



Alliances for Africa

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GRAB THE CHANCE

NEWSLETTER



Empowering Women



Promoting Justice



Building Peace

JULY - SEPTEMBER, 2026



HIGHLIGHTS



Imo State Launches First Women, Peace, and Security Action Plan



Strengthening Women's Rights:
Alliances for Africa Partners with Imo State University to Celebrate the Maputo Protocol at 23



Traditional Leaders Strengthen Commitment to Ending Female Genital Mutilation in Atta, Obinze, and Irete Autonomous Communities



Police-Youth Dialogue Strengthens Call for Safer and More Inclusive Communities in Imo State

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Resilience in the Face of Resistance



Iheoma Obibi,
Executive Director,
Alliances for Africa.

Dear Partners, Supporters, and Friends,

This third-quarter edition of *Grab the Chance* comes at a difficult time for women's rights and civic action in Nigeria and across Africa. Civic space continues to shrink. Economic hardship is deepening. Public confidence in political processes remains low, while voter apathy threatens meaningful participation ahead of the January elections in Nigeria.

Women and girls carry a disproportionate share of these pressures. They face rising living costs, reduced access to services, violence, discrimination, and limited influence over decisions that shape their lives. Women human rights defenders and feminist organisations must also contend with restrictions, threats, public hostility and declining financial support.

We recognise that some donors and development partners are discouraged by the slow pace of change. After years of investment, the persistence of gender inequality can create a sense that little has changed. But social change rarely follows a straight line. Progress secured through laws, policies, public awareness and institutional reform can face resistance, delay or reversal. This does not mean the work has failed. It means sustained action remains necessary. The anti-gender backlash is real, sustained and well-funded.

At Alliances for Africa, resilience does not mean enduring injustice quietly. It means remaining organised, politically aware and rooted in the communities we serve. It means protecting hard-won gains while continuing to demand accountability from governments, institutions, and those who hold power. The activities featured in this edition show what the commitment looks like in practice.

In July, Imo State launched its first Women, Peace and Security State Action Plan for 2026–2030. AfA provided technical support, advocacy and coordination throughout its development. The Plan offers a framework for increasing women's participation in peacebuilding, preventing conflict, strengthening protection from violence and placing women's leadership at the centre of security and governance. Its adoption is an achievement. Its value, however, will depend on funding, implementation, monitoring and public accountability.

Our partnership with the Centre for Gender Studies at Imo State University also provided an opportunity to mark the 23rd anniversary of the Maputo Protocol. The engagement brought students, academics, legal practitioners, civil society groups and policymakers together to examine sexual harassment in tertiary institutions. It reinforced a clear message: laws alone cannot protect women and girls. Institutions must translate them into accessible policies, trusted reporting channels, fair complaints procedures and survivor-centred responses.

AfA also continued its community work to end female genital mutilation (FGM). Through advocacy visits to traditional institutions in Atta, Obinze and Irete, we secured support for community sensitisation and challenged beliefs used to justify FGM. During the annual August Women’s Meetings in Irete and Atta, we engaged 309 community members—294 women and 15 men—on the health, legal and human rights consequences of FGM. These conversations gave community members space to question misinformation and consider their responsibility to protect women and girls.

We are members of several national and regional Community of Practice networks, and within these, we have participated in several campaigns on Mass Atrocities, Care as an economy, African feminist movement-building, and women, peace, and security.

These gains matter. They remind us that change is happening through community dialogue, feminist organising, stronger institutions and women’s participation in public decision-making. Yet resilience should not become an excuse for leaving women’s organisations to survive on commitment alone.

We call on government institutions to fund and implement the commitments they have adopted. We ask donors to provide long-term, flexible support to women-led organisations and to recognise that structural change requires patience. We urge communities, activists and citizens to resist political disengagement, challenge injustice and use their voices and votes.

Discouragement serves those who benefit from silence. Our response must be collective action, sustained investment and an unwavering belief that the rights, safety and leadership of women and girls are worth defending.

2 THEMATIC AREAS:

THEMATIC AREA 1:

Female Genital Mutilation (Type III) Infibulation

THEMATIC AREA 2:

- **Maputo Protocol**
- **Child’s Right Law**
- **VAAP Law**

REACH:

DIRECT REACH:

14,800

INDIRECT REACH:

OVER 35,000

Imo State Launches First Women, Peace, and Security State Action Plan



Participants at the Women, Peace, and Security Action Plan Launch

On 28th July 2026, Imo State reached a defining milestone in its pursuit of gender equality, sustainable peace, and inclusive governance with the official launch of its inaugural Women, Peace and Security (WPS) State Action Plan (2026–2030). The landmark framework was developed through a strategic partnership with Alliances for Africa (AfA), whose technical expertise, advocacy, and sustained support were instrumental throughout the process. Developed through an extensive consultative and multi-stakeholder process, the Action Plan provides a comprehensive roadmap for strengthening women’s leadership in peacebuilding, enhancing protection from all forms of violence, preventing conflict, and promoting sustainable peace across Imo State.



Some participants at the Women, Peace, and Security Action Plan launch

The launch ceremony, organised by the Imo State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in collaboration with Alliances for Africa (AfA) and the Imo State Women, Peace, and Security Committee, brought together women’s groups, government officials, development partners, civil society organisations, traditional and religious leaders, security agencies, youth representatives, academic institutions, and members of the media. The event marked a significant milestone in the state’s commitment to advancing the Women, Peace, and Security agenda while reaffirming stakeholders’ collective resolve to implement the action plan successfully. The Women, Peace, and Security State Action Plan aligns with the global Women, Peace and Security Agenda established under the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and subsequent resolutions, which recognise the critical role of women in conflict prevention, peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and post-conflict recovery. Speaking at the launch, the Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development, Hon. Nkechinyere Ugwu described the action plan as a clear demonstration of the State’s commitment to ensuring that women are not only protected during

periods of conflict and insecurity but are also recognised as leaders, mediators, and active participants in decision-making processes that shape peace, security, and development.



Blessing Duru, Dir. of Programmes, Alliances for Africa (AfA)

"The launch of the Imo State Women, Peace and Security State Action Plan marks more than the adoption of a policy document; it represents a commitment to building a more peaceful, inclusive, and resilient society. Sustainable peace cannot be achieved without the meaningful participation, leadership, and protection of women and girls"

Hon. Nkechinyere Ugwu

Blessing Duru, Director of Programmes at Alliances for Africa (AfA), described the Action Plan as a transformative framework that places women at the centre of peace and security efforts. She emphasised that the Action Plan was the outcome of broad-based consultations that reflected the perspectives and lived experiences of a diverse range of stakeholders.

The launch underscores the shared commitment of the Government of Imo State, Alliances for Africa, and other stakeholders to advancing gender-responsive policies that promote justice, equality, and sustainable development.

More importantly, it signals the beginning of coordinated actions to strengthen women's leadership, improve protection mechanisms, prevent violence, and foster inclusive governance across the State.



"The Action Plan will serve as a guiding framework for government institutions, civil society organizations, development partners, security agencies, and community stakeholders, enabling coordinated interventions that respond to the unique security needs, experiences, and contributions of women and girls across the state".

Blessing Duru

Institutions, security agencies, and communities will be essential to achieving its objectives and ensuring that women and girls across Imo State can participate fully and meaningfully in building lasting peace and sustainable development.

As the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security State Action Plan (2026-2030) begins, continued collaboration among government institutions, civil society organisations, development partners, traditional institutions, security agencies, and communities will be essential to achieving its objectives and ensuring that women and girls across Imo State can participate fully.

Strengthening Women's Rights: Alliances for Africa Partners with Imo State University to Celebrate The Maputo Protocol at 23



Dignitaries at the Maputo at 23 Celebration

Alliances for Africa (AfA) has strengthened its commitment to advancing women's rights and promoting safer learning environments through a strategic partnership with the Centre for Gender Studies (CGS), Imo State University (IMSU).

The collaboration, formalised during a courtesy visit to the Centre on 9 July 2026, marks an important step towards strengthening legal literacy, promoting institutional accountability, and increasing awareness of the legal frameworks that protect the rights of women and girls within tertiary institutions.

The meeting brought together representatives of Alliances for Africa, led by Blessing Duru, Director of Programmes, alongside the Director of the Centre for Gender Studies, Dr Ngozi Chuma Umeh, and members of the University's academic community.

The engagement focused on AfA's six-month programme, particularly its legal literacy initiative designed to increase awareness of key legal instruments protecting women and girls, including the Maputo Protocol, the Imo State Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Law, and the Child Rights Law.

Speaking during the meeting, Blessing Duru, AfA's Director of Programmes, noted that strengthening partnerships with academic institutions is essential to ensuring that students, lecturers, and future legal professionals understand the laws and policies that safeguard the rights of women and girls.

A major outcome of the meeting was finalising plans to commemorate the 23rd Anniversary of the Maputo Protocol.

Commemorating the Maputo Protocol at 23: Strengthening University Responses to Sexual Harassment Through Law, Policy, and Institutional Accountability. The policy dialogue and public lecture, held on 16 July 2026 at the Faculty of Law Lecture Theatre, Imo State University, brought together University administrators, legal practitioners, academics, students, Civil Society Organisations (CSO's), development partners, and policymakers to explore practical approaches to preventing sexual harassment within tertiary institutions.



AfA team with representatives of the Imo State University Centre for Gender Studies



Ndidi Anika,
Legal Practitioner

The discussions served as an important reminder that legal reforms alone are not enough. Strong Institutional policies, effective implementation, and sustained collaboration are equally essential to ensuring that universities remain safe spaces where every student can learn and thrive free from sexual harassment and violence.

The event provided a platform for meaningful discussions on institutional accountability, survivor-centred responses, and the role of universities in creating safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environments. Twenty-three years after its adoption by African Union Member States, the Maputo Protocol remains one of Africa's most significant legal instruments for protecting and promoting the rights of women and girls.

The partnership between Alliances for Africa and Imo State University represents more than a single event; it signals a shared commitment to strengthening legal literacy, promoting gender-responsive institutional policies, and empowering young people to become advocates for Women's rights.

As this partnership continues to expand, it is expected to make meaningful contributions to the protection and advancement of women's rights by promoting safer, more inclusive, and equitable higher education environments.



Cross-section of Students During the
Maputo at 23 Activity

Through sustained collaboration, advocacy, capacity-building, and the development of effective prevention and response mechanisms, the partnership can inspire institutional reforms that address sexual harassment, gender-based discrimination, and other barriers affecting women and marginalised groups. It is also expected to encourage collective action among students, faculty, administrators, policymakers, and civil society organisations, fostering a shared commitment to accountability, respect, and equal opportunity. Ultimately, these efforts will help strengthen institutional policies and practices, support survivors, challenge harmful social norms, and advance gender equality across higher education institutions.



Alliances for Africa (AfA) Staff Members

Traditional Leaders Strengthen Commitment to Ending Female Genital Mutilation in Atta, Obinze, and Irete Autonomous Communities



Representatives of AfA, CGS, and the Obinze Council of Elders

As part of its ongoing efforts to eliminate Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Type III (Infibulation) in Imo State, Alliances for Africa (AfA), in partnership with the Centre for Gender Studies (CGS) and ISCEVAWG, paid an advocacy visit to the traditional institutions of Atta, Obinze, and Irete Autonomous Communities to strengthen collaboration and secure support for planned community sensitisation activities.

The engagements brought together AfA representatives, the Centre for Gender Studies, and members of the Traditional Council members of the three communities. The visits formed part of AfA's broader commitment to working with traditional institutions to promote the rights, health, and well-being of women and girls while addressing harmful traditional practices through community-led actions.

Female Genital Mutilation remains a serious violation of the rights of women and girls and a major public health concern. Despite ongoing national efforts to eliminate the practice, it continues to exist in some communities due to deeply rooted cultural beliefs, misinformation, and social norms. Type III (Infibulation), the most severe form of FGM, has devastating lifelong physical, psychological, sexual, and reproductive health consequences, making sustained community engagements essential.



King and Queen of Atta Community

The advocacy visits were intended to formally introduce the initiative to the traditional institutions, build collaborative relationships, and seek their support for the planned community sensitisation campaigns on the prevention and elimination of FGM Type III. The sessions also created a platform to address common misconceptions surrounding the practice, the health implications, including severe tissue damage, severe pain, infections, complications during pregnancy and childbirth, prolonged and

obstructed labour, maternal mortality, and long-term conditions such as urinary incontinence were also highlighted.

The provisions of the Imo State Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Law, which criminalises FGM, were also discussed.



AfA Staff Members and Representatives of the Imo State Center for Gender Studies

The meetings provided opportunities for open and constructive dialogue. Community leaders shared their perspectives and questions on commonly held beliefs.

The advocacy visits received positive responses from the traditional institutions, with renewed commitments from both Alliances for Africa's team and the traditional institutions to work together to advance community awareness and protecting women and girls from harmful practices.



AfA Dir. of Programmes addressing the Council

Through meaningful dialogue and partnerships with prominent community leaders, the recent advocacy visits laid a strong foundation for raising awareness and protecting women and girls from harmful practices.



Representatives of AfA, CGS, and the Atta Council

The visits provided a platform for discussing the detrimental effects of practices like Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

By joining forces with respected traditional leaders, community representatives, women's groups, and other key stakeholders, the advocacy visits went beyond raising awareness about the dangers and consequences of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). They created opportunities for open dialogue, addressed harmful misconceptions, highlighted the legal and human rights implications of the practice, and encouraged community leaders to take an active role in prevention and response efforts.

Through these engagements, the visits sought to build a stronger, shared commitment among stakeholders to challenge harmful social norms, protect women and girls, support community-led sensitisation initiatives, and work collectively toward the complete eradication of FGM across Imo State.

Irete and Atta Women Mobilise Against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) During Annual Women's August Meeting



As communities across Nigeria continue to confront the harmful effects of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), women in Irete and Atta Autonomous Communities in Imo State have been encouraged to take an active role in challenging Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and protecting women and girls from its harmful consequences.

This call was made during the two communities' August Women's Meetings, where Alliances for Africa (AfA), in partnership with the Centre for Gender Studies and the Imo State Committee on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (SCEVAWG), engaged community members from Atta and Irete in a sensitisation session on the elimination of FGM, with particular emphasis on Type III, also known as infibulation.



The engagements formed part of AfA's ongoing community advocacy efforts to increase understanding of FGM, challenge harmful misconceptions, and strengthen communities action towards FGM prevention and elimination.

During the session, participants were introduced to the four recognised types of FGM, while emphasising that no form of FGM was safe or medically beneficial. Particular attention was given to Type III FGM (Infibulation), the most severe form of the practice.



Participants learned about the potential physical, sexual, and reproductive health consequences associated with infibulation. These consequences include infections, urinary and menstrual complications, abnormal scar tissue, keloid formation, sexual difficulties, and complications during childbirth.

The discussions also highlighted the psychological and human rights dimensions of FGM, reinforcing that the practice affects not only physical health but also women's dignity, bodily autonomy, and well-being.

A key part of the conversation focused on one of the persistent beliefs used to justify FGM: that it prevents promiscuity.

AfA's team addressed this misconception,

emphasising that children's behaviour is shaped by a range of factors, including upbringing, parental guidance, values, education and the wider environment.

Participants were encouraged to recognise that protecting children and nurturing positive values should never involve subjecting them to harmful practices.

The discussions also provided a safe space for participants to ask questions, challenge assumptions and deepen their understanding of FGM.



The legal implications of FGM, including relevant provisions of the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) (VAPP) Law applicable in Imo State, were also emphasised, reinforcing the fact that protecting women and girls from harmful practices is both a health and human rights responsibility and a legal obligation.

By bringing these dimensions together, the engagement encouraged participants to look beyond the cultural narratives surrounding FGM and consider its wider implications for the health, dignity, and rights of women and girls.

The August Women's Meeting highlighted the importance of utilising existing community platforms to bring discussions about harmful traditional practices affecting women and girls to the forefront in the effort to eliminate Female Genital Mutilation in Imo State.

The Irete and Atta engagement was an important step in creating greater awareness of the realities and consequences of FGM.

More importantly, it demonstrated that meaningful change begins with conversations that allow communities to ask questions, challenge misconceptions, and consider alternatives to harmful practices.



For AfA and its partners, the mission remains unequivocal: to empower communities in their efforts to safeguard women and girls from the harmful practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The engagement also strengthened collaboration with the Irete and Atta communities and provided an opportunity to deepen conversations around preventing FGM.

This commitment encompasses not only the protection of individuals but also the promotion of their fundamental rights, which include access to health services, the preservation of dignity, the assertion of bodily autonomy, and the liberation from all forms of harmful practices.

Through education, advocacy, and support, Alliances for Africa aims to foster a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding Female Genital Mutilation and to encourage collective actions that protect and uphold the rights of women and girls in every community.

Police–Youth Dialogue Strengthens Trust and Collaboration for Safer Communities in Imo State



As part of activities marking the 2026 International Youth Day, young people, law enforcement officials, government representatives, and civil society stakeholders in Imo State came together for a Police–Youth Dialogue to strengthen trust, communication, and collaboration on community safety.

Held on 20 August 2026 at the Senior Police Officers' Hall, Owerri, the Nigeria Police Force, Imo State Command, convened the dialogue in collaboration with the Imo State Ministry of Youth Development and Talent Hunt, under the theme, "Different Contexts, Common Aspirations."

The Police-Youth dialogue provided a constructive platform for young people to interact directly with security institutions on issues affecting their safety, wellbeing, development and participation in society. Key discussions centred on drug abuse, cultism, political manipulation, digital misinformation, youth unemployment, civic participation and community safety.

A key message from the engagement was that community safety is a shared responsibility, and young people were encouraged to recognise their role as active partners in preventing crime, promoting peaceful communities and supporting positive social change.

The Commissioner of Police, Imo State Command, CP Audu Garba Bosso, stressed the importance of sustained partnerships between young people and law enforcement institutions. He urged young people to avoid drug abuse, criminal activities, and political exploitation, while encouraging them to pursue productive opportunities that contribute to their personal development and the well-being of their communities and to report concerns such as digital bullying, online fraud and exploitation, vandalism, criminal activity, abuse, and other forms of harm.



CP, Imo State Command, Audu Garba Bosso

Digital responsibility was also advised, and participants were encouraged to verify information before sharing it and to avoid contributing to the spread of misinformation, particularly through social media and other digital platforms.

Importantly, the dialogue provided space for young people to ask difficult questions, including questions around cultism within security institutions and the protection of individuals who report suspicious activities.



AfA Staff members at the Youth Policy Dialogue

Participants, however, stressed that responsible reporting must be supported by accessible, credible, and trusted reporting mechanisms. The discussion highlighted the importance of building confidence in security institutions so that young people feel safe and supported when raising concerns.

While a single dialogue cannot resolve the complex challenges affecting young people and their relationship with security institutions, it provides an important foundation for sustained engagement.



AfA Team at the Police-Youth Dialogue

Continued dialogue, stronger reporting mechanisms, youth economic empowerment, and transparent communication from security agencies will be critical to translating conversations into long term partnerships and practical community action.



Cross-section of Participants at the activity

The Police–Youth Dialogue therefore represented more than an International Youth Day activity. It was a step towards strengthening relationships between young people and institutions working to promote safety, peace and inclusive development in Imo State.

For Alliances for Africa, the engagement underscores the importance of youth-centred communication, meaningful participation, institutional accountability and community trust in building peaceful and inclusive societies.

African feminists Forum (AFF) gather to strengthen solidarity, renew feminist politics, and shape collective futures



Participants at the African Feminist Forum 2026 come together in Windhoek to strengthen connections and shape collective African feminist futures.

African feminists from across the continent gathered in Windhoek, Namibia, for three days of political reflection, movement-building, collective care and feminist imagination, strengthening solidarity and shaping a shared vision for African feminist futures.

The African Feminist Forum (AFF) is a regional political platform to strategise, connect movements, and advance feminist visions for justice and liberation. The 2026 gathering had Participants from across Africa, including Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, among others. The Forum took place at a critical moment for feminist movements in Africa and globally.

Organised anti-gender and anti-rights movements are growing in influence, while authoritarianism, economic inequality, conflict, militarism, and shrinking civic space continue to affect

communities across the continent. Women's bodily autonomy and rights remain under sustained attack, while feminist activists and human Rights defenders face increasing intimidation, surveillance, criminalisation, and violence.



Theoma Obibi, Chairperson of the African Feminist Forum Steering Committee

The Forum recognised that these challenges are deeply interconnected. Attacks on bodily autonomy and gender justice cannot be separated from wider struggles for democracy, civic freedoms, and economic rights.

The 2026 AFF provided an opportunity for African feminists to set their own agendas, sharpen political analysis, strengthen relationships across movements and imagine feminist futures on their own terms.

"A feminist movement cannot demand accountability from governments while avoiding accountability within its own spaces."

The gathering built on a rich history of African feminist thought and organising, including the legacy of the African Feminist Charter, which continues to challenge movements to examine power, patriarchy and accountability—not only in governments and institutions, but also within feminist spaces themselves.

The Forum also recognised the diversity of African feminist movements, spanning generations, identities, countries, languages and political traditions. While these differences can sometimes create tension, they can also expand political thinking, and intergenerational solidarity requires more than just intergenerational solidarity requires more than passing on knowledge; it requires sharing power and creating opportunities for new generations to shape the political future of feminism on the continent, expand political thinking and strengthen collective action.

"African feminist futures will not be handed to us. We will think them. We will organise them. We will fight for them. And together, we will build them."

Participants were encouraged to embrace disagreement without humiliation, exclusion, or harm, and to listen as honestly as they speak. The 2026 Forum honoured the feminists and movements that have carried African feminist organisations forward over generations, while emphasising the importance of creating meaningful space for younger feminists.



Iheoma Obibi, and other participants at the African Feminist Forum

Young feminists must not simply be invited to attend movement spaces. They must have opportunities to influence, lead and remake our movements.

The 2026 African Feminist Forum marks another chapter in Africa's continuing feminist journey; grounded in the lessons of the past, responsive to the realities of the present, and committed to building more just, equal and liberated futures. The 2026 African Feminist Forum closed its opening with a powerful invitation: to speak, listen, question, connect, rest, and return to the work with renewed commitment.

We will think them. We will organise them. We will fight for them. And together, we will build them.

The challenges confronting feminist movements are serious, but so is the collective power of African feminists.

Weaving a Feminist Economic Future: African Women at the Centre of Economic Transformation



African women sustain economies, yet remain largely excluded from the decisions that shape them. This contradiction was at the heart of the biannual Weavers Forum, held from 5–8 August 2026 in Windhoek, Namibia, where Alliances for Africa's (AfA) Executive Director joined African feminists to interrogate the economic systems shaping women's lives and collectively imagine alternatives rooted in justice, care and collective sovereignty.

Co-convened by the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), Nawi Afrifem Collective and Akina Mama wa Afrika, the Forum brought together African feminists to examine the economic systems shaping women's lives and collectively imagine alternatives grounded in justice, care and collective sovereignty.

Supported by a Curatorial Council that provided the political, ideological and methodological grounding for the gathering, the Forum created a critical space for reflection, dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and movement building..

At the heart of the conversations was a fundamental question: How can Africa move away from colonial and extractive economic systems towards feminist economies that centre care, justice, equality and collective wellbeing?

For AfA, this question connects directly to the organisation's broader commitment to advancing women's rights and challenging the structural inequalities that shape women's lives.

Across Africa, women sustain households, communities and national economies. They cultivate land, trade in informal markets, run businesses, work across public and private institutions and undertake much of the unpaid care work that keeps families and communities functioning.

Women are significantly underrepresented in areas where economic decisions are made, such as national budgets and global financial governance, despite being deeply affected by these choices.

The forum emphasised this contradiction questioning economic models that focus solely on

growth and GDP while ignoring inequality, unpaid care, environmental well-being, and the conditions for a dignified life.



Participants discussed how debt repayments, unequal trade, tax avoidance, and austerity measures limit public resources in Africa. Cuts to essential services like healthcare and education often increase women's unpaid care burdens.

They emphasised the need for debt justice, feminist tax reforms, and a stronger African role in global financial decisions, asserting that economic policies should prioritise people's well-being over debt repayment and private profit.

The Forum placed the care economy at the centre of economic thinking, highlighting the care economy's significance in economic discussions. Women's paid and unpaid care work, such as childcare, domestic tasks, and elder care, remains undervalued, despite its vital role in society, and the Forum called for greater investment in public care systems, healthcare, childcare, decent work, and social protection, along with broader measures of progress that include well-being, equality, and environmental sustainability, recognising care as essential to gender justice.

Participants expressed concerns about the dominance of imported economic theories and stressed the importance of incorporating African knowledge systems, Indigenous practices, and feminist experiences into our understanding of reparative approaches that acknowledge the lasting impacts of colonial extraction, racial injustice, patriarchy, and environmental degradation were also discussed.

A central goal is to ensure that African women actively participate in economic decision-making as thinkers, producers, organisers, and leaders, rather than just as beneficiaries.

For AfA, participation in the Weavers Forum emphasised the importance of connecting women's rights advocacy to the economic and political systems that shape women's lives. Issues like poverty, unpaid care, unequal resource access, exclusion from decision-making, and violence against women are interconnected with systemic power imbalances. Promoting women's rights requires addressing not only laws and policies but also the economic structures that determine access to resources and opportunities.

The Forum concluded with a shared understanding that reflection must lead to action. African women are not just impacted by economic policies; they are key contributors: workers, producers, caregivers, entrepreneurs, and decision-makers in Africa's economies.

The Weavers Forum served as a valuable space for collective transformation, and it is crucial to carry these discussions forward into sustained advocacy and action.



Theoma Obibi
Executive Director, AfA

Community Stakeholders Take Action Against FGM in Atta and Obinze



Ending Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) demands more than just raising awareness; it requires communities to challenge deeply rooted beliefs, confront harmful practices, and collectively take responsibility for safeguarding women and girls. This was the central focus of a stakeholder engagement organised by Alliances for Africa (AfA), in collaboration with the Centre for Gender Studies and the Imo State Committee on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (ISCEVAWG), held in the Obinze and Atta Autonomous Communities of Imo State. The engagement was part of AfA's efforts to prevent and eliminate female genital mutilation (FGM), specifically focusing on Type III (infibulation) in selected communities across Imo State. The event had traditional leaders, religious leaders, community leaders, youth representatives, teachers, health personnel, and other stakeholders in attendance. Instead of being a one-way awareness session, the engagement allowed participants to openly discuss and understand practices related to Female Genital Mutilation, (FGM) the beliefs

support it, its consequences, and the challenges in working to end it. FGM, as reported by participants locally known as "Icho Nwaayi Mma" or "Ibi Nwaanyi Ugwu," takes place as early as eight days after birth, an important insight into the community context and demonstrates why prevention efforts must be grounded in local knowledge and community dialogue.



Why does FGM continue?

Participants identified a range of beliefs, including perceptions that FGM can influence girls' sexual behaviour, preserve beauty or cleanliness, and prevent the clitoris from growing.

The discussion allowed for AfA's team to clarify

misconceptions about female genital mutilation (FGM), emphasising that children's behaviour is shaped by upbringing, parental guidance, values, education, and their environment, not by altering their genitalia.



Participants were reminded that the clitoris is a normal part of the female anatomy that should not be removed or modified. The conversation challenged the idea that women's worth should be defined by body modifications.

The effects of FGM were discussed, including severe pain, difficulties in sexual intercourse, reduced sensation, and potential relationship issues. A health practitioner also noted possible complications affecting women's reproductive and urinary health.



Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) can cause lasting complications like scarring, narrowing of the vaginal opening, and keloid formation. Visual aids were used to illustrate keloids. The discussion highlighted that while treatments exist, keloids may recur. It reinforced the message that communities should act to end FGM.

One key insight from the engagement was the need to raise men's awareness and involvement in addressing FGM. Participants identified challenges such as deeply rooted traditions, family

expectations and limited knowledge. Men noted they might not always realise when the practice occurs, sometimes hearing a baby cry without understanding why.



This highlights an advocacy opportunity for AfA (Advocates for Action): ending FGM is not just a women's issue. Men, traditional institutions, religious leaders, young people, health workers, teachers, and other community members all have vital roles in prevention and accountability.

The engagement underscored the importance of creating spaces for communities to ask difficult questions, challenge assumptions, and share their experiences.

For AfA, this is a crucial step in building community ownership of FGM prevention and enhancing its advocacy strategy, which emphasises the need for accurate information and the participation of key stakeholders.

The role of traditional leaders is especially important, as they can foster dialogue, challenge harmful norms, and mobilise collective action to protect girls and women.

Overall, this engagement is part of a larger effort to shift conversations and strengthen community-led initiatives to end FGM.

Making Article 5 a Community Reality: Listening, Learning, and Mobilising Against Harmful Practices



What does it take to make women's rights meaningful at the community level? It often starts with creating a space for open discussions about practices affecting women and girls, enabling communities to envision potential changes.

This idea is central to Alliances for Africa's "22 Voices: Making Article 5 of the Maputo Protocol a Community Reality" campaign, which celebrates 22 years of advocacy by the Solidarity for African Women's Rights Coalition. The dialogues in three communities focus on conversations rather than lectures.

This allows them to identify harmful practices affecting women and girls, explore why these practices continue, and discuss how different stakeholders can help end them. Article 5 of the Maputo Protocol highlights the importance of eliminating harmful practices that affect the rights, dignity, health, and well-being of women and girls. To make this commitment meaningful, communities need to understand its daily implications.

AfA is facilitating accessible discussions that translate this human rights commitment into relevant issues for communities.

During the community dialogues held in Azaraegbelu, Umororonjo, and Awaka

Communities, participants addressed harmful practices such as widowhood rituals, female genital mutilation (FGM), child and forced marriage, discriminatory inheritance, and the preference for male children.

Women shared their experiences regarding the restrictions placed on widows, including mourning practices and exclusion from inheritance. The discussion also highlighted how girls facing teenage pregnancy may be pressured into marriage, often resulting in the end of their education. FGM was explored through local beliefs, with participants discussing different forms of genital cutting that might be viewed differently from the more commonly recognised types of FGM.



The discussions shifted from identifying problems to exploring community actions. Community leaders requested documentation of the engagement

outcomes to foster further discussions and develop a by-law addressing harmful practices.



This reflects community ownership, as participants began to see local structures as key to accountability and change, rather than relying solely on external interventions, because when communities recognise harmful practices as a shared concern, responsibility for change can also become collective. For AfA, these engagements are part of a broader advocacy strategy to link community experiences with policy and regional human rights commitments.



Participants at Umoreoronjo community

The dialogues provide valuable community-generated evidence about the beliefs and barriers that sustain harmful practices, amplifying voices often missing from policy discussions. Importantly, the initiative connects Article 5 of the Maputo Protocol with existing national and state-level legal frameworks. Participants were provided with information on the legal implications of FGM, including relevant provisions of the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Law applicable in Imo State.

Community dialogues have provided important insights for AfA, demonstrating that addressing harmful practices requires continuous engagement and clear communication. It is crucial to utilise community structures and trusted leaders to discuss women's rights. With accurate information and safe spaces for dialogue, women and community members can effectively challenge harmful practices and promote positive change.



Participants at Awaka community

The “22 Voices” initiative seeks to turn a regional human rights commitment into reality for women and girls by moving from awareness to dialogue, then to community ownership, and finally to action.

Eliminating harmful practices requires more than the efforts of women and girls. It demands community support, leadership for change, institutional protection of rights, and advocacy to turn commitments into action.

Meet the Team



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About Alliances for Africa

Alliances for Africa (AfA) is a women-led feminist, human rights, peace and sustainable development organisation working with partners in, around and beyond Africa.

AfA was established to strengthen the link between human rights and development and to develop innovative responses to poverty and exclusion in Africa.

AfA works with partners to protect human rights, advance women's participation in leadership and governance, strengthen institutional capacity, and promote gender justice, equality, non-discrimination, peace, security and conflict resolution.



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