

VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

INTRODUCTION:

Indigenous people are distinct social and cultural groups that share collective ancestral ties to the lands and natural resources where they live, occupy or from which they have been displaced. The land and natural resources on which they depend are inextricably linked to their identities, cultures, livelihoods, as well as their physical and spiritual well-being. They often subscribe to their customary leaders and organizations for representations that are distinct or separate from those of the mainstream society or culture. It is reported that many Indigenous Peoples still maintain a language distinct from the official language or languages of the country or region in which they reside. There are more than 350-500 million Indigenous people in over 90 countries. They make up just 5% of the global population and 15% of the world's extreme poor. They suffer higher rate of poverty, homeless and malnutrition, with lower level of literacy and less access to health services.

Indigenous Peoples often lack formal recognition over their lands, territories and natural resources, are often last to receive public investments in basic services and infrastructure, and face multiple barriers to participate fully in the formal economy, enjoy access to justice, and participate in political processes and decision making

Apart from the foreigners, all the women in Nigeria are members of one indigenous ethnic group or the other; therefore all the information in this report covers the conditions of women generally in Nigeria.

Money wife-is practiced amongst the Becheve tribe in Cross River State, and neighbouring Cameroon community, where young girls are used as collateral for loans by parents or family members. Collateral marriage/debt bondage are forms of child slavery, trafficking and child marriage.

On Inheritance the Supreme Court in the case of Mrs Lois Chituru Ukeje & son Vs. Ms Gladys Ada Ukeje, ruled that no matter the circumstances of the birth of a female child, such a child is entitled to an inheritance from her late father's estate

On issues of land grabbing, acquisition /dispossession of local community of their land that they depend on for their livelihood must be based on free

and prior informed consent of the members of the community but most times the women are excluded from such discussions and denied their benefits as to compensation or adequate compensations

The issue of rape and domestic violence is largely unreported due.

National Human Rights Commission: Good Practices

The National Human Rights Commission, a body which serves as an extra-judicial mechanism for the nation, deals with all matters relating to the promotion, protection of human rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, international and regional human rights instruments to which Nigeria is a party. The Commission has developed practice standards with respect to violence against women.

- The NHRC-UNHCR Monitoring Project in the Northeast focuses on the monitoring of the rights of women during conflicts, training of officers to document human rights issues with a view of finding solutions. The monitoring program generates data which is used for policy formation and to design programs for various institutions.
- The National Human Rights Commission co-chairs the Protection Working Group in Nigeria. This is also an avenue to design programs targeted at protecting women's rights in conflict.
- The National Human Rights Commission in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders have carried out high level advocacy to concerned sectors where issues of conflict are flagged for immediate attention and redress.
- The Commission takes advantage of its visibility in the 36 State of the nation to embark on regular awareness creation on SGBV and also sensitization of the public through print, electronic and social media programs and platforms.
- The Commission launched a cutting edge technology reporting platform known as UNSUB which is designed to support responders to SGBV cases to work in sync, with clear referral pathways and effective monitoring system to keep track of the progress of cases with others.
- The Commission established a 24hour automated call centre with a toll free line with gender sensitive attendants. The centre has recorded almost 5,000 cases since inception over a year ago.
- The Commission in 2019 set up Presidential Special Investigative Panel to investigate Sexual & Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) from the

outcry from the raids and arrests of women and girls of night clubs and streets of Abuja by Abuja Environmental Protection Board (AEPB).

- The Commission developed clear guidelines for inspections and raids in the country by task forces and organised trainings for law enforcement agencies on professional human rights standard and practice.
- The Panel has so far had sittings across the 6 geo-political Zones of the Nation and the FCT with over 230 cases considered by identifying victims of abuse and individuals directly responsible for such violations/abuses and made recommendations for further actions to the relevant agencies or bodies to ensure adequate remedy for the victims/survivors.
- The Federal High Court ruled in favour of 6 women who were arrested, detained, harassed and abused by AEPB joint task force on April, 2019 in Abuja and awarded damages.
- The Commission in collaboration with other stakeholders have on several occasions rescued victims and reunited them with their poor uneducated family members. Sometimes also engage in screening and selecting process of some victims for empowerment programmes.
- The Social and entrepreneurial programmes of the Federal government are targeted at women: 98 per cent of women are beneficiaries of the conditional cash transfer programme while 56.4 per cent of the 2.4 million beneficiaries of the empowerment programme are women. For the youth empowerment, it is recorded that out of the 526,000 employed youth, 40.4 per cent are female and for the home-grown school feeding programme of 106, 074, 97 per cent are females.

Though more women are into politics, significant impact on decision making in governance is still much advocated for. There is need for more women to be politically and economically empowered and involved in decision making from the Local Government Area to the Federal level of governance. A lot of the violence against women and girls are been perpetrated by women who encourage (widowhood practices) or cover up domestic and sexual violence against their domestic servants by their husbands or male relations or sometimes by them.

CHALLENGES

- Patriarchal social structures- religious and ethnic

- Forced/early marriage
- fear of stigmatisation, trivialization of the act, victim blaming
- conservative and rigid cultural attitude towards women- seeing spousal violence as a family or private issue
- Section 55 (1) (d) Penal Code
- unequal power relationship between men and women
- Gender prejudice/Gender preference of a male child.
- impunity of perpetrators, culture of silence
- lack of trust of the law enforcement agencies
- the judiciary/ lengthy legal process
- lack of documentation or data for analyse to assess the right violations that would aid in developing adequate laws and policies to combat the menace
- non or less educational privilege and other opportunities
- Brutality against victims in the hands of law enforcement officials
- Illiteracy
- Geographical restrictions
- Economic weaknesses
- Social - cultural practices and attitude are deep against women
- Unprofessional conduct of first responders to sexual violence
- Lack of empathy

There is the need to address the gaps in the existing legal and policy frameworks so as to eliminate gender norms and cultural stereotypes.

High risk of abduction, displacement and death due to insecurity and conflict caused by insurgency and ritualistic killings

Below is the disaggregated data of violence against women and girls in general as reported in the 2020 Annual report of the Commission.

NATURE OF VIOLENCE	TOTAL
Domestic violence	107,440
Sexual violence	9, 680
Rape	11, 200
Sexual abuse of the child?	17, 800
Harmful traditional practice	2, 600
Gender based discrimination	3, 280
Child marriage	800
Forced marriage	6, 200
Inheritance	26, 760

Women trafficking	1, 320
Child trafficking ?	3, 480
Sexual and reproductive rights	2, 200

Note that there is no disaggregated data between the boys and girls with respect to trafficking and sexual violations.