



NIGERIAN WOMEN, CSOs, STAKEHOLDERS COMMENCE STRATEGIC LITIGATION TOWARDS INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE

To achieve an Inclusive Governance in Nigeria, women's groups, civil society organisations and other stakeholders (also known as the Legal Strategy Team) are set to seek constitutional clarification on the position of the law on the inclusion of women in the country's democratic process. **The litigation process which commences on 2 December 2020, at the Federal High Court Maitama, Abuja is set to achieve a milestone on the interpretations of the laws on women's inclusion in leadership and decision-making positions in Nigerian governance process.**

The Legal Strategy Team which is a diverse group set up for the Strategic Litigation towards inclusive governance in Nigeria aims at **seeking interpretations of the law on non-discrimination and women's inclusion and leadership in Nigeria's democratic process as well as raise public awareness on the strategic litigation process and issues of exclusion of women.**

Nigeria since independence is yet to record equal participation of women in Nigeria's governance process at all levels. The return of Nigeria to democracy in 1999 has not improved the level of inclusion of women at all levels as the proportion of women in both elective and appointive positions has remained low. This is despite the 2006 National Gender Policy and the various regional and international instruments that the government has signed on to. Nigerian women and other critical stakeholders have continued to mobilize and strategize to seek interpretations of the 1999 Constitution as amended with the sole objective of getting legal backing for a deliberate inclusive governance in Nigeria.

Various Nigerian governments since independence and since the return of Nigeria to democracy have been reluctant to improve gender equality in leadership and decision-making positions despite a formal support for it through the National Gender Policy (2006) which recommends a benchmark of 35 percent in all sectors. Besides, the government ratified the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1985 and endorsed the 2005 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), which protects the rights of women to dignity, equality, liberty and freedom from violence. The 1999 Nigerian Constitution, (as amended), equally provides for fundamental human rights including the rights to dignity (section 34); right to fair hearing (section 36), and right to freedom from discrimination (section 42).



In 2014, women’s groups in Nigeria adopted a “Nigerian Women Charter of Demand”. It demanded: “a reform of electoral laws to provide for affirmative action as a criterion for registration of political parties” as well as the establishment of “a system of gender mainstreaming which incorporates 35 percent of women in all sectors of government. A national WOMANIFESTO has also been adopted by Nigerian women seeking for a full recognition of gender equality in governance. Several bills have been rejected at the National Assembly on the grounds that they compromise provisions on the interpretations of culture and religion. The Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill is an example.

Signed:

List of Co - Plaintiff Organisations on behalf of Nigerian Women, CSOs and other Stakeholders

1. Women Empowerment and Legal Aid (WELA)
2. Nigeria Women Trust Fund (NWTF)
3. Centre For Democracy and Development (CDD- WEST AFRICA)
4. Women Advocates Research And Documentation Centre (WARDC)
5. Vision Spring Initiatives (VSI)
6. Women In Politics Forum (WIPF)