



INITIATIVE FOR RESEARCH,
INNOVATION AND ADVOCACY
IN DEVELOPMENT

IRIAD -THE ELECTORAL HUB COMMEMORATES 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD) commemorates 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence by urging all stakeholders to work towards the elimination of violence against women around the world. Our efforts to empower women and prevent violence against women include the following:

- Organising sensitisation campaigns in rural and marginalised communities to educate them on the causes and consequences of gender-based violence (GBV).
- Organising free trainings for women and young girls.
- Conducting research and advocacy to promote women's inclusion in the electoral process.

16 Days of Activism Against GBV is an annual international campaign that runs from 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to 10 December, Human Rights Day.¹ It was established in 1991 at the inaugural Women's Global Leadership Institute and is coordinated each year by the Center for Women's Global Leadership. The aim of the campaign is to call for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls.²

The theme of 16 Days of Activism Against GBV 2021 is "Orange the World: End Violence Against Women Now!" This theme is anchored on the fact that women and girls are disproportionately affected by GBV. According to the World Health Organization, about 1 in 3 women experience GBV in their lifetime, and young girls are most at risk.³ Even more alarming is the fact that this figure has remained largely unchanged over the past decade.⁴ Clearly, GBV is still a pressing issue that must be tackled urgently.

In the Nigerian context, the situation is no different. The prevalence of GBV cases has remained high, and even skyrocketed during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵ In addition, various social and cultural factors further increase the rate of violence against women and

¹ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/take-action/16-days-of-activism>

² Ibid

³ <https://www.who.int/news/item/09-03-2021-devastatingly-pervasive-1-in-3-women-globally-experience-violence>

⁴ Ibid

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

girls in Nigeria. These include female genital mutilation (FGM), child marriage, and harmful widowhood practices.

Violence against women in elections (VAWE) has also become a prevalent issue. VAWE may manifest in the form of election violence that is deliberately targeted at women, or election violence that affects women disproportionately. Research suggests that election violence affects women more than men, in terms of both frequency and extent of harm.⁶

Indeed, VAWE may be considered more harmful than other forms of GBV in the sense that it is not only a manifestation of inequality, but also a mechanism that formally institutionalises women's subordinate position in society.⁷ This is because VAWE prevents women from effectively participating in governance and decision-making processes, thereby reinforcing their exclusion.

In line with the theme of this year's 16 Days of Activism Against GBV, IRIAD- The Electoral Hub calls on all stakeholders around the world to work towards ending violence against women now, both within and outside the electoral space. Governments must develop and implement policies targeted at ending GBV. Legislatures must develop laws aimed at protecting women from GBV and punishing perpetrators. Law enforcement agencies must strictly enforce these anti-GBV laws. CSOs and the media must organise sensitisation and awareness-raising campaigns aimed at changing attitudes and behaviours, especially those that relate to harmful traditional practices such as FGM, child marriage, and widowhood practices. As we urge these stakeholders to continue to work towards eliminating violence against women, we are hopeful that the prevalence of GBV cases worldwide will reduce drastically in the medium to long term. In turn, the political participation and representation of women should also improve.

Signed

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