



# **A Compendium of Stories on Women Political Participation and Leadership**

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Historically, in Nigeria, women have faced significant challenges in political participation. Cultural norms, economic barriers, and discriminatory practices contribute to the under-representation of women in politics. After the latest general elections, women still occupy only a small fraction of elected positions at federal, state, and local levels. For instance, in the 2019 general elections, women won only 7 out of 109 senatorial seats and 13 out of 360 House of Representatives seats.

The inclusion of women in political and leadership positions is a pivotal step toward achieving gender equality and improving gender power relations in Nigeria. Despite making up nearly half of the country's population, women are significantly under-represented in political institutions, leadership positions, and decision-making bodies, due to the aforementioned factors. Enhancing their political participation is therefore not only a matter of equity but also vital for the development of a more just and prosperous society.

The WVL-Nigeria project has significantly enhanced women's political participation and leadership across Nigeria through targeted advocacy, policy influencing, and capacity-building initiatives between 2020 and 2024.

Interventions in this thematic area targeted an increase women's political participation at all levels; capacity building for female political aspirants (including trainings, mentorship, and coaching programs); advocacy actions targeting political parties and election management bodies; gender policies developed to support increased participation of women within political party structures, media engagement and leadership programmes for women and girls at all levels. Through the project, the outcomes below have been visible across the 6 project states and the FCT:

## ■ Political Appointments

Through the WVL-N project advocacy engagement, trainings, and political mentorships, the project successfully contributed to the appointment of 12 women to key political positions. Most notable is the appointment of Mrs. Abigail Duke Orok, as the Commissioner of commerce in Cross River State. Additionally, 7 women secured political appointments in their respective states, demonstrating the project's widespread influence.



## ■ Electoral Success

Over the 5-year duration of the project, more women were supported to participate in the electoral processes. Among the 131 women who contested for various positions, 40 won various seats across National, State and Local Government Area (LGA) levels. Furthermore, 5 women were elected to the House of Assembly. In total, 118 women across various levels won elections with the project's support, showcasing the significant strides made in promoting women's political leadership.

## ■ Traditional Councils

Through targeted advocacy actions, the project facilitated the induction of 190 women into traditional councils and cabinets across 22 communities in Enugu, Bauchi, Cross River, Kwara and Kebbi states further solidifying women's roles in traditional leadership structures. With this positive development, women are contributing significantly to decision making processes.

## ■ Voter Registration and Participation

The project's advocacy and sensitization efforts resulted in 17,296 women collecting their Permanent Voters' Cards (PVCs), enhancing their participation in the electoral process. In addition, 15,758 women received support during voter registration exercises. These efforts contributed to a substantial increase in women's voter turnout.

## ■ Youth and Student Leadership

The project prioritized the mentorship of young women in leadership by creating spaces where young women who are politically inclined and have leadership ambitions are trained and mentored. 3 partners namely WIPF, GADA and WEPBI established and operated resourced leadership academies for such young women. Training, coaching and hand holding activities were carried out throughout the project's timeline with verifiable successes recorded. For instance, out of the seventeen young women mentored on elective leadership skills in their respective tertiary institutions in Cross River State, 3 emerged as first female Student Union Government (SUG) President in the University of Calabar; Vice President SUG, University of Cross River State, and President of the National Association of Akwa Ibom State Students (NAKISS) in the College of Health Technology, Calabar.





In Enugu State, 2 young women emerged as SUG presidents of their tertiary institutions namely Enugu State College of Education, Technical and Peace Land College. Others also emerged as the; 1st female Deputy Chief Judge, Student Senate, and 1st female president in Computer Science department, both of the Institute of Management Technology, Enugu State. Still in Enugu we also saw the first female senior prefect in Oji Urban secondary school in the school's 28-year history.

In Kebbi state, one young woman emerged as both the SUG Vice-President of the College of Nursing and Health Sciences as well as the Vice President, National Association of Kebbi State Students (NAKSS).

## **Sensitization and Training**

The WVL-Nigeria project reached a broad audience through sensitization efforts, impacting 164,629 women with information on political participation. The project also supported 50 women to vie for elective positions within their political parties, even if they did not win in the primaries. Additionally, 112 male allies were trained as Women Leadership Advocates, promoting gender-inclusive leadership.

## **Policy Influence**

6 policies influenced in project states and at the national level aimed at increasing women's political participation.

## **Peer Education and Business**

Through the formation of 24 Peer Education Groups, 576 women were enrolled in peer education, fostering a supportive network for political engagement. Furthermore, the project mentored 6,066 adolescent girls on leadership and communication skills, preparing the next generation of female leaders. Traditional and religious leaders were also engaged, with 1,937 reached through the project's efforts. Additionally, 143 women acquired skills and established businesses, contributing to their economic empowerment towards participation in leadership.

Overall, the WVL-Nigeria project has made significant strides in empowering women, enhancing their political participation and leadership, and creating a more inclusive and equitable society.





# SUCCESS STORIES



# From Silence to Strength: Empowering Women's Voices in Ugwuaji Community

Before the WVL project came to her village, Mrs. Ngozi U, a trader and member of Umuaro Women General Assembly in Ugwuaji Community in Enugu state used to lack so much self-confidence; she had no faith in herself and usually sits behind whenever she attends women's meeting, due to sense of low self-esteem. After the women leaders of her association were trained as peer facilitators by WINET and ActionAid through the Women's Voice and Leadership – Nigeria project, they trained other group members to change their mindset about leadership and to transform lives.

Ngozi was one of the beneficiaries of that program. The topic that triggered the change on the ActionAid Nigeria Peer Education Manual was module 1 unit 1 which speaks on body image and self-esteem. This topic helped her to gain high self-esteem and self-confidence and hence she can now speak boldly to tell this story in public.

In her words, *'My life has changed since I participated in a session by women peer facilitators on body image and self-esteem. I have learned that being a woman is valuable as no woman is inferior to another woman or man in the society. I used to think that some people are better than me due to*



*my parental upbringing. This training taught me how to interact freely with other women. I no longer have an inferiority complex anymore. I no longer hide at the back; I speak boldly in front of everyone. That is why I am standing here to testify to the impact of the women peer education programme.*

With funding from Global Affairs Canada, women in Ugwuaji community are regaining their voices and developing self-esteem.



## Fadeela Bello: From Shy girl to Shining Star

Meet Fadeela M. Bello, a remarkable young woman who has overcome her shyness and lack of confidence to become a shining star in her community. Before joining the Young Women Leaders Mentorship Programme, Fadeela felt held back by her own self-doubt and was hesitant to speak in front of a crowd. However, through this life-changing programme, she has gained the confidence and skills needed to take on leadership roles.

Fadeela was one of 50 young women selected for the mentorship program, a joint initiative of the Women's Voice and Leadership -Nigeria project and Kungiyar Tallafin Mata Development Initiative (KTMDI) in Kebbi state. The program aimed to empower young women to break free from the patriarchal norms that limit their participation in leadership and political spaces.

Over six months, Fadeela and her fellow mentees received training on life skills such as leadership and communication, which had a profound impact on their confidence and self-esteem. With her newfound confidence, Fadeela decided to take a bold step and contest for the position of Student Union Government (SUG) Vice President of



College of Nursing and Health Sciences and Vice President, National Association of Kebbi State students (NAKSS).

To the surprise of many, Fadeela emerged victorious, defeating her male counterpart and other candidates in the process. She became the first female student to hold the position of SUG Vice President in College of Nursing Sciences in Kebbi state.

As an elected leader, Fadeela is now mentoring other female students to develop their own self-esteem and ambition for leadership. Her ultimate goal is to participate in political and leadership spaces beyond school level and continue to mobilize other young women to do the

same.

Fadeela's success is a testament to the transformative power of the WVL project, which is working tirelessly to empower women and girls, advance their rights, and achieve gender equality in Nigeria. By supporting organizations like KTMDI with funding from Global Affairs Canada, the WVL project is creating a ripple effect of positive change, encouraging young women like Fadeela to take on leadership roles and make a difference in their communities.

### In Fadeela's words

*"before I was selected to be one of the 50 mentees under WVL-N Young Women Leaders Mentorship Programme, I used to be very shy and did not have courage and confidence to stand in front of crowd to speak... Based on my knowledge gained during the mentorship program, I now have a truck load of self-esteem."*

Her eyes are already set on participating in political and leadership spaces beyond school level, she confidently says "...I will continue to mobilize other young women to develop ambition for leadership wherever they find themselves. I am also willing to participate in political and other decision-making process"

With more inspiring stories like Fadeela's, the future looks bright for women's participation in leadership and decision-making in Nigeria. With one of our strategic objectives focusing on strengthening female participation and leadership, the WVL project through funding from Global Affairs Canada is working to build the capacities of LWROs to empower women and girls, advance the protection of women and girls' right, and achieve gender equality in Nigeria. With more young girls like Fadeela, holding technical and important positions like this, it increases space for female participation in the leadership and decision making.



## Breaking Barriers: Praise James' Journey to Becoming the First Female Senior Prefect



Praise James' story is a testament to the power of empowerment and the impact of breaking exclusionary norms. Her journey began in 2020 when the Oji-River Urban Women Association, in partnership with WACOL under the Women Voice Leadership (WVL) Project supported by ActionAid Nigeria, visited Urban Secondary School Oji-River to sensitize students on political participation and leadership.

Praise, a determined and ambitious student, was deeply inspired by the workshop. Despite facing significant challenges, including a lack of support from her peers, particularly other girls, Praise decided to run for the highest student leadership position in the school. Her courage and determination paid off when she was elected as the first female senior prefect in the school's 28-year history.

Praise James' achievement is not just a personal victory; it is a groundbreaking moment for her school and the entire Oji-River local government area. She has become a symbol of hope and possibility, showing that young girls, when empowered, can shatter glass ceilings and lead with confidence and capability.

Her story highlights the transformative power of initiatives like the WVL Project, which aim to empower women and girls, foster leadership skills, and challenge societal norms. Praise's success is a shining example of what can be achieved when young girls are given the tools and support, they need to pursue their dreams.

In her own words,

*"The sensitization workshop opened my eyes to the possibilities within me. I realized that I could lead and make a difference, regardless of the barriers in front of me. Becoming the senior prefect is just the beginning; I hope my story inspires other girls to believe in themselves and strive for leadership positions."*

Praise James' journey from a motivated student to a pioneering leader is a powerful reminder that when girls are empowered, they can achieve extraordinary things and pave the way for future generations.

This project is funded by Global Affairs Canada.



# The Voice of Change: Aisha Ibrahim's Journey to Becoming the First Female Council Chief in Chinkani



Once upon a time, in the Chinkani community of Giade LGA, Bauchi, women were rarely seen sitting with men in groups or participating in traditional councils to discuss issues that affected them. Their voices were excluded from actively contributing to the development of their community. This all changed in 2020 when the Women Voice and Leadership Project (WVL), led by FAWOYDI, intervened and brought about significant transformations.

The WVL project launched a women's peer education group and trained women on fundamental human rights, advocacy skills, and the importance of their voices in the community and household decision-making processes. For Aishatu Ibrahim, this training was a revelation, though she still harbored concerns that expressing women's rights might be seen as rebellious.

Interestingly, men in the community were also trained on women's rights, triggering a shift in attitudes. This newfound awareness among the men became a pillar of support for the movement towards women's leadership in Chinkani. They started recognizing the importance of women's

contributions and began working alongside them to provide opportunities for women to assert their rights.

Aishatu, armed with her new knowledge and the support of her community, bravely stepped forward and became a member of the traditional council of Chinkani. She now represents women and actively participates in the decision-making process. Aishatu spearheaded an advocacy visit with the women's peer group to the district head, resulting in the appointment of a female medical professional as the head of primary healthcare in the community. This significant achievement has greatly benefited the women of Chinkani community.

The men in Chinkani, having been trained on fundamental human rights, now champion the inclusion of women in leadership roles. This change has not only allowed women to engage in income-generating activities but also empowered them to participate in household decision-making processes. The increased income and empowerment of women in the community are

paving the way for more women to take on leadership positions in the future.

The WVL project has also transformed the behaviors and perspectives of women towards decision-making processes at the grassroots level. This change is expected to lead to the sustained inclusion of women in leadership positions in the community, advancing gender equality in Nigeria and contributing to the achievement of SDG Goal 5.

Aishatu Ibrahim's journey from a concerned community member to a pioneering council chief is a powerful testament to the impact of the WVL project. Her story serves as a beacon of hope and inspiration, showing that with the right support and training, women can overcome barriers, assert their rights, and lead their communities towards a more inclusive and equitable future.

Aishatu reflects on her journey, saying,

*"The WVL project opened my eyes to the power and value of my voice. I realized that my contributions matter and that I can effect change. Becoming a council chief is just the beginning; I hope my story inspires other women to step forward and claim their rightful place in our community."*

Her story underscores the transformative power of empowerment and the importance of inclusive leadership, reminding us of all that change is possible when voices are heard and supported.



## Empowerment: How Imezi-Olo Community Found Its Voice in Democracy



In the quiet community of Imezi-Olo, where the voices of the marginalized often went unheard, a significant transformation began to unfold. This rural area had long struggled with low voter turnout and a deep sense of disconnect from the political process. For years, widows, young girls, and other vulnerable groups in the community felt that their votes didn't matter, leading to poor representation and a lack of influence in local governance. But that all began to change thanks to a powerful partnership and a commitment to empowering those who had been silenced for too long.

The Widow's Support Group, in collaboration with Women's Aid Collective (WACOL) and ActionAid Nigeria (AAN), recognized the need for change in Imezi-Olo. They saw the potential in the community and understood that the key to unlocking this potential lay in political participation. Through the advocacy of the Women's Voice and Leadership Nigeria (WVL) project, they launched a mission to increase voter participation, particularly among widows and girls, who had historically been left out of the electoral process. The challenges were significant. Imezi-Olo had a history of low voter turnout, and many in the

community, especially women and young girls, felt alienated from the electoral system. They saw it as something distant, disconnected from their daily lives and struggles. But the WVL Project was determined to change this mindset. They embarked on a comprehensive initiative to increase Permanent Voter Card (PVC) collection and enhance civic engagement within the community.

Workshops were organized, sensitization sessions were held, and outreach programs were conducted throughout Imezi-Olo. These efforts were designed not just to inform, but to inspire. The WVL project wanted every woman, every girl, and every marginalized individual to understand the power of their vote and the impact they could have on their community's future. The message was clear: Your vote matters. Your voice counts. The impact was profound. The community witnessed a remarkable surge in PVC collection. For the first time, widows, girls, and other community members eagerly lined up to secure their voter cards. The energy was palpable, and



the change was undeniable. The people of Imezi-Olo were no longer content to sit on the sidelines; they were ready to take control of their future.

As the presidential and governorship elections approached, the momentum continued to build. On election day, Imezi-Olo recorded a turnout that shattered all previous records. Over 1,000 voters cast their ballots at the local polling unit, a stark contrast to the apathy of previous years. Widows and girls, who had once felt invisible in the political process, stood proudly in line, ready to make their voices heard.

The results of this effort were more than just numbers; they were a testament to the power of community empowerment. Nwobodo Chinemere, one of the many voters who participated, shared her experience with pride:

*"Thanks to ActionAid Nigeria for sensitizing us on Political Participation and Leadership, we now have a stronger voice and a place in the democratic process. We realized that our votes matter, and our community is stronger for it."*

Imezi-Olo's story is a powerful reminder of what can happen when marginalized communities are given the tools and support, they need to engage in the democratic process. It shows that when people are empowered with knowledge and motivated by a sense of belonging, they can transform not only their own lives but also the future of their entire community. The efforts of the Widow's Support Group, WACOL, and ActionAid Nigeria have ensured that the people of Imezi-Olo are no longer voiceless. They have found their place in the democratic process, and their voices will now be heard.



# Breaking Barriers: How Women Took Charge of Election Monitoring in Nigeria



For years, Nigeria's election process has been a male-dominated arena, with women often marginalized and intimidated into silence. Election monitoring, a critical aspect of ensuring transparency and fairness, was no exception. Women were conspicuously absent from observer teams, a situation that left significant gaps in understanding the full spectrum of electoral challenges, particularly those faced by women. This lack of female representation in election monitoring not only skewed public perception but also overlooked the unique ways electoral violence affects different genders.

The consequences of this imbalance were evident in the 2015 and 2019 general elections. Cases of gender-based violence (GBV) were reported, but they were not highlighted with the urgency they deserved. Most election observers were men, who may not have fully grasped or prioritized these incidents, leaving the experiences of many women underreported and unaddressed. The intimidating atmosphere on election days, coupled with the threat of violence, further discouraged women from participating as observers or even as voters.

Recognizing the urgent need for change, the 100 Women's Lobby Group (100WLG) with funding from Global Affairs Canada through the WVL-N project embarked on a mission to integrate women into the election monitoring process. They understood that gender balance in observer teams was crucial for a comprehensive assessment of the electoral landscape, including the barriers to political participation that both men and women face. This effort was also a critical step towards developing observation strategies that specifically address the ways in which electoral violence impacts women.

In the lead-up to the 2023 general elections, 100WLG trained 320 women as election observers across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. This training was not just about equipping women with the skills to monitor elections; it was about empowering them to break free from the intimidation and marginalization that had kept them on the sidelines for so long. The partnership with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) ensured that these women

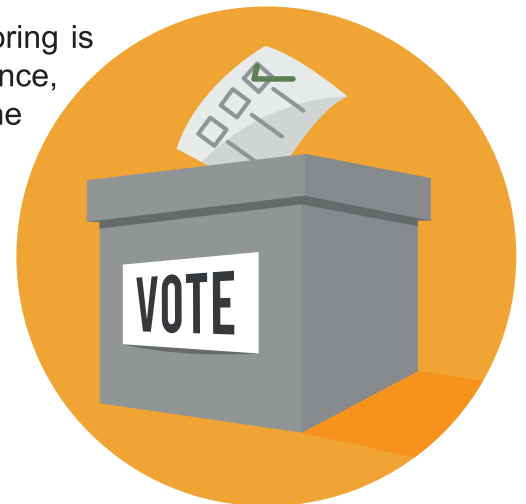
would play an active role in the election process, with a specific focus on monitoring violence and gender participation.

The impact of this initiative was profound. In areas like Yenagoa and Warri, there was a noticeable increase in the participation of women as both observers and voters. The presence of these trained women observers brought a new perspective to the monitoring process, particularly in how electoral violence and gender dynamics were reported. Their insights highlighted issues that had previously been overlooked, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the election environment.

One of the most significant successes of the 2023 general elections was the active involvement of these women in critical moments of the process. Members of the 100WLG reported delays in the arrival of INEC officials and voter materials – some as late as 6 PM on election day in certain locations. These delays had the potential to disenfranchise many voters, particularly women, who often face additional barriers to participating in elections. The women observers didn't just document these issues; they actively engaged with the situation, contributing to protests that led to the postponement of elections in those areas. Their actions ensured that the voices of women and other marginalized groups were heard and considered in the electoral process.

These reports, captured by national news outlets, marked a significant shift in how election monitoring is conducted in Nigeria. The presence of women observers brought attention to issues that had previously been underreported, changing the narrative around electoral participation and violence.

The story of how these women broke barriers in election monitoring is not just about numbers or reports; it's about empowerment, resilience, and the determination to ensure that every voice, especially the voices of women, is heard in Nigeria's democratic process. Through their courage and commitment, these women have paved the way for a more inclusive and transparent election process in Nigeria, one where no one is left behind.





# Shattering the Political Glass Ceiling: Francisca Ene Ekpo's Journey to Council Leadership



In Cross River State, women make up the largest number of voters, yet they are often marginalized and abandoned after their crucial involvement in political campaigns and elections. This is especially true in Akpabuyo Local Government, where women are seen as vital for mobilizing community members during campaigns but are seldom given the opportunity to hold significant political offices.

Francisca Ene Ekpo, a widow and head of a five-member household, embodies the struggle of many local women who experienced multi-level discrimination due to their gender, social, and economic status. A local business owner and operator of a cafeteria, aka mamaput at BamBam Junction in Ikot Eyo Ward, Akpabuyo LGA, Francisca has been an active mobilizer and a strong voice for women in her ward since 1999, yet she was never considered capable of handling a sensitive post.

The turning point in Francisca's journey came with the advent of the Women's Voice and Leadership Nigeria Project, which enlightened women about their rights to vote and be voted for. Through the sensitization and political enlightenment

campaigns of the Akpabuyo Women Development Association (AWDA), Francisca became more determined. Her efforts and perseverance were finally recognized, leading to her appointment as a Special Assistant on Women Affairs by the local government leadership.

Reflecting on her journey, Francisca shares,

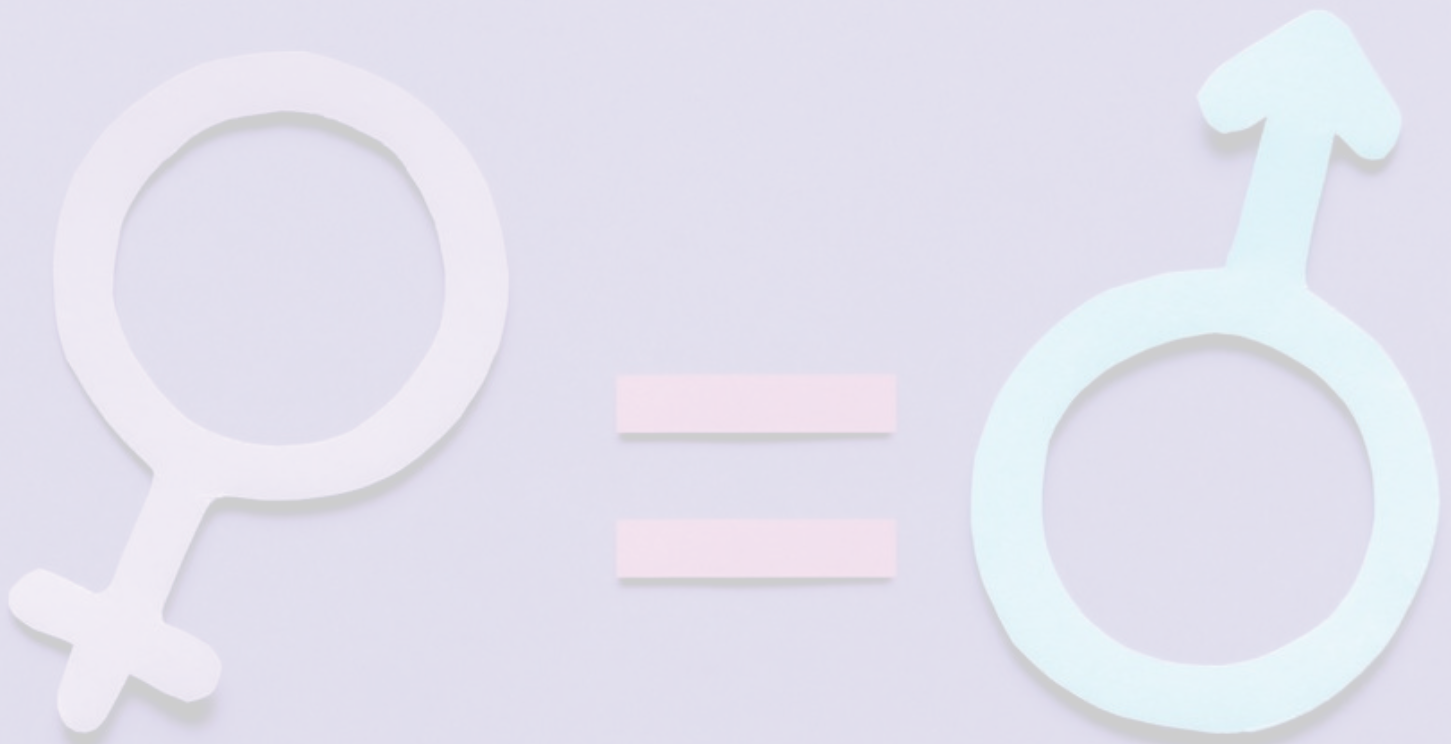
*"Before I became a Special Assistant, I worked for many governments as a grassroots mobilizer. I did all the singing, dancing, whistleblowing, and cooking jobs during campaigns. With only a First School Leaving Certificate, I never dreamt of getting an appointment in life. But due to the exposure and efforts of AWDA leadership, I am now an appointee in the council and have enough to take care of my family and assist other women. Thank you, AWDA, for enlightening me and bringing me into the limelight."*

Francisca's story is not just one of personal triumph but also a beacon of hope for many women in her community. Her appointment as a Special Assistant on Women Affairs has allowed

her to advocate for and support other women, helping them realize their potential and fight for their rights. This change has not only empowered her but has also paved the way for other women to take on leadership roles and participate more actively in the political process.

Her journey underscores the transformative power of education, advocacy, and resilience. It highlights the importance of organizations like AWDA, which work tirelessly to ensure that women's voices are heard, and their contributions recognized. Francisca's success is a powerful reminder that when women are given the tools and support, they need, they can break through barriers and achieve remarkable things.

The story of Francisca Ene Ekpo is a poignant example of how sustained efforts towards gender equality can lead to significant social and political change. Her experience inspires and motivates others to continue pushing for a more inclusive and equitable society, where women are not just participants but leaders and decision-makers.



## Breaking Tradition: Women's Historic Participation in Obioma Village General Assembly



In the small community of Obioma, located in the southern Udi local government area of Enugu State, most inhabitants are farmers and traders. Over the years, women's participation in leadership positions has been a contentious issue, as men saw it as an anomaly for women to sit at the same table with them to make decisions on matters concerning the entire community. Despite their significant contributions, women were conspicuously absent from the Obioma General Assembly meetings where crucial decisions were made.

Mrs. Philomena Agu, a 46-year-old mother of five and the leader of Obioma Women "Home and Abroad," voiced her frustration:

*"Despite the fact that women in the community contribute money for almost all the developmental projects, we do not attend the General Assembly meetings where decisions on how our money is spent are discussed."*

This was the situation for women in Obioma until NELCCI intervened via the Women's Voice and Leadership (WVL) project. The project aimed to sensitize multiple stakeholder groups in the community about the value of women's voices in

leadership. Through sustained sensitization, stakeholder dialogues, and advocacy to key community leadership structures, NELCCI highlighted the importance of including women in decision-making processes.

The impact of these efforts was profound. For the first time, women in Obioma began attending and participating actively in the General Assembly meetings. Their presence brought fresh perspectives and valuable contributions towards the growth and development of the community. Mrs. Agu, who once felt sidelined, now joins these meetings and ensures that women's voices are heard and respected.

Reflecting on this transformative change, Mrs. Agu shared,

*"The sensitization by NELCCI opened our eyes to the power and importance of our voices. Now, we not only contribute to the development projects but also have a say in how our money is spent. It feels empowering to be part of the decision-making process and to know that our opinions matter."*



This historic shift in Obioma reflects the power of advocacy and the importance of inclusive leadership. It underscores how initiatives like the WVL project can challenge and change long-standing traditions and norms, leading to more equitable and just communities. The women of Obioma, once marginalized, are now key players in shaping the future of their community.

The journey of Obioma's women from the margins to the decision-making table is a powerful reminder of the importance of gender equality in leadership. Their active participation in the General Assembly not only benefits the women themselves but also enriches the entire community. The inclusion of women's voices ensures more comprehensive and representative decision-making, leading to better outcomes for all.

Mrs. Agu's story, and that of the women of Obioma, is an inspiring example of what can be achieved when women are empowered to take their rightful place in leadership. It serves as a beacon of hope for other communities facing similar challenges and demonstrates that with persistence, advocacy, and support, meaningful change is possible.

The WVL-N project was funded by Global Affairs Canada and implemented by ActionAid Nigeria.



## Amina Mohammed: Inspiring Women's Political Participation Through Advocacy



In the Wara community of Kebbi State, Nigeria, where tradition limits councilors to a single tenure, Amina Mohammed faced significant challenges. As an incumbent Councilor, she struggled with limited leadership capacity, mobilization skills, and the ability to advocate for women's rights. The community's restrictive traditions and her own lack of awareness hindered her from making a significant impact. However, her experience with the Kunguyir Tallafin Mata Development Initiative (KTMDI) marked a turning point in her journey.

Amina was identified and enrolled as a participant in the Women with Political and Leadership Ambition program, established by KTMDI. This program, part of the Women's Voice and Leadership-Nigeria (WVL-N) project funded by Global Affairs Canada (GAC), aimed to equip women with the skills and knowledge needed to increase female participation in leadership positions.

Through the program, Amina received comprehensive training and mentorship, focusing on advocacy and lobbying. These sessions provided her with essential skills to articulate and promote women's rights and participation in

leadership roles effectively. Engaging with various stakeholders, including executives, legislators, emirs, the council of ulamas, and political parties, she was able to advocate for women's inclusion in leadership positions. These meetings helped garner support for her cause and amplified her influence.

Amina's capacity as a leader was significantly enhanced through the project. She acquired skills to mobilize women to register for Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs). She shared her newfound knowledge about women's rights and leadership with them, ensuring their active participation in the electoral process. She conducted training sessions and mentorship programs for aspiring female leaders, encouraging them to develop their capacities and engage in politics.

Due to Amina's enhanced leadership and advocacy skills, her re-election to the council was unopposed. The WVL-N project played a significant role in her electoral success. She mobilized over 85 women in her constituency to obtain their PVCs, marking a significant shift in women's political engagement.



Amina's success has propelled her to aspire for higher leadership positions, such as Chairperson or member of the House of Assembly. Her leadership journey continues to inspire other women and young girls in her community. With these changes, women are becoming more involved in decision-making processes within the Wara community, breaking down barriers and stereotypes.

Amina Mohammed's journey from a Councilor with limited leadership skills to a dynamic advocate for women's rights and increased female participation in leadership positions exemplifies the potential of women to lead and make a difference when given the right support and opportunities. Her story highlights the importance of training, mentorship, and advocacy in empowering women to effect positive change in their communities. These not only transformed her own life but also paved the way for greater female participation and representation in her community, setting a precedent for future generations.





# Amplifying Women's Voices in Bauchi State: A Historic Milestone

Since the creation of Bauchi state in 1976, the State government has been plagued by a shortage of female representatives in high leadership positions. This was largely due to the entrenched cultural and traditional beliefs that hindered women from assuming key leadership roles. Women are hardly represented in the State House of Assembly, resulting in their limited involvement in the decision-making process. However, with the launch of the Women's Voice and Leadership (WVL-N) project in 2019, Fahimta organization, in collaboration with Local Women Rights Organizations (LWROs) ASHHF, RAHAMA and FOMWAN, worked to change this narrative.

Through steadfast advocacy efforts, Fahimta succeeded in convincing the state government to include more women in the leadership process. In 2020, they organized a joint advocacy visit to the office of the First Lady of the state and the State House of Assembly, highlighting the importance of women's involvement in decision-making processes. The visit was a turning point, paving the way for a series of significant milestones.

## **Fahimta was intentional in its approach.**

### **The organization:**

- established women peer education groups in ten (10) communities and a group of male advocates to support the women's peer groups in pushing for the involvement of women in leadership positions, both in public and private spaces.
- conducted stakeholders' meetings with relevant stakeholders to highlight the importance of women's involvement in the leadership process.
- sensitized community members on religious perspectives that support women's participation in the leadership process.
- established a state-level coordinating body, comprising CBOs, MDAs, LWROs, and state security agencies; to promote the enjoyment of women's rights in the state.

In 2023, the Bauchi State Government took a historic step by appointing five female commissioners across various ministries. This breakthrough was followed by the appointment of a female chairperson in Bauchi Local Government Area and a female co-chair for the Open Government Partnership (OGP), ensuring women's involvement in high-level decision-making processes. Additionally, both the current





chief registrar and her assistant, who doubles as the chief magistrate, are female. Interestingly, her court is the only one assigned to handle gender-based violence (GBV) cases.

For the first time in the history of Bauchi state, women hold a substantial number of high leadership positions, challenging the entrenched gender inequality bias. The appointments are a testament to the efforts of Fahimta and its partners, who worked tirelessly to promote women's rights and inclusion. The newly appointed female commissioners are working closely together to advance women's rights, in partnership with the Commissioner of Women Affairs and Child Development and other relevant stakeholders. The state-level coordinating body established by Fahimta provides a platform for women to collaborate and address the specific challenges they face.

This significant achievement aligns with the WVL-N initiative, which seeks to promote gender equality and enhance women's and girls' enjoyment of human rights. The appointments also contribute to the achievement of SDG Goal 5, which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by 2030.

The story of Fahimta and its partners inspire hope for women in Bauchi State and beyond. It demonstrates that, with determination and perseverance, women can overcome age-old barriers and shatter glass ceilings. As the first steps towards greater inclusion and equality, these appointments pave the way for a brighter future, where women play a more prominent role in shaping the political and social landscape of the state.







# act:onaid

Abuja Office:  
Plot 477, 41 Crescent, Off  
4th Avenue, Gwarinpa,  
FCT.

Lagos Office:  
1a Adeboye Solanke  
Street, by first bank bus  
stop, Allen Avenue, Ikeja,  
Lagos State.

Maiduguri:  
No 3, Gombole Street, Off  
Gombole Road  
Old GRA, Opposite Giwa  
Barracks, Maiduguri

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