

IRIAD COMMEMORATES HUMAN RIGHTS DAY 2021

REDUCING INEQUALITIES, ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS

The Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD) commemorates Human Rights Day 2021 by urging stakeholders around the world to increase efforts to protect and promote human rights. Our efforts to promote human rights include the following:

- Conducting research and advocacy to promote the rights of marginalised groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) to participate in government (in line with Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights).
- Organising sensitisation campaigns and outreaches in rural communities to protect women, youths and PWDs' rights.
- Conducting interventions to protect women, youths and PWDs' rights to equality and freedom from discrimination, particularly in electoral and political processes.
- Providing public education to promote knowledge and understanding of human rights and institutions of human rights protection

Human Rights Day is celebrated annually on 10 December to commemorate the day the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. The UDHR is “a milestone document, which proclaims the inalienable rights that everyone is entitled to as a human being – regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”.¹

The theme of Human Rights Day 2021 is “EQUALITY – Reducing inequalities, advancing human rights”. This theme is anchored on Article 1 of the UDHR, which states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. However, given the marginalisation of certain groups such as women, youth, and PWDs, it is evident that the goal of equality has not been realised. Using the electoral governance sector in Nigeria as an example, women hold less than 5% of all elected seats,² youth hold less than 1%,³ and PWDs currently hold none.⁴ This abysmally poor level of representation shows that these groups cannot participate in government on equal terms as their counterparts.

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/observances/human-rights-day>

² <https://www.cddwestafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Women-in-Competitive-Elections.pdf>

³ <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2019/11/27/nigerian-youths-poor-political-office-activism/>

⁴ Although there is limited data on this, none of the elected officials have openly stated that they have a disability.

COVID-19 has further exacerbated these inequalities. The poor and less economically privileged members of society bore the brunt of the hardship that came with lockdown orders. There was an increase in cases of gender-based violence,⁵ thus reinforcing gender inequality. There were also increased avenues for human rights abuses, as evident in indiscriminate killings by security officials purportedly enforcing lockdown orders.⁶ Undoubtedly, there is need for stronger rights protection in a COVID and post-COVID world.

Against this context, we call on all stakeholders to increase efforts to protect and promote human rights. Governments must develop and implement policies targeted at rights protection, using foundational documents like the UDHR as a guide. Law enforcement officials such as the police and the judiciary must strictly enforce human rights laws. CSOs should enlighten the public on their rights and how to protect them. The general public should take action in cases of human rights abuse by reporting cases to the authorities, organising peaceful protests, and signing petitions. If each stakeholder plays their part in human rights protection, we will be closer to achieving our desired goals of equality and freedom from discrimination in our society.

Signed

Princess Hamman-Obels | Founder and Director, IRIAD

Phone: +234 9121551331 and +234 9086998850

Email: comms@iriad.org and iriadev2020@gmail.com

Twitter: @iriadev

Instagram: @iriadev

Facebook: @iriadev

Websites: <https://www.iriad.org> and <https://www.electoralhub.iriad.org>



⁵ <https://www.partnersnigeria.org/the-impacts-of-covid-19-on-nigerian-women/>

⁶ <https://bbc.com/news/world-africa-52317196>