



European Union's Gender Action

Equality between men and women is one of the core values of the European Union (EU) and enshrined in its legal and political framework. The EU is at the forefront of the protection and fulfilment of girls' and women's rights and vigorously promotes them in its external relations. In recent years, there has been an increasing political momentum in the international community to ensure that girls' and women's rights are fulfilled and that empowering action is adequately supported through galvanised efforts.

The EU Gender Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (2016-2020) provides a framework for transforming the lives of girls and women through EU External Relations. It reaffirms the essential role of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as drivers for sustainable development. The EU sees women and girls' rights as both a standalone goal and a cross-cutting issue in development policy.

The Context

Although significant success has been made towards achieving gender equality, the level of achievement has been uneven across regions and

“WE SHOULD ALL ASPIRE TO A WORLD WHERE THE RIGHTS OF GIRLS AND WOMEN ARE CLAIMED, VALUED AND RESPECTED BY ALL”

within countries. Worldwide, girls and women continue to be systematically left behind and discriminated against. Women typically experience higher levels of poverty than men do.

Persistent, and in some cases unprecedented, violations of women's rights occur on a daily basis. The situation is exacerbated by conflicts. Rape is used as a weapon of war. Women and girls are being trafficked, enslaved and even sold as

merchandise. Harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) continue to exist.

In many countries, young women are less likely than young men to be in paid work, education or training.

They are also less likely to complete secondary education. Women still do not earn the same wages as men and do not have the same access to, or control over, productive resources such as land.



Social norms lock girls and women into unequal power relations, leaving many girls and women with little control over decisions that affect their lives, be it at household, community or national level. Discriminatory laws, practices or norms often limit girls' and women's social, economic and political participation.

Transforming the lives of GIRLS and WOMEN through EU External Relations 2016-20

The EU is committed to breaking the vicious cycle of gender discrimination. It supports partner countries to establish a more enabling environment for the fulfilment of girls' and women's rights and to achieve real and tangible improvements on gender equality. Our vision is a world where the rights of girls and women are claimed, valued and respected by all, and where everyone is able to fulfil their potential and contributes to a more fair and just society for all.



European Union's Gender Action

The EU believes that:

- Women's empowerment is a question of democracy and good governance. Strengthening women's voice and participation at all levels of society can have significant positive impacts. It can facilitate peace, reconstruction and state building processes.
- Gender equality is about the realisation of human rights for all. Ignoring the systematic and consistent discrimination experienced by half of the world's population is unethical and a breach of fundamental rights.
- There are clear moral and ethical reasons to promote gender equality in all spheres of life as there is growing evidence that it is a fundamental ingredient of development that is socially, economically and ecologically sustainable.

Gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment are part of the formula for economic progress. Girls' and women's economic empowerment is a driver of development that addresses poverty, reduces inequalities and improves development outcomes.

Promoting gender equality and shifting norms and value-sets that limit girls and boys, women and men, from fulfilling their potential, are mutually reinforcing processes. They challenge deeply rooted structural inequalities to benefit society as a whole.

In fragile, conflict and emergency situations, it is essential to take gender and age differentiations into account to adopt effective and high quality programmes.

To deliver on this vision, the EU has strengthened its efforts to place gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women at the heart of its external actions, focusing on four pivotal areas:

- Ensuring girls' and women's physical and psychological integrity
- Promoting the economic and social rights / empowerment of girls and women
- Strengthening girls' and women's voice and participation
- Shifting the EU's institutional culture to more effectively deliver on its commitments.

The EU's Gender Programmes in Nigeria

The European Union is involved in a range of activities aimed at empowering girls and women, protecting their rights, transforming their lives and strengthening their voice as drivers of sustainable development. Gender projects currently being funded by the EU include:

The ***Promoting Women's Engagement in Peace and Security in Northern Nigeria*** project,



which seeks to strengthen women's leadership, advance gender equality and improve protection of women and children in conflict settings with focus on three Northern states. It aims to strengthen women's role in conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding; mitigate the impact of conflict



European Union's Gender Action

upon women and girls; and establish a conducive environment for effective implementation and monitoring of gender equality commitments in Nigeria. The project is being implemented by the UN Women.

Another project, ***A Model for Community Monitoring of CEDAW***, aims to contribute to the promotion of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in Nigeria, especially the provisions relating to gender-based violence and discriminatory practices. It is being implemented in Ekiti state. It is targeted at young women in two focal local government areas of the state, with a view building their consciousness on their fundamental human rights and promoting their ability to seek redress for violations.

The ***Support to the Health Sector in Nigeria*** is an EU-supported project that focuses on Maternal, New Born and Child Health-Care (MNCH), including nutrition and resilience, in three focal states of Adamawa, Bauchi and Kebbi. The project is expected to contribute to the complete eradication of polio in Nigeria.



It aims to establish one functional quality Primary Health Care (PHC) centre in each ward of the focal states, capable of providing high impact interventions in health, nutrition and resilience to surrounding communities. It is also designed to

strengthen health information management systems at national and sub-national levels, by boosting government capacity for data management and health expenditure tracking.

Besides projects that are funded by the EU to address some of the gaps identified in the Gender Action Plan, the EU collaborates with partner organisations, the civil society and government agencies to support thematic or horizontal initiatives that empower women and unleash their potentials for development. For instance, the EU provides support to Nigeria's anti-human trafficking agency, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP) to enhance its operational capability and effectiveness.

Transforming the lives of GIRLS and WOMEN through EU External Relations 2016-20

EU OBJECTIVES:



Girls and women live free from all forms of violence and discrimination.



Girls and women participate as equals in the economic life and have access to all economic resources and social services.



Girls and women participate equally in decision-making at all levels.



Commission services and EEAS deliver more effectively on EU commitments towards gender equality and women's empowerment through external relations.



More information: <http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-15-5691 en.htm>