

Advocacy Report

Meeting attended:

CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women 67th session
7 and 8 periodic reports of Nigeria, 14 July 2017, Palais de Nations, Geneva

Attended by Selena Cobian and Maria Cipriani, GWI Interns

Subject of meeting:

The meeting addressed the issues Nigeria has undertaken in regards to the discrimination of women; paying particular attention to the girls abducted by Boko Haram, gender-based violence, and education. The Nigerian government also elaborated on measures taken towards HIV/AIDS health and prostitution. The Nigerian representatives further discussed their progress with the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 and their progress with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Refers to SDG no #:

This meeting referenced SDGs 3, 4, and 5, with a direct call on target 5.1 to end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

Relevant treaties/conventions/resolutions:

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security operational clause 10 states, “Calls on all parties to armed conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, and all other forms of violence in situations of armed conflict.”

Session Highlights

Speaking on behalf of the Nigerian government, the session opened with the Head of Delegation, Mrs. Aisha Jummai Alhassan, from the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (FMWASD). She spoke of Nigeria’s achievements for women and girls, paying particular attention to the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) (VAPP) Act that prohibits all forms of violence against persons in private and public life, and provides maximum protection and effective remedies for victims and punishment of offenders.

Nigeria recently joined the “[HeForShe](#)”ⁱ campaign and hopes it will diminish the gender inequality in the country. In the business sector, a series of firsts (first female chief of justice, first female president of court of appeals) showcase female progress.

In the fight against Boko Haram, Nigeria still has a long way to go. Of all the girls that have been abducted by the terrorist organization, 106 have been reunited with their families and have been promised government care (103 girls were released and three escaped). The girls are given the aid and opportunity to receive an education or acquire a job, with the Nigerian government working to steer the girls towards education. Unfortunately, Nigeria reported they do not have the funds or resources to act stronger against and remove the Boko Haram threat. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimated that a total of \$1 billion (USD) would be needed to rehabilitate about 6.9 million people affected by the insurgency in the North-East.

The Nigerian Delegation renounced accusations of sexism in the judiciary and chose to discuss the number of women in State positions instead, recognizing that a woman had held the highest honor possible as a chief justice.

Special Rapporteur Report

General Comments:

- Once fully implemented, the VAPP Act will be a significant step towards improving conditions for women in Nigeria. The VAPP Act prohibits and punishes for crimes of rape; emotional, verbal and psychological abuse; harmful widowhood practices; spousal battery; and harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation.
- Under the law, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) criminalizes the exploitation of the prostitution of others. However, prostitution is not considered a federal offence and is only criminalized in Edo State.
- Working conditions and benefits have been improved through the National Minimum Wage (Amendment) Act (2011), the Employees/Workmen's Compensation Act (2011), the Social Insurance Trust Fund Act, and the Pension Reform Act (2014).

Challenges

- The Boko Haram insurgency has created a plethora of issues for Nigeria, especially for women and girls. It has negatively impacted them by forcefully displacing them; disrupting their lives and their educational pursuits; separating them from their families; exposing them to sexual violence, exploitation and abuse; and causing them to suffer through widespread malnutrition and food insecurity.
- Although Nigeria ratified the VAPP Act in 2015, the government has been ineffective in its implementation. Because the VAPP Act was ratified for only two years ago, there is little to no data about investigations, prosecutions, or convictions related to gender-based violence.
- Since the last CEDAW session, many recommendations made have been blatantly ignored by the Nigerian government. One of the experts commented that this may have a correlation with the lengthy and convoluted legal process of Nigeria, which requires constitutional review.
- Because Nigeria is a religious nation, there is a great deal of difficulty in changing marriage protection laws.

Progress

- As of May 2017, after months of delicate and complex negotiations with the Boko Haram insurgents, the federal government secured the release of 103 of the abducted girls. After being rehabilitated and reunited with their families, the girls were promised that the Government would take care of their education and provide them with jobs.
- In five states, the National Action Plan to implement UNSCR 1325 has been established.
- Females are now accepted in the Nigerian Defense Academy and are ensured that they can achieve the highest possible rank in the military.
- The draft National Policy on IDPs was revised in 2012, and then again in 2016, and now awaits adoption by the Federal Executive Council. If it passes, it will provide for the protection of the rights of displaced women and children, as well as assistance and durable solutions to their circumstances.

International cooperation

- Backed by the European Union, Nigeria has initiated the program on promoting women's engagement in peace and security in northern Nigeria.

- On issues related to Trafficking in Persons (TIP), Nigeria is working with Italy, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Spain, the United States of America, Finland, Britain, Saudi Arabia, Norway, Benin Republic and several non-governmental organizations to combat human trafficking and provide assistance to people after they have been trafficked.

Education

- Despite the gender gap in education closing, the percentage of girls in school is still significantly less than that of boys. In the North-East, 61% of females aged 6 and above have not received education.
- Because of the Boko Haram insurgency, net enrolment at all levels of education has suffered a fluctuating history as of late. Net enrolment has decreased from 60% in 1995 to 54% in 2013.
- In helping the girls and women who were affected by the conflict due to the Boko Haram insurgency, the Chibok girls who had previously been abducted will be admitted into Unity schools by September 2017 and IDPs above 15 years will be introduced to post literacy.
- In regard to accusations that the State party's military uses schools for military purposes on the fight against Boko Haram insurgents, the Nigerian government reassures that, under the Nigerian military operational code of conduct, their duty is to protect civilian objects and not to use any school for military purposes. Meanwhile, the group "Safe School Declaration" is advocating that the government ban soldiers from using schools for military purposes to avoid such schools being targets of attacks and destruction.

Health

- Through the Family Life HIV/AIDS Education curriculum, education on HIV/AIDS is implemented in schools. This curriculum has been incorporated into six subjects by almost all the states in the country.
- Working towards United Nations Millennium Development Goal 6, to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, Nigeria has reversed the trend on HIV/AIDS. HIV in pregnant women aged 15 – 24 has declined from 5.4% in 2006 to 4.1% in 2010.
- The maternal mortality rate has also decreased heavily, going from 545 per 100,000 live births in 2008 to 350 in 2012 and 243 per 100,000 live births in 2014.

Other information

- Although abortion is currently illegal, unless it is to save a pregnant woman's life, proposals by NGOs like the Women's Aid Collective (WACOL) could change that. In the coming years, Nigeria could see legal abortions expanding to cases of rape, incest, severe fetal impairment and where the health of the pregnant woman is at risk. Noting that abortion is allowable under Islamic law, the state could possibly see the decriminalization of abortion altogether.

Educational Take Away for GWI:

- Lack of access to education is still very prevalent in Nigeria, especially for young girls.
- NGOs play a monumental role in changing state policy and gaining rights for women and girls.
- The importance of the collection of accurate and disaggregated data to facilitate law implementation and State's reporting.
- Generally speaking CEDAW is being implemented too slowly in Nigeria with lacking State support.

ⁱ The HeForShe solidarity movement was created by UN Women to provide a systematic approach and targeted platform where a global audience can engage and become change agents for the achievement of gender equality in our lifetime.