

Advancing Gender Equity and Social Inclusion in the Context of FCT's Abuja Original Inhabitants (AOIs) Struggle for Social Justice and Full Participation



Introduction

Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) are cross-cutting issues. Whilst gender equity mainstreaming ensures equitable participation and promoting affirmative action for women empowerment, social inclusion on the other hand addresses the disparities faced by marginalized groups, including People with Disabilities (PWDs) and ethnic minorities. Gender and social Inclusion are vital components of Nigeria's broader efforts to achieve sustainable development and reduce disparities in society.¹ Gender-based disparities and social inequalities have profound implications for the country's development, calling for strategic interventions to promote social justice, equity and inclusion.

Integrating a GESI perspective into all policies, programs, and projects will promote the needs and interests of gender justice transforming the unequal power relations between social groups, promoting women's empowerment, inclusion of all people, especially those who are marginalized or excluded

due to their social identity or status. Thus, gender equity is not only a fundamental human right, but also a catalyst for sustainable development. Also, through inclusion, every member of society, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or background, has equal access to opportunities and resources. For Indigenous People (IP), it will also promote equal access to opportunities, resources, voice, and respect for their human rights and contribute to poverty reduction, address inequality, discrimination, and enhance social cohesion and peace.

In the context of Abuja Original Inhabitants of Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory, GESI becomes a strong affirmative action to right the wrong ensuring their full participation and social inclusion. At the heart of the Abuja Original Inhabitant (AOI) plights resides the core issue of sociopolitical exclusion, economic marginalization and cultural alienation or strangulation precipitated by poor implementation of the FCT Act of 1976 by successive governments and administrations in the country.² The wider dimension includes the issues of low and inadequate access to, and exclusion from basic social services in health, education, water, hygiene, sanitation, etc. as well as from political and economic processes and opportunities etc.³

Since the relocation of Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory to Abuja, the Original Inhabitants have continued to face plethora of challenges documented in the previous policy briefs.⁴ The Original Inhabitants, like many indigenous peoples or local communities, face marginalization and exclusion from decision-making processes. Their voices and perspectives have not been adequately

Their voices and perspectives have not been adequately considered in policies and development plans, as they lack representation, voice, and influence in the government and private sector. They have also been denied access to land, resources, and opportunities, as they have been displaced and dispossessed by the rapid urbanization and other regional infrastructural expansion.

1 With over 230 million estimated populations, Nigeria is characterized by a rich diversity of ethnicities, cultures, and traditions. However, this diversity also presents challenges related to gender inequality, discrimination, and the social exclusion of various groups.
 2 Resulting in the historic marginalization and exclusion experienced by the AOIs
 3 The original inhabitants of Abuja have been deprived of quality and affordable health, water, environment, and education services, as they have been neglected or discriminated against by the service providers.
 4 See, CHRICED's thematic policy briefs on addressing sexual and gender based violence as well as promoting cultural rights of Abuja Original Inhabitant

considered in policies and development plans, as they lack representation, voice, and influence in the government and private sector. They have also been denied access to land, resources, and opportunities, as they have been displaced and dispossessed by the rapid urbanization and other regional infrastructural expansion.

Hence, the goal of ensuring social inclusion leaving no one behind can be achieved if the social exclusion,

historic marginalization and discrimination experienced by AOIs are addressed and mainstreamed through implementation of effective GESI mainstreaming strategies. Thus, this policy brief focusing on advancing Indigenous Peoples' Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (IP-GESI) aims at ensuring Abuja Original Inhabitants and other excluded or marginalized groups receive services in an equitable manner rooted in affirmative actions without discrimination.

Contextualizing the Issue

Women and men have different roles and responsibilities placed on them by society. These context-specific roles result in differential experiences in all aspects of life. Men for instance have more access to the resources and opportunities while women may lack de facto access even if the law states equality of access. Gender therefore is about society's definition of roles and responsibilities and how these led to different realities for men and women and how these differentials can be addressed to ensure equality of access and benefits. In addition to gender, several other factors of exclusion exist such as socioeconomic status, age, disabilities, locations, ethnicity, disease and religion are barriers to social inclusion. These factors intersect thus, one person may suffer multiple discrimination and exclusion. It is important therefore that a clear understanding of these factors is brought into the mainstream of policy formulation, choices, the design of projects, implementation and reporting to ensure inclusiveness.

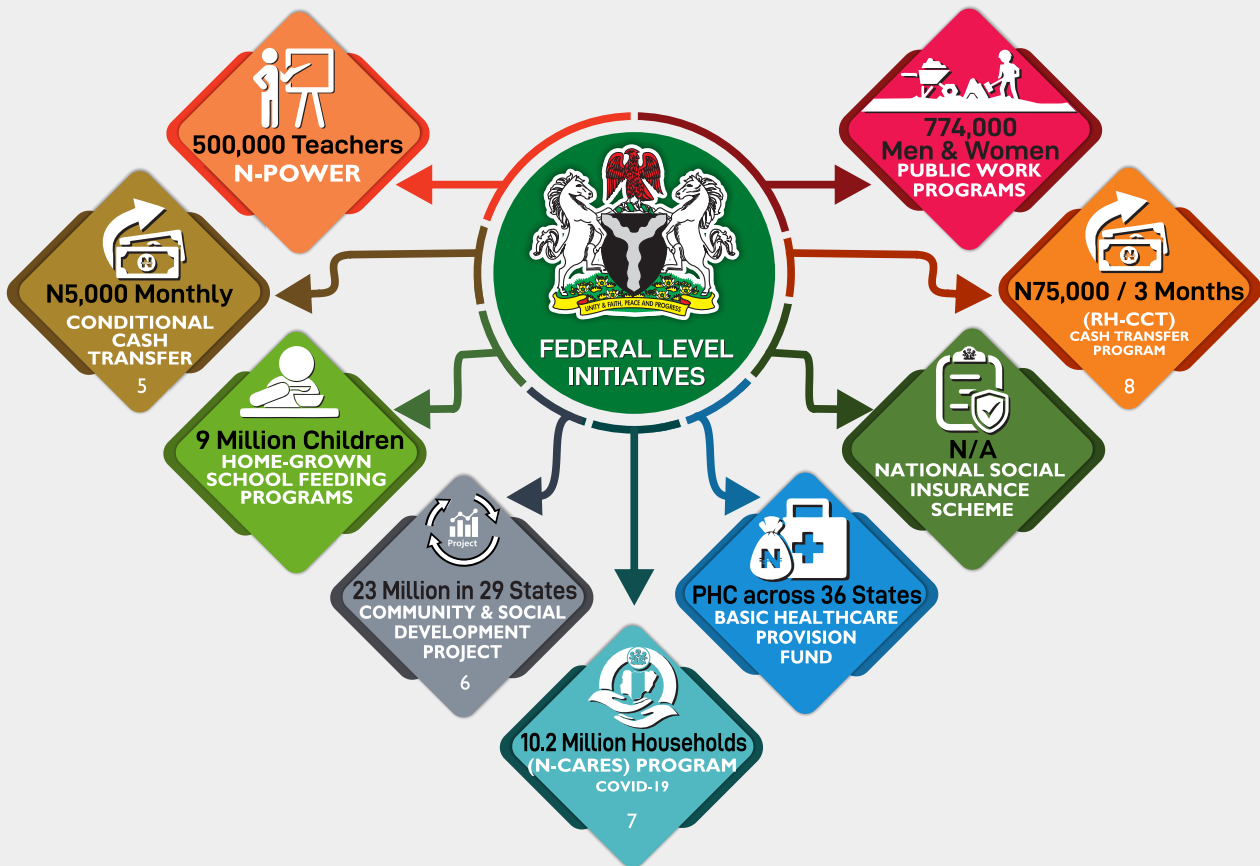
Policy and legislative landscape for promoting gender equity and social inclusion in Nigeria

Considering that gender and social inclusion are crucial for the achievement of sustainable development, GESI specific actions are needed to be taken seriously to ensure inclusivity and full participation of everyone in the spirit of leaving no one behind. There are plethora of policy and legislations formulated to address gender and social inclusion in Nigeria despite the level of social injustices and inequalities in the country. Hence, GESI is grounded within national and international frameworks, policy and legislative regimes which include but are not limited to the new National Gender Policy 2022; the National Youth Policy and Implementation Strategies; Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform of Action (BPFA) for women's socio-economic and political advancement; the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), etc.

KEY POLICY AND LEGISLATIONS

1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, (as amended)	Violent Against Person Prohibition Law, 2015	National Disability Legislation, 2014	Revised National Gender Policy, 2021-2026	Gender Policy in Agriculture, 2019
1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, (as amended)	National Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change for Nigeria, 2020-2025	Federal Ministry of Finance Gender Responsive Budget Scheme	National Health Act, 2014 BHCPS and the National Health Insurance Authority Act, 2021	Child Rights Act, 2023

Some selected Social Inclusion Policies



Even though the above policy and legislative regimes might have been formulated or enacted without discrimination, and expected to create an enabling environment for the institutionalization of GESI approaches. However, their implementations have not taken the specificities of Abuja Original

Inhabitants into consideration. The more reason the IP- GESI goal is to promote the full and active engagement of all excluded groups especially AOs women, men, young people and PWDs in Nigeria's development discourse.

The GESI strategy are based on the following principles;

Gender and social inclusion is a cross-cutting, mainstreamed issue and goes beyond just numbers.

All interventions must seek to ensure the inclusion of the needs and interests of marginalized women and men as well as all excluded groups in each project and actively engage such groups in all stages of project implementation. Active participation of the excluded goes beyond just numbers representing the group but involves specifically assigned responsibilities and roles including leadership responsibilities. This will be clearly reflected in all internal and external reports to donors/partners.

Women's Economic Empowerment is considered as key to sustained development.

While women engage in a variety of economic activities, they are also saddled with the responsibility for the well-being of their families. The gendered nature of the society however places cultural and legal barriers to their access to information, opportunities and resources that would enhance their economic activities; increase their income; reduce labor time and increase their power and agency. Therefore, where necessary, projects will be designed and implemented from a Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) perspective to enable women access opportunities

Youth participation is vital for effective programming.

Considering that young people constitute a large percentage of Nigeria's population and are therefore a potential source of change, specific efforts will be made to incorporate youth perspectives, aspirations and ideas as an integral part of all projects. Where necessary, a youth need assessment will be done to determine the understanding of the needs of young people and their area of greatest need in each project and how best to engage them.

5 <https://ncto.gov.ng/>

6 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2021/10/27/nigeria-the-community-led-approach-that-is-helping-inclusive-development>

7 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/12/16/nigeria-to-scale-up-delivery-of-social-assistance-to-10-2-million-households>

8 <https://nairametrics.com/2023/10/17/fg-launches-conditional-cash-transfer-of-n75000-to-15million-households/>

A comprehensive and consistent approach to considering excluded groups will guide the inclusion of such groups in organizational projects.

Local experience will therefore be sought to design and implement activities that reflect the concerns, priorities of excluded groups such as PWDs in all organizational projects to enable them to fully participate. Furthermore, specific efforts will be made to engage with CSOs that work specifically with such excluded groups.

Source: Culled from GGT's GESI Policy originally adopted from Strengthening Advocacy and Civic Engagement (SACE) draft template for partners

Challenges of poor implementation of GESI policies in Nigeria

- **Lack of Institutional Capacity:** One of the major challenges in Nigeria's implementation of gender mainstreaming and social inclusion policies is the inadequate institutional capacity at various levels of government. Many government agencies lack the necessary expertise, resources, and commitment to effectively integrate and implement these policies.
- **Deep-Seated Cultural Norms and Practices:** Nigeria's diverse cultural landscape often harbors deep-seated traditional norms and practices that perpetuate gender disparities and social exclusion. Patriarchal systems, early marriage practices, and gender-based violence continue to hinder the full participation of women and marginalized groups.
- **Inadequate Funding and Resource Allocation:** The allocation of financial resources for GESI initiatives is often insufficient. This lack of funding hampers the implementation of programs and projects aimed at addressing gender and social disparities.
- **Political Will and Leadership:** Effective implementation of GESI policies depends on strong political will and leadership. In Nigeria, political commitment to these issues has been inconsistent, with changes in government sometimes resulting in shifts in priorities. A lack of sustained leadership and commitment can undermine policy implementation efforts.
- **Data Collection and Analysis:** Accurate and up-to-date data is essential for evidence-based policy planning and implementation. However, Nigeria faces challenges in collecting and analyzing gender-disaggregated data, which is crucial for monitoring progress and targeting interventions.
- **Poor Coordination:** The poor coordination of GESI policies has resulted in fragmented efforts, hindering the intended impact of these initiatives. Lack of alignment and synergy among various government agencies and departments often leads to overlapping mandates and inadequate resource allocation.

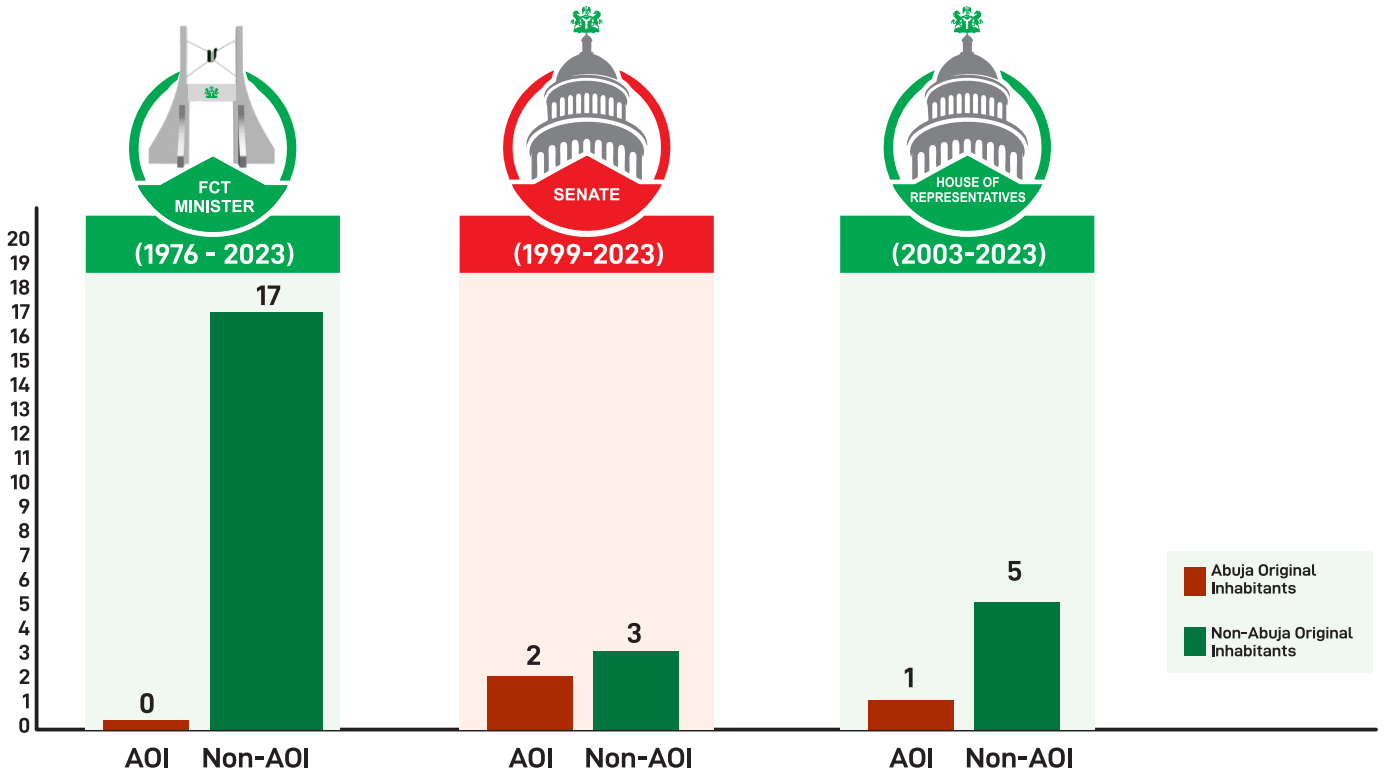
Challenges with regards to Abuja Original Inhabitants

The lack of political representation has implications for the democratic rights and welfare of the FCT residents, especially the Original Inhabitants. They have limited voice and influence in the decision-making processes that affect their lives and livelihoods. They also face challenges in accessing basic services and infrastructure, such as education, health, water, electricity, and roads. Moreover, they are vulnerable to the frequent changes and uncertainties in the policies and administration of the Federal Capital Territory Administration FCTA, which often depend on the whims and interests of the president and the minister.

The issue of political representation in Abuja remains unresolved and contentious, as the Original Inhabitants and other residents continue to struggle for their democratic rights and interests, while the federal government and the political elites maintain their control and dominance over the city.

Due to lack of political representation, AOIs have been demanding for more political inclusion and recognition, as well as compensation for their land and protection of their cultural rights. They have also been advocating for the creation of a state for the FCT, so that they can have the opportunity to elect their own governor and state legislators. However, these demands have been met with resistance and indifference by the federal government and the political elites, who see Abuja as a symbol of national unity and a neutral ground for all Nigerians.

Elective and Appointive Positions of the FCT since it Became the Capital of Nigeria



One of the recent achievements was the nomination and confirmation of Zaphaniah Jisalo, an original inhabitant of Abuja, as a junior minister in the President Bola Ahmed Tinubu administration (2023). This was the first time that an Original Inhabitant of Abuja has been appointed as a minister, and it was seen as a sign of recognition and respect for the AOIs. However, Jisalo's appointment did not satisfy the aspirations of the Original Inhabitants, who still want a full-fledged minister of the FCT, or a state governor, to represent them. However, for the government of Nigeria, creating a state for the FCT would violate the constitution, which stipulates that the FCT shall be under the exclusive legislative and executive jurisdiction of the federal government.

Another achievement was the passage of a bill by the House of Representatives in 2023, which sought to amend the constitution to create six area councils for

the FCT, and to grant them the status of local government areas. The bill also proposed to create a House of Assembly for the FCT, and to allow the residents to elect their own mayor and deputy mayor. The bill was sponsored by the three members of the House of Representatives representing the FCT, who argued that it would enhance the political representation and autonomy of the FCT. However, the bill was not passed by the Senate, and it was not assented by the president, thus rendering it ineffective.

The future of Abuja depends on how the conflicting claims and interests of the various stakeholders are negotiated and balanced, and how the constitutional and institutional frameworks are reformed and implemented to ensure the political representation and inclusion of the residents of Abuja.

Basic Five Steps Checklist Questions for Effective Implementation of GESI Mainstreaming Strategy for Indigenous Peoples (IP) such as Abuja Original Inhabitants

Step I: identification/situation analysis

- Is there a clear definition of the factors of exclusion to be addressed by the proposed intervention?⁹
- How will the roles of women, men, young people and people with disability (PWDs) in target community; political sphere; workplace and household affect the project?
- What are the roles of people in decision-making and different access to and control over resources and services?
- How will anticipated results of the intervention affect women, men, young people and people with disability differently?
- Is available data disaggregated by these factors of exclusion?¹⁰
- Were women, men, young people, PWDs, and IP involved in the collation of qualitative and quantitative data as participants and resource persons?

9 For instance, clearly stating that the interventions will only address gender, age, disability, and AOIs as factors of exclusion.

10 Is/has collation of data being disaggregated by the relevant factors of exclusion? For example, age, disability and gender, IP.

- Did the research process look at who has access to resources and opportunities in the sector of intervention and how they are doing now?
- Have the barriers excluding target groups being identified?¹¹
- How can such barriers be bridged? Were the views of excluded groups sought and incorporated?
- How can women, youth, PWDs and IP have equal access to resources and opportunities?
- How can women, youth, PWDs and IP have more control over resources?
- How will increase access to opportunities and resources impact women and men's labor, time, workloads etc.
- What is the status of women, men, young

people, PWDs, and IP in the sector? How does this impact to their lack of access, voice and participation?

- What policies exist in the sector and how do they impact the target groups?
- What existing interventions and how are they impacting target groups?
- What informal institutions and norms exist and how do these impact your target group? and how can you address these impacts if they contribute to exclusion, how these be addressed? If they impact the groups positively how can these be harnessed?
- Gender and social inclusion analysis is important at start of project and even during implementation if the need arises

Step 2: Designing Intervention

- Do the project objectives reflect the needs of the target group and is it inclusive? Does it address the identified gaps from the situation and analysis
- Do planned activities aim to improve the voice and participation of excluded groups? Do they include targeted excluded groups and ensure participation as leaders and not just as participants in planned activities?
- What was/is the level of involvement of

excluded groups in the program design?

- Do planned activities increase the workload of women? How can this be addressed?
- Do planned activities improve access to resources and opportunities for excluded groups? How do these activities ensure that excluded groups have control our resources acquired as a result of your intervention?
- Does the design stage include a GESI 'champions' who contribute to the process of design

Step 3: Implementation:

- Are all project staff, including partners, trained to be aware of the needs of women, men, young people and people with disability?
- How inclusive is the project staff? How many men, women, young people and people with disability are on staff?
- Are selection and mobilization processes of participants inclusive? How many women, men, young people and people with disability involved and what is the ratio of

representation of different populations of each group included for instance, how many youths in the lower/upper levels of the age spectrum involved; how many young women with disability are involved?

- Are delivery channels accessible for women, men, young people, and people with disability in terms of timing, location
- What mechanisms exist to ensure that intervention benefits are not controlled only by men

Step 4: Monitoring, evaluation, adjustment and reporting:

- Does situation analysis include relevant gender and social inclusion (age, disability) concerns?
- Are project indicators G and S.I sensitive?
- Is there expertise in the team to gather G&SI sensitive information?
- Is data collected in disaggregated manner by gender, sex and age?
- Are clear questions being asked about female and male roles?
- Are clear questions being asked about project impact on men and women, young people and

people with disability?

- Are mixed methods being used to gather and analyze data?
- Are evaluation teams inclusive and culturally sensitive?
- Is there a regular reflection process that focuses on the GESI effects of the intervention and how to adapted intervention strategy to make it more GESI responsive?
- Are the effects of the intervention on women, men, young people and people with disability part of every progress report?

¹¹ Were they involved in this identification process?

Step 5: Institutional/organizational:

- Is the office accessible for all staff, partners and guests?
- Are office facilities GESI sensitive, for instance are restrooms disability and gender friendly—spacious/ wall supports/running water/relevant toiletries?
- Is there a diverse and inclusive staff?
- Does management have a clear commitment to GESI?
- Do all staff have access to career development opportunities?
- Is working environment GESI sensitive - language, discriminatory practices etc?
- Are there family friendly policies – flexible working hours, childcare?
- Is there a system of sharing GESI knowledge/learning with staff, partners and others?

Source: Culled from GGT's GESI Policy originally adopted from Strengthening Advocacy and Civic Engagement (SACE) draft template for partners

General Policy Recommendations for effective GESI implementation in Nigeria

- **Strengthen Institutional Capacity:** Enhance the capacity of government institutions responsible for gender mainstreaming and social inclusion. This includes providing training for policymakers, officials, and civil servants to better understand, implement, and monitor these policies effectively. Establish clear roles and responsibilities within ministries and agencies to ensure coordinated efforts in implementing gender and social inclusion initiatives.
- **Community Sensitization and Awareness Programs:** Launch comprehensive awareness campaigns and community engagement initiatives to challenge cultural norms and practices that perpetuate gender disparities and social exclusion. These programs should target both urban and rural areas, emphasizing the importance of education, gender equality, and social inclusion. Collaborate with local leaders, civil society organizations, and community-based groups to drive these efforts.
- **Increase Budget Allocations:** Prioritize funding for GESI programs in national and state budgets. Allocate sufficient resources to ensure the effective implementation of policies and initiatives. Monitor budget execution to ensure that funds are used for their intended purposes and that they reach the targeted beneficiaries, particularly women and marginalized groups. More importantly, GESI responsive budget is an invaluable tool for tracking and assessing the degree to which fiscal governance mainstreams social inclusion. Going forward, there is a need to build capacity for GESI-responsive budgeting at National and subnational levels to achieve more inclusion.
- **Sustained Political Commitment:** Promote consistent political will and leadership in addressing gender and social disparities. Encourage governments to prioritize gender mainstreaming and social inclusion policies as essential components of development. Develop mechanisms that ensure policy continuity across different administrations to prevent fluctuations in priorities.
- **Data Collection and Analysis Improvement:** Invest in the collection, analysis, and dissemination of gender-disaggregated data. Strengthen the capacity of government agencies to gather and use data for informed decision-making. Ensure that data collection tools and methodologies are inclusive and culturally sensitive. Use data to track progress, identify areas of concern, and tailor policies and programs accordingly.
- **Coordination:** To address the issue of poor coordination in gender and social inclusion policies, program and projects, Nigeria should establish a dedicated coordinating body that bridges various government agencies, departments, private and NGOs ensuring streamlined efforts and accountability. This central authority should facilitate information sharing, collaboration, and the harmonization of policies to avoid duplication. Additionally, regular reviews and assessments of coordination efforts should be conducted to identify gaps and improve the effectiveness of these policies in achieving Gender Equality and Social Inclusion.

Specific Recommendations in the context of Abuja Original Inhabitants IP-GESI strategy

- Recognizing and respecting the rights and interests of the original inhabitants of Abuja, especially their land rights, cultural heritage, and political representation. The government should implement the recommendations of the 2014 National Conference report, which proposed the creation of a state within the FCT and the election of a governor and deputy governor for the FCT. The government should also consult and involve the original inhabitants in the

planning and development of the FCT, and ensure that they are adequately compensated and resettled when their lands are acquired for public purposes.

- Promoting the participation and empowerment of women and other marginalized groups in the political and socio-economic development of Abuja. The government should enact and enforce laws and policies that foster gender equality and protect women from violence, discrimination, and harassment. The government should also support the education and training of women and girls, and create opportunities for them to access health, water, and environment services. Civil society groups, such as the Abuja Women Forum (AWF), should continue to advocate and campaign for the rights and interests of women in Abuja, and provide support and solidarity for them.
- Strengthening the capacity and skills of civil society groups and activists to conduct evidence-based advocacy and monitoring of the delivery

and quality of basic services in Abuja. The civil society groups, such as the Original Inhabitants Development Association of Abuja (OIDA) and the Coalition of FCT Indigenous Associations (COFIA), should conduct baseline studies and surveys to understand the situation and needs of the original inhabitants in terms of access to health, education, water, and environment services.

- Enhancing the participation and representation of the original inhabitants of Abuja in the governance and development of the city, by ensuring their consultation, involvement, and empowerment in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of policies and programs.
- Improving the access and quality of basic services for the original inhabitants of Abuja, by addressing the gaps and barriers in the provision and delivery of health, water, environment, and education services, and by ensuring their affordability, availability, and acceptability.

Conclusion

Increasingly, the issue of inclusive development cannot be glossed about by policymakers if development outcome has to be sustainable. While some countries have started taken steps to address issue of inclusive development, policymakers in Nigeria appear to be foot dragging evident in ineffective GESI implementation in spite of policy and legislative commitment by the government. For enduring peace, political stability, and sustainable development, governments must be aware of social exclusions and work towards promoting inclusion by protecting the fundamental human rights and interests of different groups in the society. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) recognizes this context when it warns that “no Nigerian citizen shall be discriminated against on the basis of sex, religion or ethnic background”. Nevertheless, some of the identified drivers of social exclusion in Nigeria still include sex, age, ethnic and religious minorities and disability status.

About

CHRICED

Established in 2006, with offices in Abuja and Kano, the Resource Center for Human Rights and Civic Education is a registered Nigerian non-profit promoting human rights and advancing a democratic, representative, and inclusive political culture in Nigeria. CHRICED work is anchored on the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, and the Nigerian Constitution. CHRICED is a reputable organization with a track record of partnering with foundations, religious organizations, and development partners across Europe and North America, including Bishoppfliches Hilfswerk MISEREOR, e.V (the German Catholic Bishops' Organisation for Cooperation) and the Katholische Zentrastelle für Entwicklungshilfe e.V (Catholic Central Agency for Development Aid), the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and Open Society Foundation, to mention a few.

For core programming, CHRICED uses civics, research and publication, advocacy, information sharing, grassroots organizing, networking and outreach to mobilize vulnerable and marginalized segments of the population to implement innovative grassroots-focused programs aimed at energizing community action to resist injustice, curb corruption and foster accountability; and bring about fundamental changes in societal norms and behaviors, which fuel injustices and corruption.

Over the years, CHRICED has amassed the requisite experience and track record in project management in the areas of human rights promotion, deepening accountability and mobilizing marginalised groups to amplify their concerns in governance processes. In terms of strategic alliances, CHRICED has a strong relationship with community actors across Nigeria, including youth networks, indigenous people's groups, farmers' collective, women activists, traditional leaders and social influencers. CHRICED also has a name recognition, which would boost its ability to convene stakeholders on the demand and supply side of human rights, including inhabitant self-determination groups. Also, as a result of the consistency of its messaging on human rights, and accountable governance, CHRICED has become a credible voice in the debate on the democratic process in Nigeria.

CHRICED's key philosophy is that civic education dissemination is cardinal to the empowerment of the citizens.



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