“Women Make It Happen!” Passage of the VAPP Bill in Nigeria

The UN Women, together with UNICEF, UNFPA and members of the Legislative Advocacy Coalition on Violence Against Women (LACVAW), for several years, have been supporting national advocacy for the passage of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Bill. It was finally signed into Law in May 2015.

LACVAW, with support from UN Women and other partners, mobilized over 700 women using the slogan “MAKE IT HAPPEN”, to support the Public Hearing of the Senate Committee on Judiciary, precedent in the Senate’s history. The Senate committed to passing the Bill. The former Hon. Minister of Women Affairs and Social Development, Hajjiya Zainab Maina, also participated in the Public Hearing.

Prior to the public hearing, Stakeholders conducted an advocacy visit to the then Senate leader, Ndoma Egba to seek his support for the passage of the Bill. These efforts, among several other engagements with the Senate and the media, facilitated the passage of the VAPP Bill into Law and its eventual assent as VAPP Act 2015 by former President Goodluck Jonathan.

The UN Gender Theme Group, chaired by UN Women, will continue to support the implementation and popularization of the VAPP Act.
Call for Social Protection for Nigerian Women

Concerted and innovative efforts are required to develop a sustainable mechanism for addressing pressing social protection issues.

Although the National Gender Policy (2006), Rehabilitation Policy (2002) and the Child Rights Act (2003) exist in Nigeria, their limited implementation has resulted in precarious socio-economic and political conditions, thus deepening poverty in Nigeria.

In this regard, UN Women in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, organised a stakeholders’ consultative forum in Abuja on 21 May aimed at strengthening the policy and service delivery of national institutions.

Drawing on lessons from previous efforts to promote legal frameworks and other gender sensitive reforms in Nigeria and elsewhere, it was acknowledged that change and reform processes need a wide range of consultation with stakeholders and decision makers.

Consequently, the forum generated additional views and inputs to build on recommended interventions, institutional and financing arrangements for increasing gender equality, women’s empowerment, equity and social inclusion in Nigeria.

Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill Passed into Law in Plateau State

The Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill (GEOB) has been passed into Law in Plateau State.

The indefatigable efforts by a wide range of stakeholders (UN Women, the State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, German Development Cooperation - GIZ, a network of Civil Society Organisations, and the media) in favor of the Bill finally yielded to the Bill being passed into law on 12th May 2015 by the Plateau State House of Assembly.

The Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill (GEOB) is a Bill seeking to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and promote gender equality. The process of passing the Bill into law in Plateau State has been on-going for several years, and only passed through the second reading on May 31st 2012.

The Programme, ‘Promoting Women’s Engagement in Peace and Security in Northern Nigeria,’ being implemented by UN Women in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development and UNICEF, and funded by the European Union, increased the momentum in favor of the Bill by supporting the Plateau State Ministry of Women Affairs, CSOs and other stakeholders to remain resilient in pursuit of the Bill.

This support included a Stakeholder’s Review Workshop on the GEOB, advocacy visits/rally to the Plateau State House of Assembly and the Executive Governor of Plateau State, among other top government officials, in addition to media public mobilization/sensitization.

One of the rallies by different CSOs in Plateau State House of Assembly for the Passage of the GEO Bill.
The Women’s Situation Room established during Nigeria’s General Elections of March 28 and 29, 2015, received both national and international recognition for playing a major role in Nigeria’s peaceful elections. The award which was bestowed on May 27, 2015 by the Presidential Committee on Transition and Presidential Inauguration, is highly recognised in Nigeria. It was also awarded to other key supporters of peaceful elections including the National Orientation Agency (NOA). The award was received by the National Coordinator for the Women Situation Room, Ms. Joy Onyesoh on behalf of the Women’s Situation Room.

UN Women Nigeria Office in collaboration with the National Platform for Peaceful Elections, a Network of Women Organizations, set up a Women’s Situation Room at the Federal Capital Territory and in nine States, considered flash points during the 2015 general elections. These were Anambra, Benue, Enugu, Gombe, Imo, Kaduna, Lagos, Plateau and Rivers states.

There was a heightened fear of violence, intimidation and possible breakdown of law and order following violent experiences that characterised political campaigns and rallies in all over the country during the election period.

It was against this background that UN Women in partnership with key stakeholders working under the Democratic Governance for Development (DGD) Project being coordinated by UNDP, set up a Women’s Situation Room. It was one of several activities that were initiated to mitigate violence during the elections particularly those affecting women as candidates and voters.

The Women’s Situation Room—the first of its kind in Nigeria—contributed to the creation of an interaction forum among different agencies including the election management body, law enforcement actors, Civil Society Organisations, to document, share and respond to incidences of violence that were reported. Selected eminent African women played a key role in advocating for the public and those involved in the elections to abide by the Peace Accord sworn by the political parties.

The Women’s Situation Room was a non-partisan monitoring structure that brought together different parties to foster peaceful co-existence during the electoral period.

The Group of Eminent African Women:
- Justice Margareth Igbetar (Nigeria)
- Prof. Uche Azikiwe (Nigeria)
- Ms. Yemisi Rasome-kuti (Nigeria)
- Amb. Eleanor Cooper (Liberia)
- Dr. Kadi Sesay (Sierra Leone)
- Mme. Turrie Akilere-Ismail
- Mme. Cyvette Gibson (Liberia)
still had challenges related to poverty, youth unemployment, female genital mutilation, and women’s deprivation from land ownership, as well as family and public health care among others.

The Representatives of the UN agencies commended the First Lady’s initiative and acknowledged that if the value chain of the resources in the State are well maximized, it would go a long way in addressing many of the challenges faced by the State. Dr. Grace Ongile at the meeting, also solicited for the support of the Ebonyi State Government in promoting the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill at the State level.

Concluding the meeting, the four agencies agreed to partner with Ebonyi State in the area of economic empowerment.

On 25th June 2015, Her Excellency, Chief Mrs. Rachel Umahi, the Wife of Ebonyi State Governor (Chief Dave Umahi), paid an advocacy visit to the Country Representatives of four UN agencies; UN Women, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), and United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO). Led by the Representative of UN Women to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Dr Grace Ongile, the meeting took place at the UN Women Office in Abuja.

The visit solicited the partnership of the UN agencies in the Ebonyi State project aimed at empowering women in agriculture for sustainable development. The presentation made by the team from Ebonyi state illustrated that despite the abundance of agricultural and mineral resources, the State,
UN Women Partners with Intel to Support Women and Girls’ Access to ICTs and the Internet

According to data published by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), an estimated 59% of all men and 63% of all women are yet to become Internet users as at 2013. The number of women Internet users was estimated at 1.3 billion — accounting for 37 percent of all women worldwide. This is compared to the number of male Internet users, estimated at 1.5 billion — putting the total global Internet gender gap at 200 million as at 2013.

The digital gender gap was found to be even more pronounced in the developing world, where an estimated 16 percent fewer women than men, used the Internet (compared to only 2 percent fewer women than men in the developed world). As at 2011, Intel Corporation had estimated the gender gap for all 144 developing countries to stand at 23%. It was further estimated that in sub-Saharan Africa, twice as many men as women were on the Internet. Intel forecasted that without further action, this gap could grow to a total gender gap of 350 million in three years’ time.

UN Women is in the process of fast tracking the use of practical ways to equip girls’ and young women’s skills and knowledge of ICTs and the Internet as a platform for self-expression, shared learning, and networking. In line with this, UN Women has entered a strategic partnership with Intel Corporation on the Intel® “She Will Connect” program.

The programme seeks to reduce the digital gender gap through a combination of digital literacy training, online peer networks, and gender-relevant content. This partnership with Intel is premised on UN Women’s recognition of the critical role that Intel has played in re-defining business perspectives, practices and strategies, to promote the rights and freedoms of women and girls.

The programme will be piloted in 3 countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa) from July 2015-June 2016 with focus on the following results:
1. Increased use of digital services and e-services to advance women’s economic empowerment;
2. Enhanced digital literacy and use of ICTs among young women and girls; and,
3. Informing efforts to engender national policies on ICT.