only fair; it is a smart economic move.” The global financial meltdown and austerity measures taken by major donor countries further supported this approach, since international financial institutions and international NGOs received greater pressure from donors and from the global public to design and implement maximally cost-effective programs.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF NIGERIAN WOMEN TO THE GROWTH OF THE ECONOMY

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is Africa's largest economy and one of the continent's most influential nations. As at 2022, the country's population was estimated at approximately 216.8 million people (NBS, 2022). By 2023, the population had grown to around 227.9 million (World Bank, 2023). Forecasts from the United Nations, as estimated by Worldometer, indicate that by 2025, Nigeria's population may surpass 237 million and is still increasing.

Out of this large population women make about 50% of the Nigerian population (World Bank, 2024). They have made noteworthy contributions to the growth of the economy across various sectors. Their impact can be seen in entrepreneurship, agriculture, politics, education, technology, and other industries. Some notable contributions of women include:

1. Entrepreneurship and Business

Women play a dominant role in Nigeria's informal economy, which contributes nearly 50% of the country's GDP (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2020). Nigerian women own and operate businesses in various sectors, including fashion, food processing, manufacturing, and retail, significantly contributing to job creation, innovation, and the growth of the informal sector. Reports indicate that approximately 41% of Nigerian women own businesses, positioning them among the highest percentage of female entrepreneurs globally (PwC, 2020; MSME Africa, 2022).

(WEE,2023) ,reports that Nigeria has the highest number of women entrepreneurs in the world and women represent 43percent of Nigeria's entrepreneurs with the gender gap narrowing as more women continue to start businesses and enterprises .Organizations like the Bank of Industry (BOI) and Women Entrepreneurs Association of Nigeria (WEAN) support female entrepreneurs through loans and training. Medium Term National Development Plan 2021-2025 , Federal Governments commitments facilitates access to funds by providing access to digital finance tools and advisory services that equips women entrepreneurs with tools needed to grow their businesses into viable enterprises.

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) there over 23million Nigerian female entrepreneurs running micro-businesses in the informal sector. However , women in the formal and informal economy are confronted with the challenge of access to finances and capital as huge barriers that (WEE,2023).

2. Agriculture and Food Production

Women play a key role in Nigeria's agricultural workforce, particularly in farming, food processing, and small-scale agri-business. They make up a significant portion of smallholder farmers, who contribute over 90% of the country's agricultural output (PwC, 2020). Women-led initiatives in organic farming, agri-tech, and value chain development enhance food security and sustainability. Women contribute approximately 22% to Nigeria's agricultural GDP.

According PwC over 80percent of Nigeria's farmers are small holder farmers responsible responsible for over 90percent of Nigeria's Agricultural output, women contribute to food security and sustainability by running smallholder farms and cooperatives. Many women-led initiatives focus on organic farming, exportation, aggrotech innovations and value chain development. Many women engage in subsistence and commercial farming, ensuring food security. Women contribute about 22percent to GDP in the agricultural sector.

3. Technology and Innovation

The tech sector contributes 18% to Nigeria's GDP, with increasing female participation in software development, digital marketing, and innovation .Nigerian women have contributed in technology, creating

startups and contributing to fintech, edtech, and health tech solutions. The tech industry has significant proportion of its workforce (percentage) as women. Women-led startups in fintech, e-commerce, and education technology are expanding Nigeria's digital economy. Innovators like Funke Opeke founder of Main One, a major broadband company have improved Nigeria's digital economy.

4. Entertainment and Creative Industry

Nollywood is the second-largest film industry in the world and contributes over 2.3 percent to GDP which is significant to Nigeria's economy. Women in Nollywood, music, and fashion have helped boost Nigeria's global recognition and contributed significantly to GDP growth.

According to a study conducted by the Nigerian Export Promotion Council, the creative industry is worth \$9 billion, the study found that women constitute more than 50 percent of the workforce. Icons like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (literature), Tiwa Savage (music), and Mo Abudu (media entrepreneur) have put Nigeria on the global map. Women in fashion and beauty industries drive local and international markets.

5. Politics and Governance

Women play vital roles in policy-making and governance, advocating for economic reforms and gender-inclusive policies. Figures like Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (former Minister of Finance, now WTO Director-General) and Amina Mohammed (Deputy Secretary-General of the UN) have influenced global and national economic policies.

6. Education and Skill Development

Women contribute to the economy by leading in education, training young people in skills that enhance workforce development. Female educators and researchers have played key roles in improving literacy and technical skills as well as improve workforce productivity and human capital development.

7. Healthcare and Social Development

Nigerian women are at the forefront of healthcare and social development, improving maternal health, reducing child mortality, and providing essential services. Many women-led NGOs focus on health,

poverty alleviation, financial inclusion as well as improve workforce productivity and human capital development.

8. Financial Inclusion and Banking

In 2012, the Central Bank of Nigeria committed to improving gender diversity with a directive to ensure 30% minimum female representation on boards of the commercial banks and 40% in top management positions (African Business, 2024). Women in banking and finance, such as Ibukun Awosika (former chairman of First Bank of Nigeria), have influenced economic policies and financial growth.

Programs like Women's Microfinance Banks help rural women access credit and expand their businesses.

9. Beauty Industry

The beauty and personal care industry, according to a study by Mckinsey the market was valued at \$422.7 billion in 2020 globally with about \$10 billion coming from Africa, Euromonitor International reports that Nigeria is one of the biggest exporter of beauty and personal care trends, with an industry worth more than \$1,26 billion at retail, and was projected to enjoy double digit growth to reach approximately \$2.2 billion by 2022. (WEE, 2023) attributes the projected growth to large domestic market with 101.7 million women in Nigeria, making it one of the largest domestic markets for beauty industry.

10. Political and Institutional Contributions

Women in governance and policymaking influence economic policies that drive GDP growth.

Leaders like Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (WTO Director-General, former Finance Minister) and Amina Mohammed (UN Deputy Secretary-General) have shaped Nigeria's economic strategies.

11. Manufacturing

Women are crucial to Nigeria's manufacturing sector, particularly in food processing, textiles, and cosmetics, where they make up 30-40% of the workforce (ILO, 2023). Over 20% of women entrepreneurs in Nigeria operate in manufacturing, contributing to innovation and job creation (World Bank, 2022). In certain sectors like food processing,

women represent over 50% of the workforce (UN Women, 2021). However, women in manufacturing face challenges, such as limited access to finance, with less than 10% of female-led businesses receiving formal financing (OECD, 2023). Despite these obstacles, women's contributions are vital to the growth of the sector and overall economic development (NBS, 2022).

The Context

Women empowerment from a political economy perspective involves examining the factors that affect how power, resources, and rights are distributed, as well as how policies impact the status and agency of women in society. This approach recognizes that issues of gender inequality, poverty, alienation, exclusion, and violence against women are deeply ingrained in power relations, social structures, and economic systems, which leads to gender inequality (Para-Mallam, 2010) asserts that systemic gender inequalities are deeply rooted in patriarchal norms, limiting women's access to education, health care and economic opportunities. Gender is noted as a critical variable in power relations, as access to power determines the direction of the share of resources as well as the enforcement of rights. This largely explains the gender disparity in Nigeria, as disaggregated data show women as highly marginalized. For instance, despite all the developmental plans, gender mainstreaming policies and frameworks, disaggregated data show wide gender disparity. For instance, Nigeria has a population of 211 million people, out of which 101.6 million are women and girls. The poverty rate in Nigeria is surprisingly very high. The National Bureau of Statistics' MPI survey has it that 133 million Nigerians are multi-dimensionally poor. According to the World Bank, close to 90 million people are extremely poor, and women are 70% of the figure, i.e., 63 million. Similarly, the 2023 WEF Global Gender Gap index ranks Nigeria 142nd out of 146 countries, with Afghanistan at the bottom. The 2024 WEF Global Gender Gap index ranks Nigeria 125 out of 146 countries.

According a study by Policy and Legacy Advocacy Centre in 2024, Out of the 185 countries analyzed in women representation, Rwanda ranked highest in Africa, with women making up 61.3 percent of its parliament, while Nigeria ranked 180th, with only 4.4 percent female representation.

Currently, women occupy only 3% of the seats in the Senate and 4% in the House of Representatives in the 10th National Assembly, this represents 19% decline in terms of women representation in the National assembly. Despite the contributions of various frameworks, initiatives and plans to mainstream gender in development agendas, women are still marginalised and highly underrepresented in National parliament, in Nigeria.

In terms of education, there is wide disparity in the secondary school completion rates, as (WEE Policy, 2023) reports that 67% of boys complete secondary school as against girls. (UNICEF, 2022) reports on girl child education in Nigeria, showing that 7.6 million girls are out of school, 3.9 million at primary schools, and 3.7 at junior secondary school, while more than 50% of girls are not attending school at the basic education level. Similarly, the report shows that 1 million girls drop out between the first and last years of school, 0.6 million between primary 6 and JSS1, while 48% of out-of-school girls are in the North West and North East. Similarly, the report shows that only 9% of the girls from poor homes attend secondary schools compared to 81% from rich homes. Some barriers to girls' education include social norms, poverty, insecurity, long distances to schools, lack of water sanitation, health facilities, and inadequate recruitment of female trained teachers, especially at junior secondary schools. This scenario is deeply worrisome despite the provisions of the UBE Act (2004) and associated state laws that provide free and compulsory education. The National Policy on Gender in Education (2021) ensures equitable access for girls and promotes quality and inclusive education for all, as well as the Child Rights Act that has been adopted by 26 states.

Economic participation and opportunity determine the extent of financial independence among genders. Financial inclusion in particular has the potential to reduce extreme poverty and boost shared prosperity, which has made it to be identified as an enabler of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030. According to the Enhancing Financial Innovation & Access (EFInA) (2023) report, the financial inclusion rate cutting across all genders grew to 64.1 percent in 2020 from 63.2 percent in 2018. The figure is below the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)'s 80 percent financial inclusion target. The inclusion rate dropped marginally from 36.8 percent in 2018 to 35.9

percent in 2020; the excluded adult population of 38.1 million reported in 2020 was higher than the 36.6 million recorded in 2018. Meaning 1.5 million adults fell into the exclusion circle in the last two years to 2020 (Bailey, 2023). With particular reference to women, the World Bank's 2021 Global Findex reports that 35 percent of women had bank accounts in 2021, the highest in 10 years (World Bank, 2022). The reports acknowledged the role of technology in driving inclusion. However, the voyage thus far has not significantly accelerated the economic empowerment of women in Nigeria. This is as a study by the Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors Gender Center of Excellence shows that 98 percent of women still lack access to formal credit markets (Olawoyin & Udegbonam, 2022; Gender Center of Excellence, 2022).

Furthermore, in all societies, women perform different roles of labor but are not considered equal to men. Globally, women are paid less than men, with an estimated wage gap of about 23% (UN Women, 2023). The gender gap parity ranking uses parameters like economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, political appointment, and financial exclusion/wealth accumulation of the female gender in the world to determine the status of men and women. None of the parameters present favorable outcomes for women in Nigeria.

Nigeria has an unequal gender representation in leadership and decision-making positions. If women were represented equitably, perhaps issues on economic injustice, unpaid care, salary inequities, and employment challenges would be better represented. Closely intertwined is the issue of double burden, which refers to women's primary responsibility for unpaid work such as domestic upkeep, cooking, cleaning, childcare, elder care, and fetching water, while a wider perspective could include the several hours of emotional labor that go into holding families together and putting up with patriarchal constructions of what women are expected to tolerate and expect.

The importance of addressing gender disparities in governance is underscored by global initiatives and policy frameworks. The United Nations Millennium Development Goal 3 aims to promote gender equality and empower women, and Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs), particularly Goal 5, aim to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, while SDG 16 on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development focuses on ensuring women's full and effective participation in decision-making processes as well as other SDGs that seek to empower women earlier listed. Furthermore, regional agreements such as the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the European Union's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 underscore the commitment to advancing gender equality in governance and policymaking.

The African regional benchmark is 26%, the 1999 Constitution as amended guarantees the rights of all citizens, and the revised National Gender Policy (2021-2026), which aims at achieving gender equality, focuses on addressing systemic gender inequalities across all sectors like economics, health, education, and politics with a goal to build a more just society where women, men, girls, and boys have equal opportunities and participation in national development. The NGP basically aims to empower all citizens regardless of gender; however, this has remained rhetoric.

The five gender bills that were rejected by the 9th assembly confirm the weaknesses of the legal and policy frameworks that promote inclusive governance in Nigeria. The five bills include: Expansion of the Scope of Citizenship by Registration (Bill 45): Grants citizenship to foreign spouses of Nigerian women; Special Seats for Women in the National and State Houses of Assembly (Bill 47): Reserves 35% of legislative seats for women; Affirmative Action for Women in Political Party Administration (Bill 48): Ensures 35% female representation in party leadership; Indigeneship Rights for Women (Bill 49): Allows women to obtain indigeneship of their husband's state; Voting Rights for Nigerians in the Diaspora (Bill 50): Grants voting rights to Nigerians living abroad. Some of the reasons advanced for the rejection of the bills are: Cultural and religious concerns: Lawmakers cited Islamic and Christian teachings, as well as traditional values; Fear of undermining male dominance, some lawmakers believed the bills would erode men's authority; Lack of consensus and divided opinions among lawmakers hindered passage; Limited public awareness and engagement, insufficient public education and advocacy; Perceived threat to federal character: Some lawmakers argued the bills would

compromise Nigeria's federal character principle. The consequences of the rejection of the bill are Continued gender inequality; perpetuation of patriarchal systems; negative impact on national development; missed opportunity for progressive legislation; limited opportunities for women's empowerment. All of this impact the rights of women, access to power, and resources with huge implications for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Table 1. The Outlook of Women in Parliament from 1999-2019

Legislature	1999-2003		2003-2007		2007-2011		2011-2015		2015-2019		2019-	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
SENATE												
Male	106	97.2	106	97.2	100	91.7	102	93.6	101	92.7	102	93.6
Female	3	2.8	3	2.8	9	8.3	7	6.4	8	7.3	7	6.4
Total	109	100	109	100	109	100	109	100	109	100	109	100
HOUSE OF REPS.												
Male	348	96.7	339	94.2	335	93.1	336	93.3	337	93.6	338	93.9
Female	12	3.3	21	5.8	25	6.9	24	6.7	23	6.4	22	6.1
Total	360	100	360	100	360	100	360	100	360	100	360	100
BOTH HOUSES												
Male	454	96.8	445	94.9	435	92.8	438	93.4	438	93.4	440	93.8
Female	15	3.2	24	5.1	34	7.2	31	6.6	31	6.6	29	6.2
Total	469	100	469	100	469	100	469	100	469	100	469	100

Source (INEC, 2024)

Table 1 above shows the performance of women in the upper and lower houses of assembly from 1999- 2019, it presents the poor, dwindling and the lack of progress in the representation of women in the National assembly, this has great implications for democratic consolidation as women's voice s , perspectives are grossly inadequate in shaping bills that affect women and other issues of national importance that varied perspectives from gender will enhance the quality and outputs of bills from the national assembly.

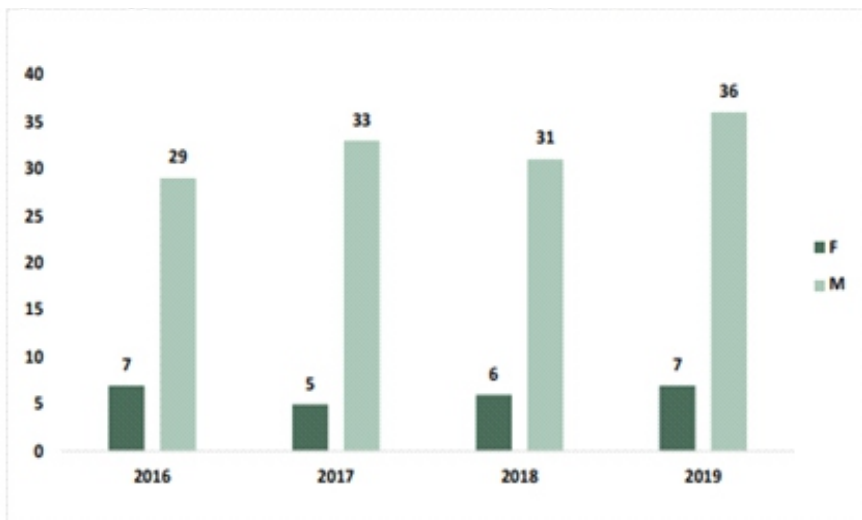


Figure 1. Appointive Ministerial Position by Gender 2016-2019
(Source: INEC, 2024).

Figure 1 above presents the scenario in terms of appointive positions from 2016 to 2019. This is a clear indication that very few women have been at the high-level decision-making forums, where critical decisions are taken to shape the destinies of women and men. This is most worrisome as the relevance of having women at the decision making processes cannot be over emphasized.

Table 3. Distribution of Number Occupying Elective Positions as President and Vice President in the Executive Arm and Number of Available Seats (1999-2019)

Position	1999-2003		2003-2007		2007-2011		2011-2015		2015 - 2019		2019 -	
	No. of Seat Available	% F	No. of Seat Available	% F	No. of Seat Available	% F	No. of Seat Available	% F	No. of Seat Available	% F	No. of Seat Available	% F
President	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Vice President	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0

Source: Office of Secretary to the Government of Federation (OSGF)

Table 4. Percentage of women in the National Assembly 1999-2023

Year	Senate Women (Count)	Senate Percentage	House of Representatives Women (Count)	House Percentage
1999	3	2.8%	12	3.4%
2003	3	2.8%	22	6.7%
2007	9	8.3%	25	6.9%
2011	4	3.7%	13	3.7%
2015	7	6.5%	20	5.6%
2019	7	6.5%	12	3.4%
2023	3	2.8%	14	3.9%

Source: (IPU, 2024)

Table 4 above illustrates the difficulties and sluggish progress toward gender parity in politics by charting the rise and fall of women's representation in Nigeria's National Assembly over a period of over 25 years. From 1999 to 2023, women have grossly been underrepresented in parliament. According to (IPU, 2024), available statistics revealed that women held only three Senate seats (2.8%) and twelve House seats (3.4%) in 1999, making them extremely underrepresented in both chambers. There were periods of slight improvement over the years. With nine female senators, the Senate had the greatest percentage of women at 8.3% by 2007. The House of Representatives reached a slightly earlier peak of 6.9% with 25 female members the same year.

These advances, though, were not maintained. The figures significantly decreased in 2011. There were just 4 women (3.7%) left in the Senate, and the House slipped back to 3.7%, reflecting a broader trend of regression rather than steady progress.

There was hardly much progress between 2015 and 2019. During those two elections, the Senate retained seven women (6.5%), but by 2019, the House of Representatives had dropped back to 3.4%. The Senate was further disappointed by the 2023 results, which saw just 3 women (2.8%), its lowest number since 1999. Although the House's representation of women increased to 14, it was still only 3.9%. This tale is a testament to the very difficult political space in Nigeria for women and also reflects the very difficult fight for women's political

participation and ultimately gender parity in Nigerian politics. This also questions the journey to the path of attaining 30% affirmative action as prescribed by the Beijing Platform of Action and the 35% affirmative action provided in the NGP as well as the 1999 constitution.

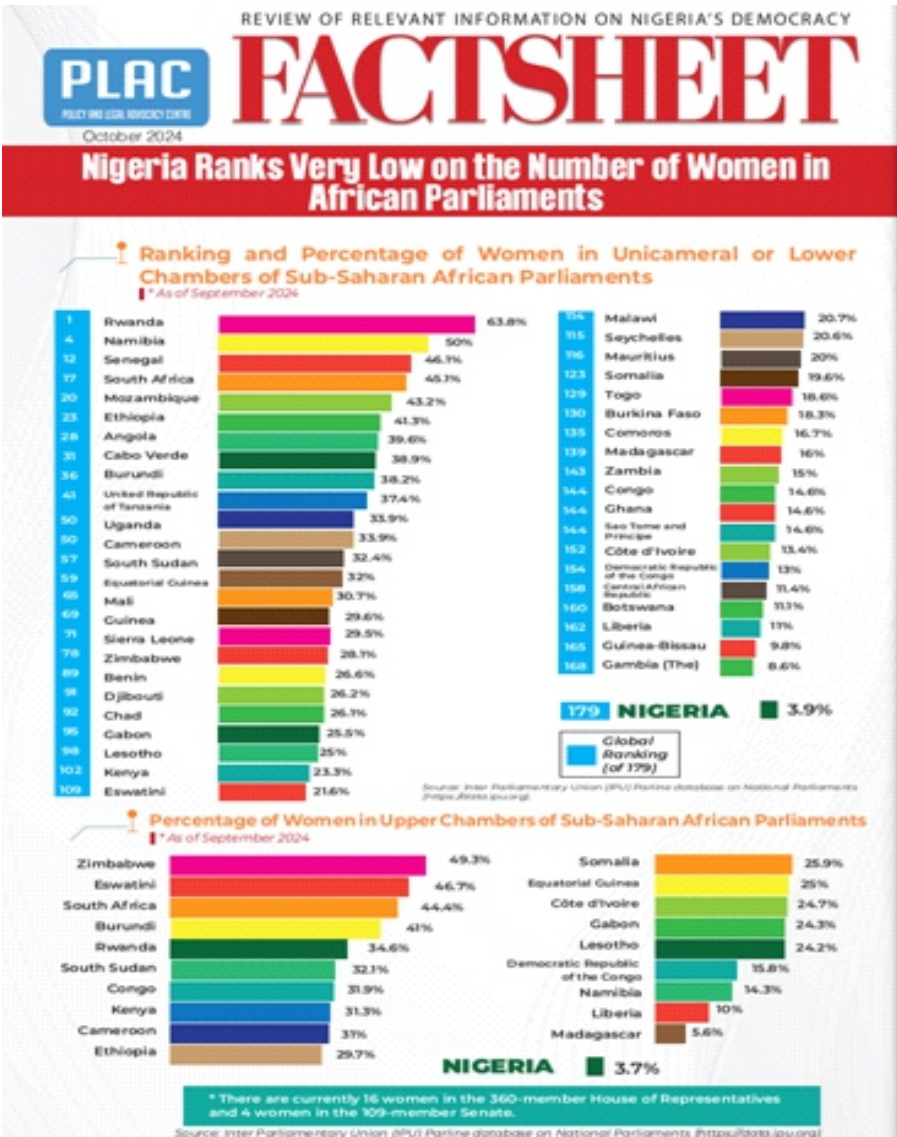


Figure 2. Ranking and Percentage of Women in Lower and Upper Chambers of Sub-Saharan African Parliaments (Source: IPU database: <https://data.ipu.org>)

Figure 2 above depicts the very worrisome status for Nigeria, a mere 3.7% for the giant of Africa in the Sub-Saharan political landscape, presenting an urgent call for constitutional amendments and electoral reforms that can urgently reposition Nigeria in the community of nations in terms of political participation while a long-term comprehensive and robust strategy is developed for Nigeria to assume its pride place as the giant of Africa.

Nigerian women continually face significant challenges in accessing comprehensive healthcare services. Despite efforts to improve healthcare delivery, disparities persist, especially in rural and underserved regions. Challenges are more profound in reproductive health, sexual and gender-based violence, non-communicable diseases (NCDs), health financing, and insurance.

For instance, on maternal health and family planning, the Federal Government has set a target to achieve a 27% modern contraceptive prevalence rate (mCPR) among women by 2024. However, as of December 2024, only 7.6 million out of approximately 51 million Nigerian women aged 15-49 were using modern contraceptive methods, indicating a substantial gap in family planning services.

Similarly, on reproductive rights and safe abortion access, restrictive abortion laws in Nigeria have led many women to seek unsafe procedures, contributing to high maternal mortality rates. NHIA reports that approximately 6,000 women die annually from complications related to unsafe abortions. Activists and healthcare providers are working to provide safe termination options and support for survivors of gender-based violence, despite legal and societal challenges.

On issues related to healthcare coverage and initiatives, the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA) reported surpassing its 2024 targets, increasing health insurance coverage from 16.7 million to 19.2 million enrollees. The NHIA has announced plans for a further 20% expansion in 2025, aiming to enhance access to healthcare services for Nigerian women.

In areas with limited access to modern healthcare, traditional birth

attendants (TBAs) play a crucial role in maternal and infant care. Over 60% of births in Nigeria occur outside hospitals, with many women preferring TBAs due to trust, cultural practices, and lower costs. Furthermore, on healthcare access and utilization as of 2024, 71% of women in Nigeria report having access to healthcare, but only 45% utilize healthcare services (2020). Also out-of-pocket expenses: 73% of women in Nigeria pay out-of-pocket for healthcare expenses. Health Insurance: Only 5% of women in Nigeria have health insurance (2020). There is also a rising burden of breast and cervical cancer.

This context presents an unacceptable condition of women in Nigeria when compared to international, regional, and national benchmarks. In comparison to other countries within Africa, countries like Rwanda are hailed as the beacon of gender equality, with over 60% of women in parliament; Senegal has empowered women through legal reforms and economic policy reforms; South Africa has codified gender equality into its constitution, making it one of the most progressive African countries in terms of women's rights; in Mauritius, the economic progress is due to gender inclusivity, while Nigeria lags behind. Nigeria cannot afford to rhetorically claim to advance gender justice yet present a very woeful reality and still pride herself as the giant of Africa. There is an urgent need for policy reforms, constitutional amendments, and legal reforms for Nigeria to maximally utilize the contributions of women to the growth and sustainable development of the country. Women make up about 50% of the population; they are indeed very critical to the sustainable development of Nigeria when empowered.

MAJOR RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS TO WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) identified five important areas concerning gender patterns of inequality between men and women. These include economic participation, economic opportunity, political empowerment, educational attainment, and health well-being (UNIFEM, 2009). Global Gender Gap Index also uses matrix such as economic participation and opportunities, political participation, educational attainment and access to health care. To address the injustice between men and women, the dynamics of power distribution, access to resources and

rights in the society becomes an academic and moral imperative. My research contributions therefore attempt to bridge the unequal power relations and contribute to the global drive for sustainable development.

My specific research interventions and contribution towards women empowerment include:

Kwon-Ndung, Linda & Azige, Lious Machue(2022). Women's Exclusion in Politics and Democratic Consolidation in Nasarawa State, Nigeria: 2015-2019. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development*. VOL.11(2)49-5. DOI: 1024940/ijird/2022/v11/i2/.

This research explored the exclusion of women from politics and democratic consolidation in Nasarawa State between 2015 and 2019. It evaluated women's participation in the political landscape since the advent of democratic governance in the Fourth Republic, examining challenges through hard data and secondary sources to highlight the limited representation of women politicians in Nasarawa State. Using the descriptive model of political participation as its theoretical framework, the study incorporated key informant interviews with notable women politicians and major stakeholders, alongside content analysis of the collected data. Findings revealed that women in Nasarawa State face significant political marginalization, with minimal involvement in governance due to factors such as patriarchy, cultural norms, inadequate networks and mentoring, poverty, religious beliefs, political violence, and low educational attainment. Additionally, weak institutions and the absence of policy or legal frameworks to secure quotas for women further hinder their political engagement and deter those aspiring to enter the political sphere. To address these challenges, the study recommended constitutional and electoral reforms that promote equitable representation of women, active engagement with religious and traditional leaders to advocate for women's political participation, enhanced commitment from women to partisan politics, economic empowerment initiatives for women, and intensified activism and lobbying to achieve greater representation and visibility in the state.

Kwon-Ndung, Linda & Atsiya Godiya Pius (2021). Women in Politics: Implications for Credibility of Future Democratic Governance. International Journal for Innovative Research and Development. VOL.10(5) 95-105. DOI1024940/ijird/2021/v10/i5/.

This research examined women's participation in politics, focusing on the 2019 general elections in Nigeria. It employed theories of descriptive representation to emphasize the importance of promoting women's involvement in the democratic process. Data for this study was gathered using secondary methods from existing literature. The paper specifically investigated the socio-cultural, economic, and political factors that contribute to the low participation and representation of women in governance. The findings revealed that while some African countries like Rwanda, Senegal, and South Africa have made significant strides in the political arena, Nigeria has shown minimal progress, with concerning results from the 2019 general elections. The study concluded that unequal political representation in Nigeria is a major obstacle to socio-economic development, hindering the nation's overall progress. The paper recommended a paradigm shift to address the dominant roles of men in Nigeria's political landscape. It advocated for strict adherence to and practical implementation of international best practices, as prescribed by the United Nations and other relevant laws. This includes gender mainstreaming, which involves integrating the concerns and experiences of both women and men into the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs in all development processes, ensuring that both genders benefit equally.

Kwon-Ndung, Linda & Gbaeren, Felix Tersoo (2021). The impact of microfinance on women. groups in Katsina-Ala, Benue state Nigeria. International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS) Vol.V,472-486 Issue XI ISSN 2454-6186.

The paper, *The Impact of Micro-Finance on Women Groups in Katsina-Ala, Benue State, Nigeria* by Linda Kwon-Ndung and Felix Tersoo Gbaeren, explored the role of microfinance in alleviating poverty and improving the socio-economic wellbeing of women. Drawing from the model established by Prof. Mohammed Yunus with the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, the study highlights the importance

of microfinance as a tool for financial inclusion, particularly for women, who are often under-served by traditional banking systems. The research utilized both primary and secondary data, including structured surveys administered to 200 women from various associations in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the impact of microfinance on these women. The findings showed that women who accessed microfinance from institutions like Lift Above Poverty Organization and Better Life Microfinance experienced notable improvements in their businesses and overall socio-economic status compared to those without access. However, the study identified challenges, particularly the demanding repayment processes, which created pressure for borrowers. The authors recommend making the repayment terms more flexible and extending the duration to ease financial strain. Additionally, they emphasize the need for increased awareness campaigns to educate more women about the availability and benefits of microfinance for achieving financial security and resilience.

[Linda Kwon-Ndung.](#), [Luka Ruth Caleb](#) and [Atsiya Godiya Pius](#). 2021. Gender Mainstreaming as a Panacea for Peace-building in Nigeria. In Book: Terrorism, Insurgency and Economic Development in Nigeria (pp.236-259). Publisher: Micro Teachers & Associates Makurdi, Abuja, Kaduna.

The article recognized Gender mainstreaming is a cornerstone strategy of the European Union (EU) aimed at promoting equal opportunities for women and men across institutions, organizations, and political frameworks. This approach gained formal recognition with the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam, where it was established as a binding principle for all EU member states. Article 4 of the Treaty explicitly states that the EU Community is committed to eliminating inequalities and advancing equality between women and men, solidifying the legal foundation for gender equality at the European level. Gender mainstreaming involves the systematic integration of a gender perspective into all stages of policy processes—design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation—by those typically engaged in policy-making. This approach requires the (re)organization, improvement, and development of policies in Nigeria to ensure that gender equality is a central consideration in

every aspect of governance. The goal is to make the principles of equal opportunities and gender equality intrinsic to all policies and activities undertaken by the EU and its member states. Key aspects of gender mainstreaming include, Comprehensive Inclusion such that Gender equality must be considered during the planning, execution, and evaluation phases of state measures. This ensures that the impact on men and women is assessed and addressed at all levels of decision-making, from local to national to EU-wide initiatives. A Holistic Policy Integration so that the strategy transcends stand-alone gender equality programs, embedding gender perspectives into broader policy areas such as education, employment, healthcare, urban planning, and environmental sustainability. Gender mainstreaming requires that all levels of political and organizational responsibility incorporate gender equality into their actions. This ensures consistency and accountability in implementing the EU's commitments to equality. Reinforced Legal Basis by explicitly codifying gender equality as a shared objective. This legal mandate supports the ongoing development and evaluation of initiatives aimed at reducing gender disparities. The ultimate aim of gender mainstreaming is to create societies where gender equality is not an isolated issue but a fundamental aspect of all policies and actions. By doing so, it ensures that political, social, and economic opportunities are accessible to everyone, irrespective of gender, thereby fostering inclusive and equitable progress across all member states.

Ogechi, Agatha., Takyun, J.C., **Kwon-Ndung, L. & Otesanya Bene.** (2019). Reducing Post Traumatic Stress Disorders Among Internally Displaced in Nigerian Adolescents. In *International Journal for Psychotherapy in Africa*. Vol4. (1), 111-121.

This study examined the impact of internal displacement on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among adolescents, aiming to reduce the incidence of PTSD among victims. The research involved 283 adolescent participants, both male and female. Data were collected using the PTSD K-scale, along with in-depth interviews and focused group discussions. The results revealed a significant three-way interaction between internal displacement, age, and gender in trauma symptomatology ($F(1,275) = 3.87, P = .05$). Internally displaced adolescents exhibited higher mean trauma scores compared to their

non-displaced counterparts. Among the internally displaced, female adolescents showed more trauma symptoms than males. Specifically, older displaced female adolescents had the highest mean trauma symptomatology score of 31.35, while older displaced male adolescents had the lowest score of 27.93.

Kwon-Ndung, L. (2019). Forming a Synergy for Human Capital Development in Nigeria: Women Empowerment Strategy. In *African Journal of Economics and Social Research (AJESR)* Vol.2, (1), 118-127.

The research examined the formation of a synergy for women's empowerment strategies as a critical pathway to enhancing human capital development in Nigeria. It evaluates the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which targeted a 2015 deadline to significantly reduce extreme poverty. Specifically, Goals 3, 4, and 5 were directed toward improving the status of women and girls by promoting gender equality, reducing child mortality, and improving maternal health. While progress was observed—such as improvements in girls' school enrollment and marginal increases in women's representation across various professions—the MDGs were recognized as achieving partial success. The persistent challenges indicated that significant efforts were still needed to address extreme poverty and gender disparities effectively.

The paper further reviewed the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which introduced 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Among these, gender equality (Goal 5) and women's empowerment were identified as core priorities, highlighting their central role in achieving broader sustainable development objectives. The emphasis on gender equality underlines the necessity of removing structural barriers and ensuring equal opportunities for women in all aspects of life. Key Findings are Education as a Catalyst for Empowerment:

The paper underscores the critical importance of education in empowering women and fostering gender social integration. Education is identified as a foundational tool for equipping women with the skills, knowledge, and confidence required to participate

actively in economic, social, and political spheres. **Legal and Policy Frameworks:** The paper highlights the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa as a key instrument advocating freedom from all forms of discrimination. It recommends leveraging this protocol to strengthen policies that promote gender equality and women's rights. **Human Capital Development Theory:** Drawing on the human capital development theory, the paper argues that investments in women's education, healthcare, and skills development can yield substantial economic and social benefits. The theory emphasizes that empowering women not only enhances their individual potential but also contributes to national economic growth. **Women's Role in Society:** With women constituting approximately 50% of Nigeria's population, the paper acknowledges their proven capabilities in both domestic and public spheres. However, it highlighted that the underdevelopment of women's human capital has limited their access to opportunities, leaving many women unable to reach their full potential. The paper recommended a compulsory and free education policy for the girl child as a non-negotiable step to enhance women's human capital development. By prioritizing education, Nigeria can address systemic barriers that perpetuate gender inequality and empower women to contribute meaningfully to the nation's progress. The paper also called for the integration of women's empowerment into national development strategies, robust implementation of gender-focused legal frameworks, and increased investment in programs that support women's economic and social advancement. The study concluded that achieving gender equality and empowering women are indispensable for human capital development and sustainable national growth. By adopting holistic and inclusive strategies that prioritize education, legal protection, and capacity-building, Nigeria can unlock the vast potential of its women, driving progress across all sectors.

Kwon-Ndung, Linda & Okpe Mathew. (2019). The Impact of National Health Insurance Scheme Policy on Enrollees in Federal Medical Centre Keffi, Nasarawa State Nigeria. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development*. ISSN 2278-0211. Vol. 8:(3), 38-45.doi.1024940/ijird/2019/v8/i3/MAR19017.

This study examined the implementation of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) as a social health insurance for the enrollees in the Federal Medical Center Keffi (FMC Keffi) of Nasarawa State, Nigeria, to ascertain the effectiveness of the policy on the enrollees. The survey depended on both primary and secondary sources of information for data for the study. Simple percentage was adopted as the method of data analysis. As of the first quarter of 2018, a total population of 15,086 enrollees drawn from all the Health Maintenance Organizations have a Memorandum of Understanding with FMC Keffi, with a monthly encounter average of 1,257. Thus, the sample size was determined by Taro Yamme's model, and 390 enrollees were randomly selected for the survey. The study revealed that most enrollees face a wide range of challenges in terms of access to quality healthcare service delivery, such as waiting time to see doctors, non-availability of prescribed drugs, and sometimes a lack of prescription sheets. The challenges of non-availability of drugs are largely due to the prescription of branded drugs, especially at specialist clinics, which are not covered by NHIS; however, for drugs that are covered by the scheme and are not available, FMC Keffi made provision for outsourcing from nearby pharmacies within 24 hours for the patients. The management of FMC Keffi also makes refunds for out-of-pocket spending to patients who could not wait for the outsourcing. The study recommends that for the enrollees to effectively benefit from this policy, all government hospitals and other private hospitals that meet the requirement should be accredited in order to make access to quality healthcare service delivery reachable and affordable at all times for the enrollees, among others.

Linda Kwon-Ndung. 2019. Women Participation in the Electoral Process: The Voyage Thus Far: May 2019. In the book: Delivering Democratic Promises in Nigeria; prospects and challenges; a festschrift in honor of Senator Umaru Tanko Al-Makura (pp. 201-225). The paper highlighted that gender mainstreaming has become one of the most popular calls globally today. Communities, both local and international, have come to realize the central roles exercised by women in societal progress generally. In particular, women's roles are being increasingly noticed in the overall political development of the global community. The pivotal roles exercised by women political leaders in various parts of the world today can no longer be overlooked.

Adadu & Kwon-Ndung (2019) reported the very imposing presence of Angela Merkel of Germany, the very push-up efforts of Hillary Clinton in the United States politics, the very dogged fight put forward by Theresa May in the British–EU Brexit saga, along with the presence of Erna Solberg as Prime Minister of Norway, and the role of Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in establishing democracy in Liberia attests to the strong role of women in democratic politics.

Kwon Ndung, E.H , David Ishor & **Kwon-Ndung, L.**(2018). Analysis of the Midline Impact of Fadama III Agricultural Development Project on Poverty Alleviation among Beneficiaries in Benue State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Innovative Approaches in Agricultural Research* . 2 0 1 8 , V o l . 2 (2) , 1 3 3 - 1 4 4 . <https://doi.org/10.29329/ijiaar.2018.141.6> June 2018.

This study evaluated the midline impact of the Fadama III Agricultural Development Project on poverty alleviation among beneficiaries in Benue State, Nigeria. It focused on comparing the average income of Fadama III beneficiaries with non-beneficiaries, based on their involvement in crop, livestock, and off-farm activities, as well as assessing differences in quality of life. The research sampled 314 households across 20 LGAs, including 192 Fadama Community Associations (FCAs) and 2,727 Fadama User Groups (FUGs). Data collection was conducted by ten enumerators using structured electronic questionnaires programmed for household and community surveys. Data processing and analysis were carried out using STATA software, which facilitated data cleaning, household matching, and statistical evaluation. A Lorenz curve was employed to analyze income distribution and inequality. For the Fadama III treatment group, the Gini coefficient was 0.37830, and the concentration coefficient was 0.35921, indicating a more equitable income distribution. In contrast, the non-Fadama III group had a Gini coefficient of 0.25562 and a concentration coefficient of 0.401243. These results demonstrate that Fadama III significantly reduced income inequality among beneficiaries. The findings suggested that Fadama III has had a substantial positive impact on income distribution and poverty alleviation in rural communities. The study recommended sustaining and expanding the Fadama III project as a model for promoting rural development and poverty reduction in Nigeria.

Kwon-Ndung, L. (2017). Girl-Child Education: Challenges and Prospects in Nigeria. *Journal of Entrepreneurship Research Vol.6(1)*,70-178.

Girl-child education in Nigeria has been a focal point for policymakers and educators due to its significant impact on societal development. Despite various initiatives, challenges persist, including cultural norms, economic barriers, and inadequate infrastructure. However, there are also notable prospects, such as increasing awareness, governmental support, and international partnerships aimed at promoting gender equality in education. The key challenges are cultural norms: Traditional beliefs often prioritize male education over female education, leading to lower enrollment and retention rates for girls. Economic Barriers: Poverty can force families to choose which children to educate, frequently resulting in girls being left out. Inadequate Infrastructure: Many schools lack facilities that cater to the specific needs of female students, such as separate sanitation facilities. The prospects include government initiatives with programs like the Universal Basic Education (UBE), aimed to provide free and compulsory education, which benefits both boys and girls. International support from organizations such as UNICEF and UNESCO is actively involved in promoting girl-child education through various programs, funding, and community engagement. There is a need for increasing community awareness and involvement, which can lead to better support systems for girls' education.

Kwon-Ndung L, & Mutong S.M. (2016). An Assessment of Subsidy Re-Investment and Empowerment Programme in Nigeria SURE-P. *Review of Nigerian Political Economy. RONPE. Vol.5.(1&2)*,111-122.

This paper examined the implementation of SURE-P in Nigeria. The Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P) was introduced by the Nigerian government on January 1, 2012, with the primary goal of alleviating the hardships faced by Nigerians due to the removal of subsidies on premium motor spirit. The federal government aimed to channel its share of the subsidy savings into a mix of programs designed to stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty through investments in critical infrastructure and social safety net projects. To transform the economy, SURE-P prioritized key infrastructure projects

in sectors such as power, roads, transportation, water, and downstream petroleum, targeting poverty mitigation and improved living conditions for the poor. Relying primarily on secondary data sources, the study adopts the elite theory as its analytical framework. Findings reveal that the operational feasibility of SURE-P was compromised by elite dominance, which manifested in widespread corruption, irregularities, favoritism, and other malpractices. These challenges significantly hindered the program's potential to achieve its intended objectives. In light of these issues, the paper recommended that the Nigerian government intensify efforts to combat corruption to foster economic growth and development. Furthermore, given the ongoing economic challenges and the associated hardships faced by citizens, the government should consider reopening SURE-P. If it was properly implemented, the program had the potential to improve the living standards of Nigerians and contribute to sustainable economic development.

Kwon-Ndung, L. (2016). Micro-Finance as a Tool for Women Development in Nigeria. *FULafia Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*. Vol.1 (1),96-219.

This paper delved into the concept of microfinance and its transformative potential, especially for women. Microfinance has emerged as a pivotal tool for poverty alleviation and a key strategy for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It recognizes that access to financial services is essential for enabling poor households to meet basic financial needs, protect against risks, and reduce vulnerability to economic shocks by fostering asset accumulation. Unlike conventional financial institutions, which often exclude the poor, microfinance is specifically designed to provide accessible financial services to underserved populations, particularly those in rural and economically disadvantaged areas. Women, who are often disproportionately affected by poverty and financial exclusion, can leverage microfinance to channel their savings into significant sums. These funds can then address various needs, including business expansion, personal consumption, social obligations, and long-term asset building. By enabling women to manage and grow their resources, microfinance contributes to economic empowerment, social inclusion, and improved family welfare. The study relied on secondary

data to explore the phenomenon of microfinance and employed the empowerment strategy as its theoretical framework. This approach emphasized the importance of enabling individuals, particularly women, to gain control over their economic circumstances and make decisions that affect their lives and communities. The paper highlighted the necessity of targeting rural women as a central focus of microfinance initiatives. It recommends the establishment of both formal and informal microfinance institutions in rural areas, where the majority of under-served populations reside. Such institutions can bridge the gap between financial exclusion and economic opportunity, providing rural, self-employed women with the tools to expand their businesses, increase income, and improve overall well-being. Ultimately, microfinance represents more than a financial mechanism—it is a pathway to empowerment, fostering resilience, and enabling communities to break free from the cycle of poverty. By focusing on the unique needs of rural women, microfinance can serve as a catalyst for sustainable development and inclusive economic growth.

Kwon-Ndung, L. (2015). The State and Implementation of Microfinance in Nigeria:2000 to 2006. *Studies in Politics and Society. Journal of Nigerian Political Science Association. Vol 3, (1),*194-220.

This paper explores the role of the Nigerian state in the implementation of microfinance initiatives as a tool for poverty alleviation and economic empowerment. Microfinance has become a cornerstone of Nigeria's economic development strategies, aimed at providing financial services to underserved populations, particularly the rural poor and small-scale entrepreneurs. The study critically examines the state's policies, institutional frameworks, and regulatory mechanisms that support the microfinance sector. Through an analysis of government initiatives such as the establishment of the Central Bank of Nigeria's Microfinance Policy, as well as state-driven microfinance banks and programs, the paper highlights the successes and challenges faced in promoting financial inclusion. It also assesses the effectiveness of microfinance in improving livelihoods, enhancing access to credit, and fostering local entrepreneurship while addressing concerns about the sustainability and reach of these services. The paper further investigates the impact of socio-political factors, including

corruption, inadequate infrastructure, and regulatory enforcement, on the successful implementation of microfinance policies. Ultimately, this study provides a nuanced understanding of the interplay between state actions and the development of microfinance in Nigeria, offering policy recommendations to strengthen the sector and achieve its intended goals of inclusive economic growth.

Kwon-Ndung, L., Erunko, C.E. & Pius A.G. (2015). Elections and Voters Behavior in a Democratic State. An Assessment of the 2015 General Elections in Nigeria. *South East Journal of Political Science VOL 1.(1)*, 225-239.

This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of election and voter behavior during Nigeria's 2015 general elections, a pivotal moment in the nation's political landscape. The 2015 elections marked the first time in Nigerian history that an incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathan, was defeated in a democratic election, highlighting significant shifts in voter preferences and electoral dynamics. The study examines the socio-political factors influencing voter decisions, including ethnic, religious, and regional affiliations, as well as the role of campaign strategies, media influence, and electoral integrity. Additionally, the paper explores the impact of the opposition party, the All Progressives Congress (APC), in consolidating a broad-based coalition that effectively challenged the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP). By utilizing a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, including voter turnout statistics, surveys, and interviews, the paper identifies key patterns in voter behavior, the evolution of political loyalties, and the changing nature of political participation in Nigeria. Ultimately, this analysis provides insights into the complexities of Nigeria's democratic process and contributes to the understanding of electoral behavior in emerging democracies.

Kwon-Ndung, L. (2015). Microfinance as a Mechanism for Development in Nigeria. *Nasarawa Journal of Political Science* Vol 3. No.3 Pp104-128.

Microfinance is widely recognized as a tool for poverty alleviation and is one of the key strategies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It plays a crucial role in enabling poor households to

meet their basic financial needs, protect themselves against risks, and reduce vulnerability to shocks by helping them build assets. Professor Muhammad Yunus of Bangladesh pioneered a microfinance model, introducing a group lending scheme for landless people, which later evolved into the Grameen Bank. Today, Grameen Bank serves over 2.4 million clients, with about 94% of them being women, and has become a global model for community development. Nigeria, like many other countries, adopted this microfinance approach. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) defines microfinance as providing financial services to the poor, who are typically excluded from conventional financial institutions. This paper examined the phenomenon of microfinance and explored its potential to empower women by helping them turn savings into substantial sums to address a wide range of business, personal, social, and asset-building needs. The paper draws on secondary data and uses the empowerment strategy as its theoretical framework for analysis. The paper recommended that women in rural communities should be central to microfinance initiatives, and as such, both formal and informal microfinance institutions should be established in rural areas, where the need for financial services is most acute. Access to microfinance can support rural self-employed women in expanding their businesses, improving their personal and family well-being, and achieving greater financial independence. Additionally, women should be encouraged to open bank accounts to enhance their access to and use of financial services.

Kwon-Ndung, L. & Kabir, Mato. (2014). Microfinance as a Veritable Tool for Gender Economic Empowerment in Nigeria. *The International Journal of Humanities and Social Studies*. Vol 2(11), 74-82 (ISSN 2321-9203) www.theijhss.com.

Microfinance is hailed as a tool for poverty alleviation and is one of the major strategies to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This is because access to financial services assists poor households in meeting their basic financial needs, protects them against risks, and reduces their vulnerability to shocks by building assets. Prof. Mohammed Yunus of Bangladesh developed a framework for a microfinance approach to community development with a pilot group lending scheme for the landless people, and this later became the Grameen Bank, which currently serves more than 2.4 million clients,

out of which about 94% of them are women, and has become a model for many countries (Anon. 2011). Countries like Nigeria also adopted this approach. Indeed, according to the CBN (2005), "microfinance is about providing financial services to the poor who are traditionally not served by the conventional financial institutions. This paper examined the phenomenon of microfinance and its potential to help women turn their savings into sums large enough to satisfy a wide range of business, consumption, personal, social, and asset-building needs. This paper relied heavily on the secondary sources of data for all the information needed. It equally used the empowerment strategy as the theoretical framework of analysis. This paper recommended that women in the rural communities form the central targets of microfinance; therefore, formal and informal microfinance institutions should be established in the rural areas since microfinance banking is actually for the rural poor. Access to microfinance can help rural self-employed women to expand their businesses and improve their personal and family well-being, and women should be encouraged to open bank accounts so that they can get used to financial services.

Kwon-Ndung, L.& Kabir, Mato. (2014). Micro-Finance as a Veritable Tool for Gender Economic Empowerment in Nigeria. *The International Journal of Humanities and Social Studies*. Vol 2(11), 74-82 (ISSN 2321-9203) www.theijhss.com.

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Kwon-Ndung, L & Allanana, M.G. (2012). Women Empowerment and Reproductive Health Challenges in Nigeria. *NSUK Journal of Humanities. Vol. 2. (1&2)*, 91-106.

This paper explored the intersection of women's empowerment and reproductive health in rural Nigeria, focusing on the limited bargaining power of women within the context of a patriarchal society. It examined how this imbalance negatively affected their active participation in economic activities. The paper reviewed key factors influencing maternal and reproductive health, highlighting the challenges rural women face in accessing essential healthcare services. Furthermore, it discussed the potential strategies for empowering women, such as providing access to micro-credit, which can enhance their involvement in income-generating activities, improve their bargaining power, and elevate their standard of living. The paper also explored how such empowerment can foster economic independence for women. The paper recommended increasing the disbursement of loans to women involved in economic activities, ensuring they can access necessary reproductive health services, visit healthcare facilities regularly, and afford a balanced diet, particularly for pregnant women.

Kwon-Ndung, L. (2022) Women Participation in Politics in Nigeria: Beyond Legalities and Rhetorics Organized by Makerere University School of Women& Gender Studies, Kampala, Uganda 23-25Feb2022.

This paper examines women's participation in Nigerian elections, moving beyond the legal frameworks and rhetorical commitments that often dominate discussions on gender equality in politics. Despite constitutional guarantees of gender equality and numerous affirmative action policies, the actual participation of women in Nigeria's political processes remains significantly low. The study investigates the complex socio-political, cultural, and economic barriers that limit women's active involvement in elections, from both a candidate and voter perspective. Drawing on case studies from previous electoral cycles, the paper analyzes the impact of patriarchal structures, religious and cultural norms, lack of financial resources, and the underrepresentation of women in political parties and decision-making bodies. The paper also highlights the role of women's political organizations and civil society in advocating for increased participation and their efforts in challenging gender-based discrimination. Additionally, it explores the effectiveness of policies such as the 35% women's representation target and the establishment of gender-focused electoral quotas. By contextualizing women's electoral participation within both historical and contemporary frameworks, the paper calls for a holistic approach to gender equality in Nigerian politics, emphasizing the need for not only legal reforms but also cultural transformation, targeted capacity building, and economic empowerment to ensure that women's voices are truly heard in the nation's electoral processes.

Kwon-Ndung, L. (2016). Micro-Finance, a Mechanism for Women Development in Nigeria. *Overcoming Challenges of Development through Indigenous Research Excellence*. 3rd – 4th Feb. FULAFIA Research Conference.

This paper explores microfinance as a mechanism for women's development in Nigeria, examining how access to financial services can empower women, enhance their economic independence, and contribute to broader socio-economic development. Despite the critical role women play in Nigeria's economy, particularly in rural areas, they have historically faced significant barriers to accessing financial resources due to cultural, societal, and institutional constraints. Microfinance, designed to provide small loans and financial services to under-served populations, has been widely touted

as a solution to these challenges, offering women the opportunity to start or expand small businesses, improve household welfare, and invest in education and healthcare. The paper assesses the effectiveness of various microfinance programs in Nigeria, such as the Microfinance Policy and the activities of microfinance banks and institutions. It highlights success stories where women have used microfinance to transform their lives, while also critically examining the limitations and challenges, including high-interest rates, inadequate financial literacy, and the risk of over-indebtedness. Drawing on case studies and empirical data, the paper identifies key factors that contribute to the success of women-focused microfinance initiatives, such as gender-sensitive policies, targeted outreach, and the involvement of women in the design and management of programs. The study concludes by offering recommendations for enhancing the impact of microfinance on women's development in Nigeria, emphasizing the importance of integrated support services, inclusive policy frameworks, and continuous monitoring to ensure sustainable empowerment outcomes for women in the country.

Kwon-Ndung, L., & Andah, R. (2015). Entrepreneurship: Prospects for Women Empowerment in Nigeria. A. E. Zamani, A. N. Liman, A. T. Usman & S.O. Smah. (eds), *Women and Development Perspectives from Nigeria*. (pp8-16.) Faculty of Social sciences, NSUK. organised by the Faculty of Social sciences, NSUK. On 2nd – 5th November, 2015.

The paper identified the world has been evolving, creating new opportunities for entrepreneurs, especially women. These opportunities have become increasingly crucial due to the challenging economic status of women in Nigeria and the significant potential entrepreneurship holds for women. This paper examined the crucial role of entrepreneurship, particularly through small and medium enterprises (SMEs), as a tool for empowering women and improving their living standards. The study relied solely on secondary data, with empowerment theory serving as the theoretical framework for analysis. The findings revealed that SMEs possess the potential to transform the socio-economic conditions of women, thereby enhancing their living standards through entrepreneurial opportunities. The paper recommended that financial institutions, including microfinance banks and deposit money banks, eliminate

gender bias in financing SMEs, as women have been shown to perform well and are often more likely to repay loans on time. Furthermore, it was suggested that regular evaluations of SME policies and their impacts be conducted to maximize benefits and address any challenges encountered during implementation. In addition, improving access to micro-credit was recommended to boost the scale and momentum of business activities. Finally, the government was encouraged to promote gender-focused entrepreneurial networks to support and strengthen women in business.

Caleb, R. & **Kwon-Ndung, L.** (2015). Women and Electoral Participation in Nigeria: Case Study of 2015 General Elections. A. E. Zamani, A. N. Liman, A. T. Us, and S.O. Smah (eds.), *Women and Development Perspectives from Nigeria*. (pp. 22-33) Faculty of Social Sciences, NSUK.

Women's electoral participation in Nigeria, including as voters, candidates, and electoral staff, has shown some improvement over time. However, this progress remains below both national and international standards. Several challenges hinder women's participation, including limited financial support for female candidates, the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society, fear of violence and intimidation, cultural beliefs that marginalize women, and patron-client relationships that restrict their involvement in political processes. This paper examines women's participation in electoral politics, with a specific focus on the 2015 General Elections. The feminist theory is employed as the theoretical framework for analysis, and secondary data sources, such as textbooks, journal articles, newspapers, and magazines, are used for data collection. The paper recommended the enforcement of election laws related to campaign financing and the imposition of limits on election expenses. It also suggests that political parties adopt a 35% "affirmative action" benchmark in their electoral processes to support women seeking elective positions. This would help ensure equity in political participation and governance. The paper concludes by noting that unless the numerous gaps and contradictions in the Nigerian political system are addressed, the prospects for sustained improvement in women's electoral participation remain uncertain.

Kwon-Ndung, L. & Andah, R. (2013). Culture and Women Participation in Politics in Nigeria. *Democracy and Development in Africa*. (eds.) A.S. Modibbo & Y.A. Adadu (pp. 108-116). Department of Political Science, NSUK.

Women's electoral participation as voters, contestants, and staff of the electoral process has improved over time, yet the improvement falls below national and international benchmarks. This can be attributed to the challenges faced by women during elections, which include limited financial support for female candidates, the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society, fear of violence and intimidation, cultural belief that relegates women to the background and denies them a voice in society, and patron-client relationships. This paper examined women's participation in electoral politics with an emphasis on the 2015 General Elections. The feminist theory was adopted, and the secondary source of data collection was utilized, which includes the use of such materials as textbooks, journal articles, newspapers, and magazines. The paper recommends that there should be an enforcement of election laws on campaign financing and a limitation on election expenses. Political parties should adopt the 35% "Affirmative Action" as a benchmark in their electoral processes for the benefit of women seeking elective positions. This will ensure equity in political participation and governance. This paper, however, concludes that until the numerous gaps and contradictions in the Nigerian polity are overcome, the prospect of continued improvement in women's electoral participation is doubtful.

Luka Ruth Caleb and **Kwon-Ndung Linda**. Women and Electoral Participation in Nigeria: A Case Study of the 2015 General Election. In: *Women and Development: The Nigerian Perspective*.

Women's electoral participation in Nigeria, encompassing roles as voters, candidates, and electoral staff, has seen improvement over time. However, this progress still falls short of both national and international benchmarks. The challenges faced by women during elections include limited financial support for female candidates, the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society, fear of violence and intimidation, cultural beliefs that marginalize women and deny them a voice, and patron-client relationships. This paper examines women's

participation in electoral politics, with a focus on the 2015 General Elections. The feminist theory was adopted, and secondary data sources were utilized, including textbooks, journal articles, newspapers, and magazines. The paper recommends the enforcement of election laws on campaign financing and the limitation of election expenses. It also suggests that political parties should adopt the 35% "Affirmative Action" benchmark in their electoral processes to benefit women seeking elective positions. This will ensure equity in political participation and governance. The paper concludes that until the numerous gaps and contradictions in the Nigerian polity are addressed, the prospect of continued improvement in women's electoral participation remains doubtful.

Andah, R. **Kwon-Ndung, L.** & Bature, N. (2010). The impact of global financial crises on human resources management in Nigeria's banking sector. (eds) M.A. Mainoma, S.A. Aruwa & S.B. Tende. (pp156-169). *Managing the Challenges of Global Financial Crisis in Developing Economies*. Faculty of Administration NSUK.

The current global financial crisis is one of the most pressing challenges facing countries and businesses in today's interconnected world. Globalization has facilitated the free flow of technology and human resources across national boundaries, shaping the structural dynamics of the global economy. This paper examines the impact of the global financial crisis on the financial sector, with a specific focus on the banking industry. It also explores the ability of human resource managers to address the issue of staff layoffs, which has been a significant challenge for various organizations, particularly within the banking sector.

Pension payments have become a major concern due to dwindling finances, making it difficult to meet financial obligations related to recurrent expenditures. Job cuts, layoffs, and increased unemployment have emerged as critical challenges during the crisis. Measures that help workers cope with the crisis in the sector would serve both social and economic goals. These measures include adequate, well-designed unemployment benefits and social protection, activation policies, and effective public employment services.

Kwon-Ndung, L. (2010). The Impact of Colonial Policies on Graduate Unemployment. *Colonial Africa and its Legacies: A Reappraisal*. Department of History Ibrahim Badamasi Babagida University, Lapai, Niger State, Nigeria. 28th Nov-1st Dec.

This paper examined the indirect rule system of administration during the colonial era and the various ordinances that shaped the educational sector in Nigeria. The approach taken by the colonial masters in handling education has left enduring legacies that have implications for graduate unemployment in Nigeria. This study relies heavily on secondary data sources and a comprehensive review of existing literature. The findings reveal that British colonial education focused primarily on training individuals to be well-rounded gentlemen without imparting the necessary skills to take initiatives and thrive in a competitive world. Furthermore, the primary objective of those educated under the British system was to serve the public treasury, leaving graduates without the basic skills needed for self-employment. The paper recommends that tertiary institutions in Nigeria should place a strong emphasis on entrepreneurship development. Additionally, secondary school curricula should be designed to include entrepreneurship education, and societal policies should deliberately reduce the high value placed on white-collar jobs.

Kwon-Ndung, L. Luka R.C. & Atsiya, G. (2021). Mainstreaming Gender as a Tool for Peace Building in Nigeria. Post-Election and Peace Building, in Adagba, O. and John, T.T. (Eds.): Terrorism, Insurgency & Economic Development: (pp. 236-259). Micro Teachers & Associates Makurdi, Abuja, and Kaduna.

Gender mainstreaming is the strategy of the European Union for the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men in institutions, organizations, and politics. Gender mainstreaming was enshrined in the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam. It has been considered a binding principle for all member states ever since. The Treaty of Amsterdam, Sec. 4, states that the community shall aim to eliminate inequalities and to promote equality between men and women. Gender mainstreaming entails the (re)organization, improvement, development, and evaluation of policy processes so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages by the players

normally involved in policy-making. The aim is to incorporate dimensions of equal opportunities and gender equality for women and men in all the policies and activities of the European Community. By specifying gender equality of men and women as a common objective, the legal basis for the implementation of the gender equality concept is reinforced on a European level. This ensures that the implementation of equal opportunities and gender equality becomes the central theme of political and organizational action. Gender mainstreaming is taken into consideration during the planning phase as well as during the realization, accompaniment, and evaluation of state measures. And this must take place on all levels of responsibility in politics.

Kwon-Ndung, L. & Gulesh, J. O. (2020). Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Peace Building in Nigeria. In Anothony, C.U., AL Chukuma, O., Anjide, S., & Timothy, J.K. (Eds.), *Beyond The Pulpit Essays in Honor of His Grace, Most REV. Dr. Mathew Ishaya Audu*: (pp. 336-355). Challenge Press. JOS.

The fragility of Nigerian society, arising mostly from its pluralistic nature and the attendant primordial interest, has over the years threatened the attainment of a peaceful and prosperous atmosphere (Chima & Alokpa, 2015). Incessant cases of socio-economic, ethnic, religious, and political unrest heightened by increased mistrust, denials, inequality, divisibility, and disillusion, among other things, have continually and increasingly created anxiety and tension among individuals and groups of people, prompting the need for interventions by organizations existing outside public spheres. This intervention takes the form of peace-building process which is a mechanism that involves programs designed to address the causes of conflict, the grievances of the past the to facilitate long term steadiness and justices.

Kwon-Ndung, L. (2019). Women Participation in the Electoral Process: The Voyage Thus Far. In Mohammed I. Kida & George A. Genyi (Eds.), *Delivering Democratic Promises in Nigeria. Prospects and Challenges*. Afestschrift in honor of Senator Tanko Al-Makura: (pp. 201-225).

Gender mainstreaming has become one of the most popular calls globally today. Communities both local and international have come to realize the central roles exercised by women in societal progress

generally. In particular, women's roles are being increasingly noticed in the overall political development of the global community. The pivotal roles exercised by women political leaders in various parts of the world today can no longer be overlooked. Adadu & Kwon-Ndung (2019) report the very imposing presence of Angela Merkel of Germany, the very push-up efforts of Hillary Clinton in United States politics, the very dogged fight put forward by Theresa May in the British–EU Brexit saga, along with the presence of Erna Solberg as Prime Minister of Norway, and the role of Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in establishing democracy in Liberia attests to the strong role of women in democratic politics.

Other Research Interventions

Gulesh, James O., **Linda Kwon-Ndung** & Dr. Dalhatu Musa Yusha'u. 2023. The Political Economy of Diversification in Nigeria and Maize Production in Plateau State, 2015- 2020. *International Journal of Humanities Social Science and Management (IJHSSM)*. Volume 3, Issue 1, Jan.-Feb. 2023, pp: 431-440 www.ijhssm.org Impact Factor value 7.52 | ISO 9 001: 2008 Certified Journal Page 431

The Political Economy of Diversification in Nigeria and Maize Production in Plateau State, 2015-2020 by Gulesh, James O., Linda Kwon-Ndung, and Dr. Dalhatu Musa Yusha'u examined the challenges and outcomes of Nigeria's diversification policy concerning agricultural productivity, specifically maize production in Plateau State. The study critiques Nigeria's inability to implement a sustainable diversification policy, which has undermined stable maize prices and farmer productivity. Using descriptive statistics and data collected from 370 questionnaires administered to registered members of the Maize Association of Nigeria (MAAN) in Plateau State, the study evaluates the dynamics of the policy's implementation. It employs the Structural Functionalist Theory as its analytical framework. The findings indicate that strategies implemented for diversification between 2015 and 2020 had a positive influence on maize prices and production levels in Plateau State. The paper recommends maintaining consistency in diversification policy implementation, supported by legal frameworks and oversight, to ensure sustained agricultural productivity and price stability.

Gulesh, James O., **Linda Kwon-Ndung** & Dalhatu Musa Yusha'u. 2023. Constraints to Economic Diversification and Profitability of

The paper confirmed that Nigeria has not shown a high level of commitment towards diversifying the nation's economy by addressing the challenges that hinder agricultural development, which consequently limits mass participation due to low earnings and productivity. This paper employs content analysis to identify the factors that impede the diversification of Nigeria's economy and hinder increased profitability in agricultural production. The study adopts Systems Theory as its theoretical framework. The findings indicate that the issues causing economic diversification and agricultural profitability challenges are complex, but primarily stem from Nigeria's political economy. To address these problems, the paper recommends adopting a new approach that reinforces leadership through the Public Private Partnership (PPP) management system. This strategy aims to strengthen institutions and ensure corporate benefits, giving stakes to peasants and ultimately increasing their incomes and earnings from agricultural production.

Gulesh, James Obadiah, **Kwon-Ndung, Linda** & Musa, Dalhatu Yusha u (2022). Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP) and Profitability of Maize in Bokkos Local Government Area, Plateau State Nigeria:2015-2019 International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS) Vol.VI,657-661 Issue II ISSN 2454-6186.

This paper adopted the Agricultural Promotion Policy (APP) which was established as a new agricultural development strategy rooted in neoclassical principles to drive the need to boost the non-oil sector and lessen dependency on oil resources. The focus was on increasing maize production among other priorities. This paper evaluated the effectiveness of the APP on the profitability of maize production in Bokkos Local Government Area, Plateau State, Nigeria, from 2015-2019, aiming to determine the profitability dynamics of the crop. A descriptive survey research method was employed, involving 370 respondents who are members of the Maize Association of Nigeria (MAAN), Bokkos Local Government Area Chapter, through questionnaires, and 384 unregistered farmers participating in Focus Group Discussions. The study used Rentier-State Theory as its

theoretical framework. The findings revealed that the APP increased maize production profitability by 75% and led to higher output. The paper recommended that the government and stakeholders prioritize enhancing profitability alongside maize production and stabilizing market forces to ensure favorable pricing at all times. It suggested that Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development should consider agriculture not only as a business but as a profitable venture, aiming for increased income towards the sustainable growth and development of the sector.

Kwon-Ndung, L. (2017). Public Procurement Act and the Fight against Corruption in Nigeria. *FULAFIA Journal of Contemporary Political Studies Vol.1* (2),78-188.

This paper examined the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) Act as a mechanism for promoting transparency and accountability in public procurement in Nigeria. The BPP was established in 2007 by former President Olusegun Obasanjo, and the Procurement Act was signed into law by the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua on June 4, 2007. The Act's provisions aim to consolidate the principles of public accountability, thereby fostering sustainable development in Nigeria. By adhering to international best practices, the Act has demonstrated potential to enhance good governance, as evidenced by its implementation to date. However, this paper argued that operational challenges, such as lack of transparency, accountability deficits, and procurement-related corruption, undermine the Act's full potential. Using a qualitative approach, the study relies on secondary data to assess the significance of the BPP Act and applies the structural-functional approach as its theoretical framework to deepen understanding of the Act's role in public procurement. The paper highlighted the need for strict enforcement of procurement procedures to ensure that only qualified contractors are awarded contracts. To address the challenges, it recommended that all professionals, stakeholders, and the general public, including rural communities, be educated and mobilized to report procurement malpractices. Combating public procurement corruption—identified as the greatest challenge—requires robust strategies and active engagement. Strengthening institutions such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and related agencies to expedite the prosecution

of violators will help sanitize Nigeria's procurement process and reinforce the credibility of the BPP Act.

Kwon-Ndung, L. (2014). Legacies of Colonial Ordinances on Education and Implications on Graduate Unemployment in Nigeria: An appraisal from 2004. *Nasarawa Journal of Political Science Vol 1 & 2*. 299-307.

This paper examines the legacies of colonial ordinances on education in Nigeria and their lasting implications on graduate unemployment in the country. Colonial educational policies, designed primarily to serve the interests of the colonial administration, shaped the structure and content of Nigeria's education system. The study investigates how these policies, particularly the introduction of a Western-style education system and the establishment of a limited number of institutions, created an educational framework that often prioritized clerical and administrative skills over technical and vocational training. By tracing the evolution of Nigeria's education system from the colonial era to the present, the paper highlights how these early policies have contributed to a misalignment between the skills acquired by graduates and the needs of the modern Nigerian economy. The study explores how the overemphasis on academic qualifications, coupled with inadequate focus on practical, industry-specific skills, has resulted in a high number of graduates who are ill-prepared for the job market. Moreover, it considers the broader socio-economic implications, including the growing disparity between education outcomes and employment opportunities, and the impact of graduate unemployment on national development. Through a combination of historical analysis and current labor market data, the paper provides insights into how colonial legacies in education continue to influence graduate employment outcomes in Nigeria and offers policy recommendations for reforming the education system to address contemporary challenges.

Kwon-Ndung E.H., **Kwon-Ndung, L & J, Migap.** (2014). Research Innovation. Strategies for Economic Competitiveness and Industrial Growth: Lessons for Nigeria. *European Journal of Business and Innovations. Vol.2*. 56-76. (ISSN 2053-4019 Print).

The paper identified a significant but often overlooked opportunity within Nigerian industrial organizations which lies in fully harnessing the potential of research and knowledge to transform business products and processes with the aim of fostering long-term innovation. Business research and innovation are critical drivers of productivity, quality improvement, and the strategic success of enterprises. This paper drew on a comprehensive review of published literature to explore the profound benefits of sustained research and innovation, not only for individual businesses but also for the broader national economy. It further offered strategic recommendations on how Nigeria can leverage this concept to boost its global economic competitiveness. By capitalizing on research-driven innovation, Nigerian industries can enhance their productivity and position themselves more effectively in the global market.

Kwon-Ndung, L., & Andah R. (2011). Sustainable Development and the Role of the Niger Delta Development Commission. *Journal of Management Research and Development*. Vol. 2(1), 111-118.

The paper reviewed the concept of Sustainable development, though a widely used concept, with various interpretations, leading to diverse responses. The paper broadly aimed to merge growing concerns over environmental issues with socio-economic challenges in the Niger Delta region, with its unique characteristics, which has presented significant obstacles to development, including its status as home to one of the world's largest wetlands, covering approximately 70,000 km². The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), established by the Obasanjo administration in Nigeria, serves as a notable example of a sustainable development initiative. The mission of the NDDC was to facilitate the rapid and equitable development of the region, transforming it into an area that was economically prosperous, socially stable, and ecologically regenerative. The Sustainable development initiative had the potential to address fundamental challenges for humanity both in the present and for future generations, clearly defined goals the NDDC hoped to achieve. A comprehensive review of relevant literature was conducted, and several recommendations were made, including that the NDDC must be flexible, creative, and adaptable to ensure long-term sustainability in the region.

Kwon-Ndung, L. (2010). Graduate Unemployment Syndrome in Nigeria: Factors, challenges and Prospects. *Kogi Journal of Politics*. Vol. 1.(3),61-173.

This paper examined the phenomenon of graduate unemployment in Nigeria and investigated the factors responsible for this issue by analyzing the perspectives of various scholars. The analysis revealed that both economic and non-economic factors contributed to the graduate unemployment problem in the country. Economic factors included inflation, the Structural Adjustment Program, and weak economic growth, while non-economic factors encompassed issues such as the quality of education, parental influence, an overemphasis on white-collar jobs, and the mode of entry into tertiary institutions, among others. Based on a content analysis of the reviewed literature, the paper recommended, among other things, that the educational sector should be repositioned to align with the manpower development needs of society. The paper also suggested that the current Post-University Matriculation Examination (Post-UME) screening process should be upheld and strictly enforced to ensure that only qualified candidates gain admission into tertiary institutions. Additionally, it recommended that the curricula of higher education institutions be restructured to focus on developing entrepreneurial skills to encourage graduates to pursue self-employment. Finally, it advocated for macroeconomic policies that prioritize the welfare of the masses.

Takyun, J.C., Okwoli, M.J & Kwon-Ndung, L(2021). University Maladjustment and Negative Self –Image on Psychological Distress Among Undergraduate Students During Covid -19 Pandemic In National Security, COVID-19and Social Issues in Nigeria. organized by Faculty of Social Sciences Federal University of Lafia, 26- 28 Oct 2021.

Erunke, C & Kwon-Ndung, L. (2019). Transformation Agenda of the Jonathan Administration Re-Assessing Implementation Strategies. *Progress & Society in Africa*. Nile University FCT Abuja 20-21 March 2019.

This paper critically reassesses the implementation strategies of the Transformation Agenda under the administration of former President

Goodluck Jonathan, evaluating its successes, challenges, and long-term impact on Nigeria's socio-economic development. Launched in 2011, the Transformation Agenda aimed to address key issues such as infrastructure deficits, poverty, job creation, education, healthcare, and governance, with the overarching goal of positioning Nigeria as a globally competitive economy. The paper examines the framework of the Transformation Agenda, analyzing the key sectors targeted by the administration, including power, transportation, agriculture, and education, and assesses the extent to which its policies translated into tangible outcomes. Through a detailed review of implementation strategies, the study explores the role of institutional coordination, public-private partnerships, and the capacity of government agencies in executing the agenda. The analysis also highlights the challenges faced, including corruption, insufficient funding, political instability, and inconsistent policy enforcement, which hindered the realization of the administration's goals. By combining qualitative and quantitative assessments, the paper provides a nuanced perspective on the Transformation Agenda's legacy, offering recommendations for improving the effectiveness of future national development initiatives. The study concludes that while the agenda made some strides in specific areas, a more integrated, transparent, and accountable approach to policy implementation is necessary for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Kwon-Ndung, L & Erunke. (2018). Insecurity and Governance Question in Africa: Re-Evaluating Security Policies For Enhanced Democratic Survival in Nigeria. *State, Governance and Regional Integration in Africa*. Nigerian Political

Science Association. Ebonyi State University. March 26-29th 2018.

This paper explores the critical relationship between insecurity and governance in Africa, with a specific focus on Nigeria and re-evaluates the country's security policies in light of the challenges to democratic survival. In recent years, Nigeria has experienced escalating insecurity, characterized by insurgencies, banditry, communal violence, and terrorism, which has severely undermined governance structures and the legitimacy of the state. The study examines the interplay between poor governance, ineffective security strategies, and the persistence of insecurity, questioning how these factors threaten Nigeria's democratic

consolidation. By analyzing existing security policies, the paper highlights the shortcomings in the state's approach to national security, such as inadequate resource allocation, corruption, lack of coordination among security agencies, and the politicization of security matters. The research also considers how regional dynamics and international cooperation, especially within the framework of the African Union and ECOWAS, influence Nigeria's security landscape. Drawing on comparative case studies of other African nations, the paper proposes a re-evaluation of security policies that emphasizes a more holistic approach, integrating human security, community involvement, and democratic principles. The study argues that enhancing democratic survival in Nigeria requires a comprehensive security strategy that goes beyond military interventions to include strengthening governance institutions, fostering public trust, improving social justice, and addressing the root causes of insecurity. The paper concludes with recommendations for policy reforms that could bolster security and governance in Nigeria, ensuring that democratic processes are protected and enhanced in the face of mounting threats.

Abubakar, R . **Kwon-Ndung, L** & Kazeem, A. (2017). Appraising Institutional Capacity for implementation of Nigerian Cybercrime Act 2015. Organized By *Big Data Analytics & Innovation*, .Baze University Abuja.

This paper appraised the institutional capacity for the implementation of the Nigerian Cybercrime Act of 2015, which was enacted to combat the growing threat of cybercrime and enhance cybersecurity in Nigeria. As digital technology rapidly evolves, cybercrimes such as hacking, online fraud, identity theft, and cyber terrorism have become significant concerns, posing risks to national security, economic stability, and individual privacy. The paper critically assesses the effectiveness of the institutional framework established to enforce the provisions of the Cybercrime Act, focusing on key agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), and the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA). It examines their capacities, resources, and coordination in addressing cybercrime, as well as the legal, technical, and institutional challenges that hinder the

full implementation of the Act. Through qualitative and quantitative analysis, the study identifies gaps in institutional readiness, including inadequate funding, insufficient training, lack of technical expertise, and the absence of a robust cybercrime monitoring and reporting system. The paper also explores the role of public-private partnerships, regional cooperation, and international collaboration in strengthening Nigeria's cybersecurity infrastructure. Ultimately, the study proposes recommendations to enhance institutional capacity, including improved coordination among agencies, increased investment in cybercrime prevention and education, and the development of a national cybersecurity strategy that incorporates both legal and technological solutions. By evaluating the effectiveness of the Cybercrime Act's implementation, the paper contributes to the broader discourse on cybersecurity governance and the legal challenges faced by developing nations in combating cyber threats.

Conclusion

In conclusion, advancing gender justice and women's empowerment in Nigeria is not merely a moral imperative but a strategic economic necessity and a foundational pillar for sustainable development. A political economy perspective underscores the intricate interplay between economic structures, political institutions, and deeply entrenched social norms that perpetuate gender disparities. By critically analyzing these factors, we can dismantle systemic barriers and create an enabling environment where women can fully participate in all spheres of life such as political, economic, and social without bias or limitation. Empowering women in all dimensions translates into stronger, more inclusive, and resilient economic growth. Studies have consistently shown that when women are given equal access to education, economic, and leadership opportunities, societies experience improved governance, reduced poverty, and accelerated innovation. This empowerment, however, is not the responsibility of women alone; it requires a collective commitment from governments, the private sector, civil society, and international organizations to enact and enforce policies that level the playing field.

As Nigeria, often regarded as the "Giant of Africa," strives to cement its position as a global economic and political force, it must prioritize gender justice not as an afterthought but as a fundamental driver of national progress. Achieving a just and equitable society requires more than rhetoric; it demands actionable policies that ensure women's access to resources, decision-making power, and legal protections against discrimination and violence. This is a clarion call for all sectors of society to move beyond symbolic commitments and take decisive action. Only through intentional, sustained efforts can Nigeria break the cycle of gender inequality and unlock the full potential of its population. A nation that empowers its women is one that secures its future ensuring inclusive prosperity, social cohesion, and a truly sustainable path toward development.

Recommendations for Advancing Gender Justice and Women's Empowerment

Advancing gender justice and women's empowerment is essential for sustainable development. It aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 1994 Jakarta Declaration, which recognizes women's empowerment as a prerequisite for economic and social progress. Achieving gender equality in Nigeria is both a rational economic decision and a moral imperative, necessitating systemic reforms, policy changes, constitutional amendments, legal advancements, and multi-sectoral interventions at national and sub-national levels. Additionally, a revisit to the Justice Mohammed Lawal Uwais Commission 2008 report on electoral reforms remain a laudable roadmap to change the political landscape in Nigeria. These efforts must be championed by governments, civil society organizations, and development partners.

Key Recommendations:

1. Enhancing Women's Political Participation

- a). The National Assembly should urgently amend the constitution to introduce gender quotas and special seats for women, increasing their political representation.
- b). Collaboration between the National Assembly and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is crucial to reviewing electoral laws and ensuring the implementation of the 35% affirmative action stipulated in the 2021 Revised National Gender Policy.
- c). National and sub-national governments must enforce the 35% affirmative action in leadership and decision-making positions.
- d). Political parties should prioritize inclusive leadership, fostering equal participation in political decision-making at all levels.

2. Economic Empowerment of Women

- a). The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, in partnership with development organizations, should ensure the full domestication and implementation of the 2023 National Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Policy at sub-national levels.

- b). The five key pillars of the WEE policy agriculture, entrepreneurship, education, emerging industries, and traditional industries should be harnessed to create sustainable economic opportunities for women.
- c). The Central Bank of Nigeria should mandate financial institutions to develop tailored financial products and services for women, enhancing access to credit, savings, and insurance.

3. Improving Women's Health and Well-being

- a) Policies and interventions should focus on key areas such as maternal and reproductive health, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), non-communicable diseases (NCDs), health financing, and insurance.
- b) Adequate budget allocations must be ensured to support comprehensive women's health programs and services. Budget markers should target health needs of women
- c) Strengthening the healthcare system requires upgrading infrastructure, equipping facilities, and increasing the healthcare workforce, especially in rural areas, by recruiting and training more midwives and obstetricians.
- d) Enhanced healthcare financing is essential to reduce out-of-pocket expenses that limit access to medical care.
- e). Scaling up maternal health services by providing comprehensive antenatal, delivery, and postnatal care including emergency obstetric care in all health facilities is crucial.
- f). The Federal, State and Local governments as well as development partners should intensify awareness campaigns to address cultural and social barriers to women's health.
- g). Training community health workers should be prioritized, empowering them to provide basic healthcare services, referrals, and health education.
- i). Strengthening collaborations between medical professionals and traditional birth attendants (TBAs) is essential to improve maternal health outcomes, given that 60% of births in Nigeria occur outside health facilities due to trust and financial constraints.

4. Closing the Gender Gap in Education

- a). Addressing the cultural, economic, and systemic barriers to girls' education requires a multi-faceted approach.
- b). Federal, State and Local governments must enforce the Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy to ensure free primary and secondary education for girls, particularly in rural areas.
- c). More schools should be established closer to communities to reduce long travel distances, while ensuring proper security, sanitation, and anti-sexual harassment policies.
- d). Community sensitization campaigns should be intensified to educate parents, religious leaders, and community members on the importance of girls' education.
- e). Strict enforcement of laws prohibiting child marriage is necessary to prevent early marriage from hindering girls' education.
- f). Gender-sensitive policies should be adopted, including flexible learning options such as part-time or evening classes for girls with family responsibilities.
- g). Governments should scale up the establishment of all-girls schools in conservative regions to encourage higher enrollment.
- h). More efforts should be made to promote female participation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields.

5. Implementing Gender-Transformative Policies and Legal Reforms

- a). Federal and State governments must enact and enforce gender equality laws addressing gender-based violence, discrimination, and unequal pay.
- b). Gender-responsive budgeting should be institutionalized to ensure that public spending benefits both women and men equitably, allocating resources to programs specifically targeting gender disparities.

My Future Research Direction

To consolidate on my academic endeavors, my future research engagements will focus on poverty reduction among women with special interest on comparative poverty reduction models and the impact of digital technologies on women's economic empowerment. The goal is to provide viable policy alternatives to government and other relevant stake holders.

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IJMB and how we embarked on this journey together, marrying while I was in my 200 level. Your steadfast commitment, guidance, and encouragement during moments of doubt, fear, and difficulty have been invaluable. The boundless love and support you have shown provided the foundation upon which I built this endeavor. For being my rock, my motivator, and my constant source of strength, I am deeply grateful.

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Citation of Professor Linda Kwon-Ndung

Born on February 25, 1974, in Zaria Kaduna State, Nigeria, to the family of Late Uhwe William and Ngoo Talatu Taimako Garba of Donga Local Government Area of Taraba State. Professor Linda Kwon-Ndung is a renowned academic and administrator. In over two decades, she has devoted herself to advancing tertiary education, pioneering research on women empowerment and offering expert gender-based advocacy, consultancy and several other community service projects.

Professor Linda Kwon-Ndung's academic journey commenced at Capital School Yola between 1979 to 1984 where she displayed an early talent for scholarship and very keen interest in learning. Her passion and diligence in further education paved the way for her transition to Federal Government College Yola between 1984 to 1990, where she did not only achieve outstanding grades but nurtured her ambition to make it in life. Driven by a high entrepreneurial spirit, she established the 'Lins Stitches' in Jimeta-Yola, a Fashion Design brand and outfit that specialised in sewing both male and female wares that attracted the low and high in Jimeta. This entrepreneurial flavor seemed to have led her to enrol for a Certificate Course in Accountancy at the then Federal University of Technology Yola between 1992 to 1993. An unfavourable and unpredictable business climate seemed to have directed her to pursue her IJMB and she later enrolled for the IJMB at the College of Preliminary Studies Yola in 1996 and she graduated with very good grades which later qualified her for a Direct Entry admission to study Political Science at the University of Jos, from 1997. She however completed her undergraduate studies with a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degree in Political Science in 2002 (a 3year program turned 5 years no thanks to unstable calendar due to ASUU struggles). Her thirst for knowledge led her to further her studies at the University of Abuja between 2005 to 2008, where she later obtained a Master of Science (M.Sc.) degree in Political Science and determined to excel even further, Professor Kwon-Ndung later went back to her *alma mater* at the University of Abuja, where she earned her Ph.D in Political Science with a specialization in Political Economy and Development Studies from 2010 to 2015 . In 2020, she obtained a Certificate Course in Managing Gender Based Violence in Emergencies from UNFPA and

also a Professional Certificate in Project Management in International Development from Institute for Development Research Nairobi, Kenya in 2024.

It is very clear that this rigorous academic training equipped her with the expertise and tools that would later define her impactful academic career. This academic journey is a testimony of her perseverance and resilience and ability in overcoming several challenges with unwavering determination to achieve excellence in her chosen career.

She performed her mandatory NYSC primary assignment as Admin Officer at the National Cereals Research Institute Badeggi, Niger State after which she took up a teaching appointment with the Federal Polytechnic Bida Staff Secondary School in 2004. She soon after joined the Federal Polytechnic Bida as a Lecturer in the General Studies Department in 2005. In 2007, she was engaged as the Programs Officer for an NGO, Grassroots Health Organisation for Nigeria located at National Council of Women Societies Secretariat, Abuja. In 2008, she assumed the position of Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Political Science at the Nasarawa State University Keffi. In 2016, she transferred her service to the Federal University of Lafia as a Senior Lecturer. Through the dint of hardwork, she earned her promotion to the rank of an Associate Professor in October 2019 and to a full Professor in October, 2022.

Throughout her professional life, Professor Kwon-Ndung has held sensitive roles and performed creditably. She has served as member of various statutory and *ad hoc* University committees, contributing to policy formulation, curriculum development, and institutional governance. She was Level adviser to students in Political Science for different levels from 2008 to 2012 at NSUK. She also served as Departmental Registration Officer for different levels from 2008 to 2012 at NSUK. She was both Faculty and Departmental Welfare Officer from 2009 to 2012 at the NSUK. She was member, Committee on Departmental examination malpractice and served on Faculty Appraisal committee for Senior Staff from 2015 to 2017. Member LOC, National Association of Political Science Society Conference held in Nasarawa State University Keffi, 2015, Member LOC Faculty of Social Sciences Conference, NSUK in 2016. At FULafia, she has

served in several sensitive committees among which are member, Committee to monitor the readiness of students hostels in FULafia, 2017, Member, Committee on the harmonization of proposed curriculum for new Departments within the Faculty of Social Sciences and the BMAS 2017, Member, Committee on Guidelines for Processing Results in the Faculty, FULafia, Member, Departmental Editorial Board, 2017. Member, Faculty Research and Publication Committee, 2017 to Date. Member, Faculty Examination Malpractice Committee, FULafia, 19th May 2017 to Date. Member, Faculty Postgraduate Board, 2018 to Date, Chairperson, Departmental Curriculum Review Committee June 2021 to Date, Member, Faculty Committee on ICT, 19th April, 2021 to Date. She has also served as the Departmental Postgraduate Coordinator in the Department of Political Science FULafia from 2018 to 2019.

She has served as an External Examiner to the Centre for Gender and Women Studies, University of Jos for the Postgraduate programme MA in Women Studies 2019 to 2021. She has also served as an External Examiner for the Undergraduate programmes B.Sc Political Science and B.Sc Public Administration in the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences University of Jos from 4th May, 2021 to Date. She was engaged as a sabbatical staff at National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru where she served as the Chief Operating Officer for the Gender and Public Policy Studies Centre, from 13th Feb. 2024 to 31st January 2025.

Professor Linda Kwon-Ndung is an active member of several esteemed professional organizations, including the Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA) where she has meritoriously served on the NEC as National Treasurer from 28th June 2015 to 28th March, 2018 and received a Presidential Award for meritorious service as NPSA Treasurer with an Award presented on 18th April, 2018. She is also a member of the European Center for Research Training and Development, UK 2014, Member, Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA) North Central Zone, Member, Nigerian Society of Women Academics, Member, Professional Women in Nigeria and she has also served as a Member, Caretaker Committee for Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA) North Central Zone between

2017 to 2018. She is also a member of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA). Her expertise in gender-studies has also made her a sought-after technical expert, notably for development Research and Projects Center (dRPC), where she has contributed significantly to promote gender initiatives. She is also a member of CWEENS (Christian Women for Excellence and Empowerment in Nigerian Society) and currently oversees the Nasarawa State Chapter.

Prof. Kwon-Ndung has accessed research grants from CERDPA in 2007 on the research, Creating Awareness for access to caregivers among People Living with HIV, USAID/COMPASS research grant for study on promoting positive living for People Living with HIV/AIDS and the provision of Micro-finance to rural women in Burum and Kabusa FCT Abuja in 2008 and Tetfund IBR Research grant on Reducing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Among Internally Displaced Nigerian Adolescents in Plateau State 2016, TETFUND IBR Research grant on Relationship between Students' performance in University Pre-qualifying Examinations and Actual Examinations in Federal University Lafia. 2018.

A productive scholar that she is, Professor Kwon-Ndung has authored 23 peer-reviewed journal articles, 2 books, 8 contributions in Book Chapters, 11 Edited proceedings and has attended over 25 Conferences and Workshops in advancing scientific knowledge and addressing critical issues. She is a celebrated academic for her extensive contributions to the fields of political economy and development studies. Her dedication and contributions have earned her some awards and recognition for excellence in teaching, research, and community service. To date, Prof. Linda Kwon-Ndung has supervised to completion over 200 Undergraduate B.Sc projects, 15 M.Sc dissertations and six PhDs with 9 MScs and 8 PhDs currently ongoing. Prof. Linda Kwon-Ndung has some editorial responsibilities. She is a Reviewer, International Journal of Social Science Research, Reviewer, Nigerian Journal of Political Science and Associate Editor of FULafia Journal of Political Science.

Beyond her academic and professional achievements, Professor Kwon-Ndung remains deeply committed to community development and has taken prominent roles in local community initiatives, including championing an NGO 'Positive Values for Life and Youth Initiative' where she is actively involved in promoting the adoption of positive values among the youths. She promotes this campaign among her students in the University and Secondary School students in the communities and local Churches. She also has a passion in mentoring teenagers and newly wedded couples. In addition to all these, she is also the Administrator of Emalyn Glory Schools Keffi. She has also served as member, Nasarawa State CSO implementation committee on the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPP) in 2023. Organizer, Pre-Summit for International girls Celebration in Nasarawa State, 2022 in collaboration with the Nasarawa State Ministry of Women Affairs and Ministry of Education., Nasarawa State Adviser on Coalition of Civil Society Organizations on COVID-19 Intervention, 2020. She has been involved in creating awareness on women rights in Nasarawa State in collaboration with the State Ministry of Women Affairs from 2021 to 2022 and also Creating awareness on Gender Based Violence cases in Nasarawa state from 2019 to Date. Through some interventions, she has also been involved in creating opportunities for women to be economically empowered through various skills acquisition programs from 2019 to Date. She has served as Team Leader for Pilot study on Census of Public some Schools in Nasarawa state in 2019. Prof. Has also served as a member of the Technical Committee on Northern Governors' Sub-Committee on Restructuring and Constitutional Amendment in October, 2017. All these efforts exemplify the essential role of academics in bridging the gap between higher education and societal advancement. Her work thus demonstrates how intellectual leadership can drive meaningful change at both local and national levels.

Prof. Kwon-Ndung has effectively and meticulously combined her academic pursuits with motherhood and has been available in raising her five biological and one adopted children in addition to many other foster children. She is thus a devoted wife and mother and is happily married to her husband, Prof. Emmanuel Hala Kwon-Ndung. Her life and career personify the values of dedication, commitment, creativity and divine service, with an ultimate goal of serving as a light to many within and beyond the academic world.

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26.	Prof. Linda Kwon-Ndung	Advancing Gender Justice and Women's Empowerment for Sustainable Development Through Political Economy Outlook	13 th March 2025

SIGNIFICANCE OF INAUGURAL LECTURE IN FULAFIA

The rite of passage to be come a Professor in a University has for hundreds of years included the test of having to profess one's knowledge to a lay audience and fellow academics. Indeed, the origin of the title 'Professor' comes from the need to profess, or declare publicly, one's knowledge. The occasion of Inaugural Lecture Presentation is, therefore, an essential component of the University's public events through which the institution engages with audiences with a broader interest in its research, including funders and decision-makers from Government, Academia and Industry. Professionals and Academics gain a unique opportunity to engage across knowledge boundaries for the benefit of mankind.

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To become a renowned institution of learning, research and innovation for positive socio-economic transformation of the nation

MISSION

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