



Working with Civil Society Organizations and Media Practitioners in Support towards Achieving the Full Implementation of 35% Affirmative Action



On the 26th and 27th of February, Alliances for Africa (AfA) organized a two day capacity workshop for media practitioners and civil society organizations based in South Eastern States in Nigeria; on the theme "The role of civil society organizations and media in achieving the full implementation of 35% Affirmative Action in South East Nigeria". The workshop was organized by Alliances for Africa's with support from UN Women Funds for Gender Equality (FGE). The training took place at Abakiliki, Ebonyi state.

The training is of great importance because it was time to begin discussions on how the media can change the narratives if well

equipped with a clear understanding of affirmative action and mechanisms to be adopted to ensure that women are visibly represented in all arms of political leadership. It was also an opportunity for CSOs to integrate affirmative action into their activities at different state level with a clear understanding of Gender and Gender mainstreaming.



The resourceful workshop was packed with information on challenges of affirmative action and the best practices to reverse the downward representation of women in leadership and governance, overcoming political obstacle through creative investment, understanding and gender and strategies to mainstream gender in Nigeria,

strategic reporting to increase women's participation in politics, changing media narratives to achieve gender equality, gender portrayal in media content, news and advertising.



As expected, there were specific targets for bringing participants together which include;

- To increase the number of media reporting on 35% Affirmative Action in the 5 south east states
- To increase the number of women interviewed by the media on matters relating to women's participation in politics in the 5 South Eastern states which are Abia, Imo, Ebonyi, Enugu and Anambra respectively.
- To increase the number of advocacies and campaigns by civil

society organizations on 35% Affirmative Action in the 5 South Eastern states.

- Identify mechanisms adopted by both media and civil society organizations in demanding, lobbying and monitoring the implementation of 35% affirmative Action in the South East



These targets are our indicators for effective monitoring and evaluation to ensure that participants are, lobbying and demanding the full implementation of 35% Affirmative Action across the 5 South East states in Nigeria in order to reverse the downward representation of women in governance in the South East.



Editorial

Working experience on women in governance is a better shot at identifying the necessary strategies to ensure women's access to elective leadership positions in political spaces, while there are challenges to affirmative action in Nigeria.

Political parties are the most critical among the institutions that can influence women's political participation. Most political parties in many countries have the sole responsibility to nominate candidates and most times this also influence who gets elected into office.

We can categorically leave women's access to leadership positions in political spaces in the hands of political parties. Women's role in political parties determines their prospect of participating in elected political roles at state or national level.

We realized that political parties have the ability to influence women's political prospects. Government and civil society organizations who are working to advance women's political status can channel their efforts to the role of political parties.

Other than political parties, we also learned from experience that women need to be more involved in electoral processes. INEC has reported a very low turnout of women in the voters registration exercise. INEC statistics shows that very few women have registered as voters. We need to resuscitate women's life in the political world. Civil society organizations will do well to work with women at local communities and get them to be part of electoral processes.

Women in Nigeria pre perceives politics as male dominated and finds it a hostile environment to operate therein. Even though Nigeria has stipulated 35% representation of women political leadership spaces, we in practice see great obstacles to women's active participation in political leadership roles.

To address this under representation of women in political leadership spaces, we need to work with women and political parties. Women need to align themselves with political parties for their nomination, and for support through the electoral processes. When political parties back women, it is easier for them to win elections especially at state and national levels.

Time is now to take a closer look at political parties' internal policies to ascertain if it is friendly to women in politics and aimed at enhancing women's political participation. Political parties in Nigeria need to understand that there are national benefits of supporting women to elected political offices.

We hope government and more civil society organizations will join efforts with Alliances for Africa in working with political parties to achieve the full implementation of 35% affirmative action, to have women adequately represented in political leadership across Nigeria especially as we approach 2019 elections.

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2018 International Women's Day campaign; #SheGoverns



March 8, 2018 marks the start of the #SheGoverns campaign by Alliances for Africa. It was a campaign to commemorate the 2018 International Women's Day (IWD). The campaign was initiated to integrate and mentor young women into political leadership.

As the theme for 2018 International Women's Day echoes "Time Is Now! Press for Progress" so appropriate is the #SheGoverns campaign a progress towards closing the gender gap in political leadership. The campaign which took place at Federal University of Technology, Owerri Imo state had about seventy two (72) young women in attendance including past and present young women who have held political offices in the university.

#SheGoverns campaign was born out of Alliances for Africa's ongoing project with female politicians on implementation of 35% affirmative action in the South East. The project had identified the need to close the inter degeneration gap between the older and younger generation of women in

politics; if we must sustain women in

political

processes.

The campaign adopted a three partite Model; Inspire, Equip and Inform as a strategy for integrating young women into political leadership. Young women were To believe that politics and governance improves the lives of people and communities



A young female participant at the campaign

The online platform is hoped to equip young women with public leadership skills, increase their interest to register with Political parties, build their capacities to contest and be voted for as female political candidates. The platform will provide



#SheGoverns. Young women were inspired to take up political leadership roles

Communication and knowledge sharing and relevant information that will help sharpen the young women's potentials and inform them about politics. The online platform will promote networking and mentorship among young women more also, capacity building trainings. The online platform is hoped to deepen affirmative action in Nigeria.



A participant at the campaign

A New Dawn for Women's Right in Africa

Sexual and gender based violence against women in Nigeria is on the increase in Nigeria and Africa generally. The growing concern in Nigeria most especially is the unwillingness of law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute these human rights violations which had led to the heightened perpetuation of such crimes.

The inability or unwillingness of the state to act, violates the due diligence principle that the responsibility to protect women from violence rests in the states themselves. It also means that the state is not being held accountable for violations committed against half of its population being women and girls. More so, where this inhumane treatment is being perpetrated by security agents charged with the responsibility of

maintaining law and order in the society. A plethora of victims of SGBV, if not all live in psychological pain of no n-recompense for the violation of their fundamental human rights. The knowledge that the perpetrators still walk the streets as free men further kills the victims' desire to seek help for themselves. The relevant question is what more appropriate help can be offered these victims other than punishing their perpetrators, offering monetary compensation and rehabilitating the survivors? Statistics has proven that the surest heal for survivors of SGBV are the reparation of their perpetrators. Knowing that the perpetrators are punished heals the malaise the crimes near on women and girls.

Despite this menace, October 12, 2017 saw the advocacy for the protection of the

fundamental human rights of women and girls take a new turn as the community court of justice of the Economic community of West African States (ECOWAS) gave judgment in favour of Dorothy Njemanze, EduEne, JustinaEim, and AmarachiJessyforth in the case of Dorothy Njemanze and three others Vs. Federal Republic of Nigeria in suit no ECW/CJ/APP/17/14. It was a case of gender violence against Dorothy Njemanze and the three aforementioned ladies by agents of the Abuja environmental protection board (AEPB), the Nigerian police and the Military.

The heightened level of violent, cruel, inhumane, degrading and unlawful treatment suffered in the hands of the aforementioned purported law enforcements agents in Abuja by these women instigated the suit. The

women were abducted and assaulted verbally, sexually and physically, threatened and unlawfully detained at different intervals

Between January 2011 and march 2013 by the above mentioned agents of the Nigerian government simply because they were found outside at night on the streets of Abuja. The women were termed prostitutes while men who were so situated were not harassed.

Prior to the institution of the suit in the court, the first plaintiff Dorothy ChiomaNjemanze exhausted all avenues reaching out to government offices, ministries and organizations in a desperate attempt to obtain justice for herself but received no positive support whatsoever.

However the case was filled since October 2014, in the intervention of Alliances for Africa (AfA) being an organization keen on protection promotion of women's human rights and with support from institute for human rights and development in Africa, **Nigerian Women Trust**

Fund and the law firm of **S.P.A Ajibade SAN**. All was made possible with funding from **Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA)**, an altruistic Organization. **On the 12th of October, 2017**, after surviving several adjournments, the case was decided. **The ECOWAS court sitting in Abuja** held inter alia, that;

1. The multiple violation of fundamental rights of the plaintiffs through arbitrary arrest, the inhumane and cruel treatment and unlawful detention at different times by the agents of Nigerian Government, offends the provisions of the Protocol to the African Charter on Women and Peoples Rights on the Right of Women in Africa.
2. The degrading and humiliating verbal assault on the plaintiffs; calling

them prostitutes repeatedly without proof; amounts to gender based violence as the men were not harassed during the said raid at night.

3. The 1st, 3rd and 4th plaintiffs are each entitled to monetary compensation to the tune of 6,000,000.00 (Six Million Naira only).

Alliances for Africa is delighted by this landmark decision that not only promotes gender justice in Africa but has motivated the African woman to seek redress for the violation of her human rights; being the first ever pronouncement of a Regional Court of Law on women's human rights using the **Protocol to the African Charter on Women and Peoples Rights on the Right of Women in Africa (MAPUTO PROTOCOL)** essentially **Articles 2,3,4,5,8 and 25** and **Articles 5 & 6 of African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)**.

Let the Nigeria and other West African States be put on notice hence, that we will fight every act of violation of the fundamental human rights of women and girls, we will prosecute and justice is assured. The era of unspoken

victimization has been blown away by the wind of the ECOWAS court judgment of 12th October and we now ride on the wings of this new era to determine freedom from sexual and gender based violations in Africa! It is

hoped that this decision will generate change in government policy and practice with regard to the gender-based violence and gender-based discrimination across Africa

Evaluating citizen's participation in the voters registration exercise in the South East

A visit to INEC office by Alliances for Africa's program manager working on the women in governance initiative revealed that the turnout of women during the voters registration exercise is not encouraging most especially as we hope to close the gender gap in political leadership come 2019 elections.

According to INEC staff working on the gender unit, "women are not registering"!

INEC has reported a low turnout of women for the voters registration exercise

This situation has instigated concern among women working with INEC gender unit in Imo state, South East Nigeria. INEC has reported a low turnout of women for the voters' registration exercise in Imo state. The South East caucus of Inter Party Advisory Council has urged citizens to participate actively in the ongoing continuous voters registration exercise organized by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).the chairman of IPAC went further to appeal to churches, traditional rulers, stakeholders at all levels to encourage and mobilize their people to go and register as a voter in order to obtain their PVCs. According to report, Anambra state is experiencing a poor turnout despite huge publicity in the state.

We can encourage more women to register through an aggressive enlightenment campaign in both urban and rural communities. Women make more than half of the country's population and hence need to participate in electoral processes. Stakeholders concerned can embark on radio programs and campaign to sensitize all, especially women on the need to

participate in the voters registration exercise. If every woman have a permanent voter's card, and understands the need to support other women running for office to successful elections, we would be having a Nigeria where women are adequately represented in elected leadership positions in political spaces.

**QUESTIONING THE FAILURE OF NIGERIA TO MAKE THE DECLARATION
RECOGNIZING THE COMPETENCE OF THE AFRICAN COURT TO RECEIVE CASES
FROM NGOs AND INDIVIDUALS.**

The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (the Court) is a continental court established by African countries to ensure the protection of human and peoples' rights in Africa. It complements and reinforces the functions of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The court was established by virtue of Article 1 of the protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the establishment of an African court on human and people's rights (the protocol) which was adopted by member states of the then organization of African Unity in June 1998, the protocol came into force in January 25, 2004. As at February 2018, only 8 out of the 30 state parties to the protocol had made declaration recognizing the competence of the court to to receive cases from NGOs and individuals. The court has a jurisdiction over cases and disputes submitted to it concerning the interpretation and application of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, (the

charter),the protocol and any other relevant human rights instrument ratified by the states concerned. Specifically, the court has two types of jurisdiction: contentious and advisory. The court may receive filled by the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, State parties to the protocol or African Intergovernmental Organizations. Non-Governmental Organizations with observer status before the African Commission and individuals can also institute cases directly before the court as long as the state to which they are complaining has deposited the Article 34(6) declaration recognizing the jurisdiction of the court to accept cases from individuals and NGOs.

It is definitely interesting to observe that Nigeria is yet to grant cognizance to the competence of the court to receive cases from NGOs and individuals. This in itself limits the jurisdiction of the African Court to interpret the Articles of the Protocol to the

African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Thus leaving the fight for gender justice in Nigeria at a stagnated pace.

Article 2 of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights expressly provides for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and takes into cognizance the necessity of appropriate legislative, institutional and other measures in attaining the elimination of violence against women.

The passivity of the Nigerian Government in granting the African Court the cognizance required to take cases from NGO's and individuals casts aspersions as to the intent of such inaction? It is trite knowledge that the government cannot report cases against itself and denying the most eligible persons; Individuals and NGO's, access to report the Nigerian government to the African Court in cases of Human Rights Violations especially against women and children is a concern that needs addressing by the Legislators of our Nigerian society.

The question is, how do we breach this gap of legislative inactivity in adopting and enacting viable legal instruments that ensure the unhindered access to redress and justice in the event of human rights abrogation in Nigeria?

A government cannot be silent over any instrument, whether International, regional or local, that seeks to protect and preserve the Human rights of its citizens. Where such is the case, it rests an onus on stakeholders; Human Rights Activists, Human Rights Organizations, etc to question and demand an immediate breach of such lacunae by the government in question or incur the likely intervention of the international community. Pressure, has been proven to be the most effective means to require inactive nations to respond to instruments that protect the Fundamental Human Rights of its citizens.

We cannot however deny that accountability of a government fuels its willingness to bring into force instruments that may work against it in the event that it abrogates the rights of any of its citizens without lawful justification. Thus, it is reconcilable that the failure of the Nigerian Government in granting the African Court cognizance to receive cases from individual and NGO's is hugely owed to the lack of accountability of the Nigerian government and can be deemed, though cautiously, a deliberate act of the Nigerian government to conceal its opaqueness in protecting Nigerian citizens against itself.

It is apt to conclude on this note; stakeholders MUST rise up to their obligations and demand the grant of cognizance by the Nigerian government to the African Court to receive cases from individuals and NGOs. This will ensure not just transparency and accountability of the Nigerian Government but will ensure the preservation and protection of the rights of women in Nigeria as provided by the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

