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Fifth Edition

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Africa Needs Intentional Investment In Women To Progress



- Amb. (Dr.) Smily Ghoshal

Rural Women Need Support - Expert



Gloria Nwafor

Physical Disability Is Not A Death Sentence

Nigeria Armed Forces: From Policy Shifts To Combat Roles And Global Recognition



AMB. DR. SMILY MUKTA

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CORPORATE TRAINER & SOFT SKILLS EXPERT
Empowering individuals and teams to communicate, lead and succeed.

MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER
Inspiring audiences to unlock their potential and achieve excellence.

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GENDER MILESTONES

Fubara Celebrates Women Judges, Reaffirms Commitment To Inclusiveness



L-R: Vice President ,National Association of Women Judges Nigeria (NAWJN), Hon Justice Onyekachi Otisi; Head of the Civil Service of Rivers State, Dr. (Mrs) Inyingi S. I. Brown; Chief Judge of Rivers State, Hon Justice Simeon Chibuzor Amadi and Chief Judge of Cross River State, Hon Justice Akon Bassey Ikpeme at the dinner in honour of the participants of the National Association of Women Judges Nigeria (NAWJN) South South Regional Conference held in Port Harcourt.

Governor of Rivers State, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, has hailed women judges for their invaluable contributions to justice delivery, good governance, gender equality and national development.

Governor Fubara gave the commendation on Friday at a dinner held in honour of participants of the National Association of Women Judges Nigeria (NAWJN), South-South Regional Conference at the Banquet Hall, Government House, Port Harcourt.

The Governor, who was represented by the Head of the Civil Service of Rivers State, Dr. (Mrs.) Inyingi S. I. Brown, described the regional conference as an important gathering of accomplished women in the judiciary and congratulated the association for its success.

He noted that beyond dispensing justice with fairness, courage and integrity, women judges serve as role models to countless young women aspiring to careers in law, public service and national leadership, demonstrating that excellence, competence and integrity know no gender.

Fubara stressed that no society can achieve its full potential when women are denied opportunities, assuring that his administration remains committed to promoting fairness, inclusiveness and equal opportunities in governance and public service.

He urged the association to continue building strong mentorship networks, supporting young female lawyers and creating pathways for the next generation of women leaders.

"I encourage this association to continue building strong mentorship networks, supporting young female lawyers and creating pathways through which the next generation of women leaders can develop with the confidence, competence and character required for leadership.

"Let us remember that the greatest legacy we can leave behind is not simply what we have accomplished for ourselves but what we make possible for those coming after us," he said.

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EDITOR'S SUITE



Gently and readily, we are moving, capturing great moments in the history of the women movement.

Records are being broken, raising hopes of a more inclusive future that helps propel women to develop their potentials.

This edition brings you interesting stories of sisters who dared to achieve despite the odds, what women are experiencing on the Nigerian political space, and encouraging milestones being achieved.

As we push on, the message is that there is light coming.

Enjoy!

Chief Constance Meju
Publisher/Editor.

POLITICS

The political fortunes of Nigerian women continues to be a cause of concern as the world pushes for equal opportunities in governance for development. Nigeria still ranks low with barely 7% representation in decision making. Rivers State women, cut in the middle of political crisis, tell a true story of the existing power imbalance in the country.

The Work Is Not Yet Done, More Deliberate Efforts Needed To Bring Women on the Decision Table



Chief Mrs. Opuruchi Bari Obinna, State Woman Leader, Labour Party, Zonal Secretary IPAC Women Directorate, South South and National Organizing Secretary, Female Candidates Inclusion Agenda.

With the level of awareness created so far, women are showing greater interest in participating in the 2027 political process than in previous elections. However, I must say that the level of inclusion is still below expectations because some women are still yet to understand the need for them to get involved in political affairs. So, more deliberate efforts are needed to ensure women are not just participants but also, candidates and decision-makers.

I keep saying that this goes a long way to say that we have a lot of work to do, a lot of efforts to put in grooming these women, in nurturing these women especially, those of them that have heard this message, and picked interest to be part of say, members, to know the expectations, to know the need for them to get involved fully.

Compliance

While some political parties have made effort to promote women's participation in compliance with the INEC gender policy of inclusion, it is generally inconsistent, it varies from party to party. There are still significant rooms for improvement. You know, because it is being affected by some political leadership influence like, political stakeholders suppressing or rather I should say, influencing the whole process of the party primaries. So there should be an improvement in ensuring that women are adequately represented at all levels.

What does the

Being at the zonal level of IPAC Women Directorate our responsibility is to promote women participation in politics, advocate for Gender equality within member

political parties, support capacity building for women aspiring to leadership, encourage peaceful political engagement and, work with stakeholders to eliminate barriers facing women in politics. So basically, we know that it is a whole lot of work and we have been pushing, we have been preaching and making sure that the message is out there for every woman to know that this is the basic reason why they should get involved; because, one thing is to let these women understand why they should get involved in politics.

Yes, we have received reports of political intimidation, harassment and defamation, online abuses and all that being directed at women involved in politics because, it is not just one woman. We have gotten reports from here and there and these issues remain a concern and can, actually discourage women from participating actively.

But we keep documenting all that and some of them, we are looking into through the appropriate channels and we strongly believe that we are going to get favourable and good results. We encourage affected women to document incidents and report them appropriately including reporting to relevant security and the electoral body. We also encourage political parties, civil society organizations and other stakeholders to encourage victims to receive support and that the perpetrators are being held accountable.

Delegates:

Delegates during the party primaries-the number of women on party Delegates list during the primaries varied across the political parties. Overall, women's representation was still lower than desirable as usual. But we strongly believe that greater inclusion is necessary to ensure fairness and equity and equal opportunities like we have been clamouring for.

The work is not done yet. We still have a long way to go. Political parties should implement the affirmative action, reduce nomination cost for women, provide leadership training and mentorship every other time, and also ensure internal party democracy to strengthen the enforcement of gender inclusion as well as, create a safe political environment free from violence and Intimidation.

A woman should not be seen as a sex toy. When you see a woman, you should allow the woman to explore, to get involved. Allow the woman to be part of the decision-makers.

Women are not just for cheerleaders. Women are not just for *asoebi* (uniform) wearing- to tie their wrapped, come out and dance; get their waist broken, get their legs broken. Society must also support and encourage competent women to seek leadership positions. This is what I think.

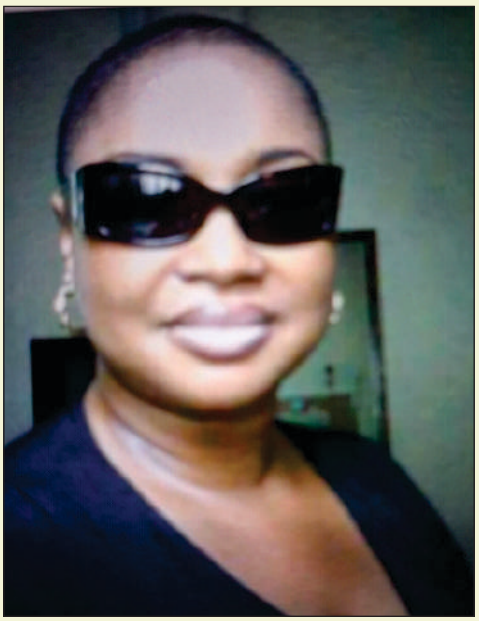
Honestly, we really need to do more to mainstream women into political leadership. I keep saying it to anyone cares to listen across political parties, that Nigeria is where it is today, because it has not given a woman an opportunity to rule. The blessings and capacity that we have as women, that gives us the leverage to organize our homes, is basically what Nigeria needs-a female president. And, until that is done, until that is achieved, we will still be where we are. So, the inclusion is something that everybody get involved and clamour for.

Inclusive governance leads to better decision-making. We all know that stronger democratic institutions and more balanced development come with women inclusion. So, we deserve meaningful representation in government

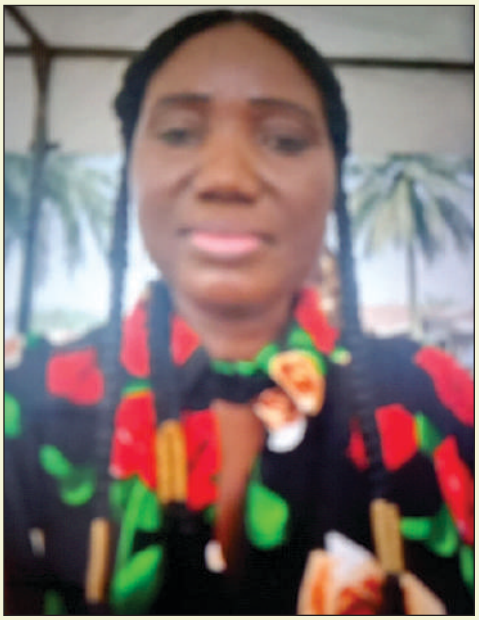
It is like Going Back To The Medieval Ages



Hon Okorite Carri-Adiele



Chief Kate Sam-Ngbor



Rivers State women in politics, because of the rift between Ex-governor Nyesom Wike and Governor Sim Fubara, are just standing on the fence. It is like going back to the medieval ages. Women have become so hopeless. In fact, the last prayer meeting we had two weeks ago after the party primaries were done, women had coiled back into their shells. They remain in their homes, they want to go back to their personal businesses and carry on with their skills to feed their families and all that.

All that the crusaders of women emancipation have worked for seems to be in futility. When it looked like women were in furtherance, now, it has become like a wasted venture. It has become hopeless. Women are no longer present even in women gatherings. We used to be thousands attending prayer sessions but the last one was just about 80-90 persons in attendance. Things have become so deplorable and hopeless in Rivers State.

**I see that it is only the few women that could be in positions of trust-elective and appointive –in this present situation we are seeing that could only be women nominated by men, not that they fought on their own or leveraged on the opportunities that were given. No, it should be that men stood on ground to nominate them. That is the only way. The way am seeing it, few women can be in elective or appointive positions the way the whole thing is going. We are going back to the 19thCentury where women had been relegated to the bottom.

On Violence

Women's rights have been violated in the scheme of things because from what we are experiencing, political caucus meetings are being held without women. At the very peak of meetings and decisions, women are not there. They relegate us, denying us voices saying, 'Let's talk, that is not a woman's talk" and all that.

Even at the local government level, we have stakeholders at political levels in all local government areas involving men and a few women. I can tell you that when certain caucus meetings are held, none of the women that form the caucus are called or even engaged. They do their own and then impose it on us, Our rights, our voices have been violated even at the local level. At the state level, everything is just like a mirage. We see things, even money flying across us. We do the prayers, do the peacemaking and everything is just flying across us.

We are sorrowful, confused. At this point, we are confused on whether to go to the left or right, or even leave it for them. We are so marginalized, so improperly treated. We are just there.

CHIEF KATE SAM NGBOR

The political crisis in Rivers State affects women most, made worse by the six months state of emergency. Recall the crowd of women that gathered during Governor Simialaiyi Fubara's days. Where are those women now? Apart from the women whom he (Wike) had picked before and re-picked now to go to the State House of Assembly, National Assembly and all that, minus the one he felt betrayed him, no one else is there. (He wanted to use them for this crisis but one apparently did not agree so he dumped her).

For this primaries for 2027, he just put his own people. In this my LGA (Tai), it is only one woman that I saw vying for the House of Representatives.

**What I am soliciting is that a woman should be picked as deputy governor. At least, we have one Joba West, a former commissioner, former LGA chairperson. She has gone far in politics so she is qualified to be considered as deputy governorship candidate.

When I raised this on our platform, the men began to attack me. I fought back. At the APC women platform, when I posted this, none of the women even put an Ok sign so I posted, 'Women which position are you people taking? When issues on women come up you keep quiet only to go and tie uniform." The only comments were from a few congratulating the men who were cleared to collect ticket to contest. The women coming out for politics now don't seem to know what they are coming out for.

The only thing I like about Wike is the deputy position he gives to women but even the women did not do much with it. Carry women along, get the Oga to appoint those women to do things, not go there to worship the chairmen and governor. In the end, they are not learning anything.

The women in the Assembly have not been seen, some cannot even speak English; representatives that they shout down. Women are not helping matters. Upon all the enlightenment concerning women, we are still doing what we talk against-we don't share information, we don't unit to lobby for advancement.

Concerning the political arrangement in the state, all I know in Rainbow Coalition is that it is the group

Cont'd on page 6

It is like Going Back to the Medieval Ages

Cont'd from page 5



HILDA DOKUBO-National Women Leader, LP

producing candidates. Some APC members have left with Amaechi to join ADC.

Chief Martha Egbe, women leader in Eleme

If you force yourself in, they will mess you up

Let me use myself as example. In 2018, I came out and contested. I did everything-started clearance consultations, spent half a million. Along the line, they said I should leave it. They carried the ticket and gave it to a man because, I did not know any person to back me up. That is why I said this your call today supposing it had come at that time, something would have happened; I could have scaled through.

Because I am the eye of the people, people trust me. So many of our women decided not to do politics again because of my being denied the ticket that time. The next electoral campaign, I came out again, it was then that my leader called me when we went for our manifesto. They said I should stop, that they know that of a truth, I was due to be a councilor; that I have worked both at the community and political angle but that they are going to choose me at the time they want to choose me.

Since then, I stopped campaigning for anything because, I know that if you force yourself, even though people lobby, if you force yourself, they will mess you up on the road. If you are not on the plate, you force yourself, they will not allow you to scale through. But if they on their own put you on the slate, you can scale through. So, I relaxed, resigned to doing what they asked me to do. I was in the farm when they gave me this woman leader position in the Rainbow Coalition. I am the APC Women Leader. I was in the farm. I did not even go there. Nobody told me that that that was what they were planning. They just lifted me from PDP to APC Rainbow Coalition. Even when you called, we were in a meeting.

Civic education opened my eyes to speak up

With the help of Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Center and what you people have taught me, I have been talking, soliciting for women. Now I am becoming a threat. If I raise my hand up in meetings, for them to allow me to talk is a problem because they know that I have understanding of the race. They refused me to talk today but if other women raise up their hands, they will grant them opportunity to speak. I try to practice what I have been taught- stay calm, minimize everything so nobody should come after me.

On the low presence of women in the primaries contest

Nobody is coming up, otherwise, you are on your own. Even, people were coming to me to come up again. I was just laughing. It is because they don't know what is on ground. Our Assembly man told me that I shouldn't mind, that they know I am due for councillorship that even the party leadership in Eleme knows that people love me and that I am the eye of the people, but I should just lie low, that the day shall come when they will place me on a slate. So, without them bringing you in, you cannot enter-that is what is on the ground now.

Sidling of women

One of the things I was supposed to talk about at that meeting was that the commissioner for Sports under Governor Rotimi Amaechi, held a meeting with four of us –APC woman leader, PDP Woman leader and APC/PDP Ward chairmen. I made a complaint that everything now is only for unit coordinators because, we have Unit Coordinators and Unit Women Leaders but now, only Unit Coordinators act. He said if it was like that he was going to talk about it. Will you believe that I raised my hand up because I wanted to bring up the matter.

HILDA DOKUBO-National Women Leader, Labour Party

On the political fortunes of Rivers State women

Well, in terms of the areas in which they have either been appointed or voted into office, there's been a slight increase. You have more women in the Assembly, the present deputy governor and the immediate past are both women; we have three senators, one of them is a female. We have females at the House of Representatives, state Assembly and of course, we had female commissioners when it was okay. Out of the 23 local government areas, 20 LGAs had female vice chairmen and three had female chairmen and the men were deputies.

So yes, and then, you know the agencies had good representation of women as well. In a way, you can say that in Rivers State, we have tried to have women included although a lot of the women have also, acted like people in position with no authority. I cannot tell you whether the authority is as a result of them not being able to understand the mandate of the assignment or if it is as a result of people not creating the environment to enable them operate effectively. They will be the ones to give that story.

Labour Party and the INEC Gender Policy with regards to the number of women granted tickets to contest in the 2027 general elections

Labour Party is doing her best. In fact, with the party national chairman being a female, you don't just have the national woman leader being female, you have at least 35 per

Cont'd on page 15

When The Noise Settles, The Name Remains: Nkoyo Toyo Is Back On INEC's List!



Ambassador Nkoyo Toyo

There are moments in public life when the loudest statement is not made with a microphone, a press conference or an elaborate political speech. Sometimes, it is made through the quiet strength of a person who refuses to be distracted by the noise around them.

Ambassador Nkoyo Toyo has just witnessed one of such moments.

Following her earlier omission from INEC's list of governorship candidates, there were public conversations, speculations and reactions from different political quarters. Some celebrated the development; others openly questioned her political prospects.

Yet, while the noise continued, this amazon maintained her composure.

She reportedly assured those who cared to listen that, when the appropriate time came, her name would be seen on the list. October 31, 2026, that assurance has found its place in the unfolding events. INEC's updated final list now carries Ambassador Nkoyo Toyo as the African Democratic Congress governorship candidate for Cross River State in the 2027 election.

What makes this development particularly remarkable is not merely the appearance of a name on an electoral list. It is the reminder that public speculation is not the final authority on anyone's political journey. Processes must be allowed to run their course and conclusions must not be drawn prematurely.

For the ADC, this is a significant development in its preparations for the 2027 election. For Ambassador Nkoyo Toyo, it is an important milestone in her political journey. And for Cross River State, it adds another dimension to the unfolding conversation about women's participation and representation in the highest office of the state.

There is something worth appreciating about composure in moments of uncertainty. Not every battle requires a public response. Not every provocation deserves an answer. Sometimes, patience and confidence in the proper process speak louder than a thousand rebuttals.

Perhaps the most instructive lesson from this episode is simple: never mistake silence for surrender and never mistake a temporary setback for a final destination.

The political journey ahead remains a contest of ideas, public engagement, policies and democratic choice. But one thing is now clear: Ambassador Nkoyo Toyo's name is on the updated INEC list.

And that, in itself, is a development worth acknowledging.

The noise was loud, the speculation was plenty, but the process had the final word. Today, the name is there.

- ***ANT Media***

BILLE GAS BUBBLE: Community Leaders Move To National Assembly



Alabo Boma Dappa (PRO, BKCC), Hon. Mrs. Okorite Carrie-Adiele, member of the Board of Trustees and representative of the Bille Host Communities Development Trust (BHCDT); Pst. Iyowuna Diri (Bille Community Development Committee, CDC Chairman) and Mr. Miebaka Omuso (BKYF President).

Following on the series of efforts aimed at unravelling the disturbing gas seepage in Bille, the Chiefs and people of Bille Community in Abuja have once again approached the National Assembly, House of Representatives Committee on South-South Development Commission, demanding urgent solution to the gas bubbling which is now claiming lives in Bille.

The leakage and the attendant eruptions and pollution, has according to community members, claimed no less than 10 lives. Last September, it claimed the life of a young Ogoni lady resident in the troubled community, Miss Joy Amos. In October, about nine others have joined the death list with many others battling with respiratory challenges, serious rashes, eye problems, among others.

The community people are particularly piqued that the Nigerian Upstream Regulatory Commission, NUPRC in charge of oil operations, has been silent over the leakage.

It failed to bring in experts to ascertain the cause of the leakage for possible resolution of the problem which, has now claimed the life of one Joy Amos, coupled with NUPRC's failure to bring expatriate specialists, as promised, to mitigate the impasse before the end of September, 2026.

Speaking on behalf of the Bille people, leader of the delegation to NASS, Chief Bennett Okpoki-Dokubo (Chairman, BKCC), drew attention to growing tension in Bille.

"The promises made without being fulfilled are beginning to create tensed moments in the community", he stressed as he called on the relevant stakeholders to up their ante.

On his part, Chief Dr. Luckyman Egila, highlighted that people have started falling sick in Bille town with high expectations of solutions from the Federal government. He expressed disappointment that while a solution to the gas leakage is being expected, the NNPC is planning another project around the community.

"We are aware that NNPC Ltd is carrying out another project (the Nembe-Cawthorn-Channel trunkline) that runs from Nembe to Bonny, and crisscrosses the Bille territory.

"We are the people living with the devastating effect of what is going on in our environment. We might not be patient forever, especially after finding out that the NNPC has even gone behind us to carry out an Environmental-Impact-Assessment (EIA). That is not acceptable... our patience is certainly weaning", he stated.

Responding, chairman of the Committee on South-South Development Commission, Rt. Hon. Julius Pondi, frowned at the slow pace approach to the Bille gas menace by NUPRC and the other operating agencies, and directed the NUPRC to report on its engagements and interventions in Bille, Rivers State to the lawmakers every two weeks.

Others in the entourage include Alabo Boma Dappa (PRO, BKCC), Hon. Mrs. Okorite Carrie-Adiele, member of the Board of Trustees and representative of the Bille Host Communities Development Trust (BHCDT); Pst. Iyowuna Diri (Bille Community Development Committee, CDC Chairman) and Mr. Miebaka Omuso (BKYF President).

NUPRC Sends Norwegian Company To Bille

As pressure continues to mount on NUPRC to do the needful, a delegation of a Norwegian Company has reported to Bille. Community leaders told AmazonaAfrica the company has been mandated by the regulatory body, to test the gas that is bubbling. It is to carry out air, underwater and surface test to ascertain the true source of the leakage.

The Bille gas leakage became noticeable in September 2025 and has now overwhelmed the community with leakages presenting in about 4000 spots, threatening lives, livelihoods.

The Bille people however say they have seen many groups coming for tests and will be calm only when the result is made public.



Norwegian Company Official and Bille Community Leaders

INTERVIEW

Rural Women Need Support, They Are Climate Change Victims-*Chinma George*

Chinma George is a climate finance expert based in Lagos. She was a resource person at a training for Local Government councilors organized in Port Harcourt on inclusive governance, law making and climate change at the instance of Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Center. The publisher of AmazonaAfrica seized the opportunity to chat with her on climate change issues.



Chinma George

We say that climate change affects women more. What is that women need to know about climate change?

First of all, because women are more vulnerable, in some cases, they are the bread winners, in some cases, they have to look after children, look after the family, and they are still working. One of the key issues, when for example, disaster strikes, and a woman will not go on her own. She will first go back to look for her children, make sure everybody is out, before she will think of herself. So, because of their natural behavior of being care givers, they need to carry their children along.

They are the most vulnerable because most times, they don't have access to land or land ownership, they don't have access to credit. We are still in a patriarchal society so it is harder for women to access funding. So these are some of the issues that make them more vulnerable and also reduces their ability to cope with negative impacts of climate change.

As someone who has been in the climate change field for a while, how do you think we should go about addressing some of these challenges?

The first thing is to create more education, more awareness on the impacts of climate change. Another thing is to start looking for alternatives in communities where women are using fire wood to cook and this also impacts on their health and reduces life span. We need solutions; we need to start looking for cleaner ways of cooking. For example, we have

There are these gels and pellets that are much more safer than firewood. And another thing is also making sure that women have right to own land or to inherit property from their parents and, also, to support women cooperatives to be able to raise capital, be able to put things together, be more informed, able to take informed decisions. Women representation has to be increased at all levels. What you see in most government offices or even in most high places, is that men are always more prominently there. That will create more equality, more women inclusion at the high decision-making levels. It is when you are at the table that you are able to tailor your need or, even reach the other vulnerable populace.

The question of more equality, more equal opportunity, in the face of the political climate in Nigeria, do you see it opening up more? We seem to be losing instead of gaining more representatives.

We are losing?

Yes. When we started (1999) this last time we have just four senators, in some states where they initially had women representatives, they may not even have women because o the way this current politics is being played. That means that opportunities for women's voices and issues to be heard, are narrowing.

Well, this is an issue that women have been fighting truly, for quite a a long time and I think the fight is still on because, am not sure that implementation in Nigeria is close to 50 per cent…

Not even 20

I think there is a bill passed on that by the federal government but the main thing is representation, I am not sure……

We are pushing for the bill. We once had the Equal Opportunity Bill, the Affirmative Action Bill but the Affirmative Action Bill is not domesticated so, it is not in place., the Equal Opportunity Bill was thrown out. You saw what we had (at the training), how many women were there? The only good thing is that at least two women are leaders of their councils Legislative Assembly. What it does is that it makes discussing women matters very difficult. If you look at the challenges that were listed by the council participants, women issues were really not there.

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GOVERNANCE

Nigeria Armed Forces: From Policy Shifts To Combat Roles And Global Recognition



Lt. Gen. W. Shaibu, Chief of Army Staff

The struggle for gender inclusion is receiving more positive response in the Army, a hardcore hitherto male club. While politicians firmly hold the door against getting women into political office, the military has recorded major successes which, have earned Nigeria, international commendation. We bring you au update of what is on ground.

1. **Breaking Combat Barriers**: *From Support to Frontline**

-2011: Regular Combatant Cadets opened to women* – President Goodluck Jonathan ordered admission of first female cadets as **Regular Combatants at the Nigerian Defence Academy**, not just Short Service. They were trained for five years as against the nine months course previously. First set graduated 2016. Now Nigeria has combatant female officers who command troops.

-Deployment reality: Women now involved in counter-terrorism/counter-insurgency operations. Female flying officers like Kafayat Sanni, Oluwabunmi Ijelu, and late Tolulope Arotile, flew ISR missions in the North East. Female soldiers are visible in patrol vehicles and checkpoints in Boko Haram, banditry, and herder-farmer conflict zones.

2. **Nigerian Army Women Corps (NAWC)** - *Institutional Change*

Created in 2018 by the Chief of Army Staff, COAS Lt. Gen. Tukur Buratai, first as "Special Women Operations Base 1". First Commander: Lt. Col. Suzan Johnson Dibal.

-*Purpose*: To respond to security challenges in "female dominated areas" + check use of female suicide bombers by Boko Haram.

- *Impact*: Gives Army ability to deploy women where male soldiers can't enter due to Culture and religion. Maj. Gen. Preye Fakrogha, as later Commander, urged female officers to be confident and contribute to Army goals.

3. **Policy & Legal Reforms – Making Inclusion Statutory**

*Armed Forces Act (Amendment) Bill 2025: The bill passed second reading in the House of Representatives. It mandates a minimum 15 percent female representation in recruitment, enlistment, and, appointments across the Army, Navy and Air Force.

- What this translates to:

- *Gender-responsive compliance* program for training, accommodation, logistics, postings, discipline

- *Dedicated gender-monitoring unit* and a disaggregated data

These align with international gender conventions like, CEDAW, UN Resolution 1325, and S.42 of the Nigerian1999 Constitution

Gender Policy 2026-2030: The UK is partnering with the Nigerian Defence Headquarter, DHQ to review/renew the Armed Forces Gender Policy. Nigeria launched the second policy after gaps in first policy were addressed.

Peacekeeping & Global Benchmarks

27.9% female participation in peacekeeping operations in 2023 surpassed UN benchmark of 17%.

*UN Women commended: Nigeria's Armed Forces achieved 37.9% female participation in peacekeeping, above UN benchmark.

*Civil Defence reached a record 35% women engagement among all staff.

5. **Leadership & Training Integration**

- First female Army spokesperson*: Lt. Col. Onyinyechi Appolonia Anele appointed acting Director Army Public Relations, April 2025.

*Standard Training Manual on Gender Approved for integration into Navy, Police, NSCDC training curricula.

*Leadership & Mentoring Programme: UN Women + NDC rolled out program for women in the security sector in the last quarter of 2024.

*Chief of Army Staff,COAS Lagbaja reaffirmed commitment to "gender inclusiveness and integration in all activities and operations".

6. **Current Role Expansion in 2026**

Under COAS Lt. Gen. Waidi Shuaibu, women are now in varied fields in the Defence sector:

- Combat support + operational planning*: Intelligence, medical corps, signals, logistics, aviation support.

- *Field missions & command*: Active in operational planning, counter-insurgency in the North East, internal security ops, and UN missions.

- The 2026 IWD celebration, "Give to Gain" highlighted women whose "courage, competence and professionalism continue to reshape the operational landscape".

Despite the above achievements, challenges still exist.

Remaining Challenges

1. **Gender bias**: Cultural norms still limit careers; security sector is still seen as a "men's club".

2. ***Combat perception***: Women are historically kept from infantry because some roles are seen as requiring "high military responsibility," which women are, "not naturally designed for".

3. ***Unit cohesion concerns***: Belief that women's inclusion may disrupt morale due to pregnancy, vulnerability to abuse, if captured.

4. ***Numbers***: Women are still "significantly under represented, especially in leadership and operational roles".

High Impact Summary

2011: First female Regular Combatants at NDA broke 100-year combat exclusion.

2018: Nigerian Army Women Corps created institutionalized female operations unit

2023: 27.9% women in peacekeeping beat UN 17% benchmark

2025: Bill for 15% statutory female quota passes Second reading

2026:Gender Policy 2026-2030 + First female Army spokesperson- The Armed Forces moved from "women in admin/medical only" to combat commanders, fighter pilots, and peacekeeping leaders. The shift is driven by operational need – female soldiers can search women, access conservative communities, and reduce civilian harm in counterinsurgency.

The next frontier is hitting that 15% recruitment quota and getting more women into General-rank positions.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Go To Work-Perm Sec Charges Newly Inaugurated LGA SGBV Response Teams

By Mercy Wai-Ogos

The Permanent Secretary, Rivers State Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation, has charged members of the newly launched Local Government Area Sexual and Gender Based Violence Response Teams in Eleme, Onelga and Etche, to commence work with urgency and passion.

Speaking at the launching organized by Healthy Life Development Initiative, HELDi in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation, which held at the Rivers State Primary Health Board, Port Harcourt on Tuesday, October 27, 2026 Mrs. Lauretta Davies-Dimkpa the Permanent Secretary urged the response teams to work with passion to help change the narrative on gender based abuses in their localities.

She said incidents of SGBV in the state and local government areas are disturbing, pointing out that the damage from abuses affects victims who live in sorrow and low self-esteem.



Chief (Prof) Blessing Ahiauzu

She called on everybody to support the fight against SGBV by exposing and reporting perpetrators, as she described the event as very important and demanding of collective efforts from local and state governments as well as individuals, for success.

The PS challenged participants to further help by spreading information about the response team, to their people. She commended the HELDi coordinator, Dr Mfon Utin for her initiative in driving the process and assured of the state government's continued support.

The permanent secretary, Ministry of Health, Dr. Vincent Nwachukwu expressed optimism that the issue of SGBV will soon become a thing of the past as he announced that the ministry is highly committed to ensuring that the fight succeeds.

He pledged the ministry's continued support as he commended HELDi coordinator for her foresight. To the response team, he advised working with passion.

Representative of the Oba and Council of Chiefs in Ogbaland, Chief (Prof) Blessing Ahiauzu expressed joy over the launching of the SGBV Response Teams in the three local government areas.

She explained that the Oba of Ogbaland, Eze Chukwueka Nnamdi III has been involved in the fight against gender-based violence, pointing out that the royal father is passionate about issues that concern women in Onelga.

"Oba has been supportive and will continue to support in all efforts to ensure the Response Teams' success, " Chief (Prof) Ahiazu stated.

To fast –kick activities, Prof Ahiazu announced the Oba's donation of the sum of N200, 000 which she supported with another N50,000, a sum Dr. Utin said will be dedicated to the Onelga team coffers.

In a keynote address highlighted the urgent need to fight SGBV to reduce violation of human dignity which it exemplifies.

She called for access essential services such as medical care for survivors, and punishment for violators.

She further called for collective responsibility as well as commitment to end the scourge on the side of the newly inaugurated teams.

Earlier in her address, Dr. Mfon Utin expressed appreciation to the Rivers State government, and the Social Welfare and Rehabilitation for continued support and partnering with her organization.

She explained that members of the Response team were drawn from three local government areas of Etche, Eleme and Ogba Egbema Ndoni, Onelga, as pilot teams, adding that the project would be replicated in other areas in due course.

"Gender-based violence is what we face every day. We should be able to know how to face it squarely. It is a call for action which demands everyone's involvement to ensure that the issue of sexual and gender-based violence is brought to an end both in the state and every locality".

The HELDi coordinator charged the teams to do their work without fear or favour and appealed to the traditional rulers and local government chairmen to support the response teams to ensure success.

Expressing support by local leadership, representatives of the Eleme Traditional Council, Mrs. Evelyn and Etche representative and the Muslim Community also expressed their joy over the launching of the LGA Response teams while also, affirming their unflinching support to helping in the fight against the abuse.



The inaugurated Local Government SGBV Response Teams, officials of HELDi and guests at the event

The Aba Women's War (Aba Women's Riot) of 1929

Abia State Governor, Alex Otti has further entorenched the contributions of Nigerian Women to development with the unveiling of monuments immortalizing the Aba Women Riot



The Aba Women's War more accurately described by historians and participants as a war or a major anti-colonial revolt was a massive uprising of women in the British-administered southeastern provinces of Nigeria (primarily in the towns of Oloko, Owerri, Aba, and Calabar) from November to December 1929.

Context and Causes

In the late 1920s, the British colonial administration used a system of indirect rule in southern Nigeria, appointing local warrant chiefs to collect taxes and maintain order. Tensions boiled over due to several key factors:

The Threat of Taxation: Following the introduction of direct taxation for men in 1928, rumors spread that the British intended to extend these taxes to women, who controlled much of the local market trade and agricultural production.

- **Corruption of Warrant Chiefs:** The warrant chiefs had abused their power, acting as authoritarian figures, arbitrarily seizing property, and imprisoning opponents.
- **Economic Pressures:** A worldwide economic depression and falling prices for palm oil and palm kernels severely impacted women's livelihoods.

The Uprising

The revolt began in earnest on November 23, 1929, in Oloko, following a dispute between a woman named Nwanyeruwa and a census taker attempting to count her property and livestock for taxation purposes.

Using traditional methods of political protest known as **"sitting on a man"** (or *ikporikpe*), thousands of women mobilized. They gathered at administrative centers, utilizing songs, dancing, aggressive protests, and collective shaming to force warrant chiefs to resign. The movement spread rapidly across Owerri and Aba provinces, involving tens of thousands of women attacking European factories, native courts, and prisons to release detainees and destroy symbols of colonial oppression.

Government Response and Casualties

The colonial administration responded with overwhelming military and police force. Over the course of the protests, troops and police opened fire on unarmed crowds of women on multiple occasions. Official reports state that over 50 women were killed and more than 50 wounded during the suppression of the revolts.

Significance and Legacy

Despite the heavy casualties, the Aba Women's War was a watershed moment in Nigerian history:

- **Structural Reform:** The British colonial government was forced to abandon plans to tax women and significantly scale back the corrupt system of warrant chiefs, replacing it with a more representative native administration.

Empowerment: It demonstrated the formidable political and economic organization of indigenous women and remains a landmark symbol of anti-colonial resistance and feminist solidarity in African history.

Extra Ordinary Personality

Africa Needs Intentional Investment In Women To Progress

Some journeys are measured by titles, awards, and milestones. Others are measured by the lives touched, the minds inspired, and the legacy left behind. The story of Amb. (Dr.) Smily Mukta Ghoshal belongs to the latter.

Known across international platforms as an Inspiration Ambassador, Global Icon, Green Queen, Sustainability Advocate, World Record Holder, and Founder of #1Natural Beauty USA, Dr. Smily Mukta has spent years transforming purpose into impact. Her life is a remarkable example of what can happen when passion is guided by vision, and vision is strengthened by unwavering determination.

Today, with more than 2000 national and international recognitions to her name, numerous leadership honours, global speaking engagements, and an ever-growing influence that spans continents, she stands as a symbol of resilience, empowerment, and conscious leadership. Yet despite the accolades and recognition, her story remains deeply rooted in humility, gratitude, and service.

Born with a profound love for nature, Dr. Smily Mukta always believed that the answers to many of life's challenges already exist around us. Long before sustainability became a global movement, she was living its principles. As an Indo-American Plant Biologist based in Dallas, Texas, she developed a deep understanding of the relationship between nature, wellness, and human well-being. What began as a personal belief eventually evolved into a lifelong mission to help people reconnect with nature and rediscover the power of conscious living.

Before becoming an internationally recognized entrepreneur and sustainability advocate, this extra-ordinary woman spent over a decade in the corporate world as a business trainer and leadership professional. Those years shaped her understanding of people, communication, and transformation. Yet somewhere within, she knew she was destined for something greater.

So, choosing purpose over predictability, she stepped away from convention and embarked on a journey that would redefine her life.

That courageous decision led to the creation of #1Natural Beauty Organic Skin & Hair Products, USA a brand inspired not by commercial ambition, but by a genuine desire to help people embrace natural wellness. Built on the principles of purity, sustainability, and environmental responsibility, the brand quickly became an extension of her personal philosophy. For Dr. Smily Mukta, beauty is never about appearance alone; but about confidence, self-care, health, and living in harmony with nature.

Her belief is simple yet powerful: when people reconnect with nature, they reconnect with themselves.

What truly distinguishes Dr. Smily Mukta, however, is not simply her success as an entrepreneur. It is her ability to inspire transformation in others.

A celebrated International Motivational Speaker, TEDx Speaker, Transformational Coach, Certified Mentor, Corporate Trainer, Personality Development Expert, Pageantry Coach, and Leadership Educator, she has empowered thousands of individuals across different countries and cultures. Whether speaking before large audiences, mentoring aspiring leaders, coaching women entrepreneurs, or guiding young professionals, her message remains remarkably consistent: embrace who you are, trust your journey, and never underestimate your own potential. Her words resonate because they come from lived experience.

One of her most recognized philosophies is her journey



Amb. (Dr.) Smily Mukta Ghoshal

from what she proudly describes as "From No One to Global Luminaire." It is not a statement of status; it is a statement of possibility. Through her own life, she demonstrates that greatness is not reserved for a select few. It belongs to those willing to dream, persevere, and remain committed to their purpose despite obstacles.

Challenges have never been strangers in her journey. Like every visionary, she has faced moments of uncertainty, criticism, setbacks, and personal tests. But she did not allow these to define her, choosing instead, to grow higher through them.

"Smile is my strength," she often says.

It is a philosophy that reflects her character. Rather than allowing challenges to diminish her spirit, she uses them as opportunities for growth, learning, and transformation. Her resilience, optimism, and unwavering faith have become defining qualities that inspire countless people around the world.

Perhaps one of the most admirable aspects of Dr. Smily Mukta's work is her dedication to empowering women. She believes that every woman possesses a unique light, regardless of her background, profession, or circumstances. Through her mentorship, coaching, and advocacy, she encourages women to

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Africa Needs Intentional Investment In Women To Progress

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Amb. (Dr.) Smily Mukta Ghoshal

stop comparing themselves with others and instead embrace their individuality. She inspires them to own their story, trust their voice, and create their own standards of success.

Her message is refreshingly simple: "You do not need permission to become who you are meant to be."

This belief has made her a respected mentor and role model for women from all walks of life- from homemakers and students to entrepreneurs, professionals, and community leaders.

Beyond leadership and entrepreneurship, Dr. Smily Mukta is also recognized for her humanitarian outlook. She advocates kindness, compassion, environmental stewardship, and respect for all living beings; her approach to life guided by a deeply rooted belief that true success is achieved when personal growth is aligned with service to others.

"*Be human first. Love nature. Bless everyone and find good in everyone around you.*"

These words are not merely advice; they are principles she actively lives by.

Her extraordinary contributions have earned her recognition as a Global Leader, Sustainability Ambassador, Wellness Educator, Peace Advocate, Transformational Coach, and one of the most respected voices in conscious leadership. Beyond her entrepreneurial and educational accomplishments, she serves as an International Brand Ambassador for various global organizations and NGOs, Advisor Board Member for corporate institutions and educational organizations, Global Convener for business forums and women empowerment initiatives, and a distinguished UN Representative in the USA. Further strengthening her global influence, she also serves as the Global Director of the Eurasia Afro Chamber of Commerce, contributing to international collaboration, leadership development, and sustainable growth initiatives across continents. These prestigious positions reflect not only her professional excellence but also the trust and respect she has earned from reputed institutions worldwide. Her selection as the International Guest of Honour at the Global Peace & Excellence Leadership Conference 2026 stands as another milestone in a journey already filled with remarkable accomplishments.

Yet, for someone who has received more than 2000 national and international honors and recognitions worldwide, Dr. Smily Mukta remains focused not on collecting awards but on creating impact.

At the heart of her philosophy lies a simple mantra that has become synonymous with her identity: "Gratitude with Attitude."

For her, gratitude is not passive appreciation. It is a powerful force that fuels growth, resilience, confidence, and purpose. It is the mindset that has helped her transform challenges into opportunities and dreams into reality

Looking at her journey today, it becomes clear that Amb. (Dr.) Smily Mukta Ghosal is far more than an entrepreneur, speaker, coach, or award-winning leader. She is a movement in herself a woman who has chosen to lead with purpose, inspire with authenticity, and create impact through action.

Her thoughts on Africa:

"Women in Africa continue to face gender discrimination, limited access to finance, cultural barriers, inadequate mentorship, and underrepresentation in decision-making. Through my leadership and work with the Center for Corporate Innovation, Information and Diplomacy (CCIID), I advocate inclusive leadership, women's empowerment, education, mentorship, entrepreneurship, and equal opportunities. I believe that empowering women is not a favour to society; it is an investment in sustainable development. When women are given the opportunity to lead, communities become stronger and nations progress".

To reduce poverty in the continent, the African advocate with extensive voice recognition stresses the move from economic dependency to economic independence for sustainable development, a measure that calls for deeper investment and knowledge buildingin the African women.

"The most sustainable approach is to move women from dependency to economic independence through practical skills acquisition, entrepreneurship, access to affordable finance, business mentorship, and market opportunities. Governments, NGOs, and the private sector should invest in women-led businesses, vocational education, digital literacy, and cooperative enterprises.

"Above all, empowerment must go beyond giving women financial assistance; it must equip them with the knowledge, resources, and confidence to create wealth, sustain livelihoods, and employ others".

For younger women, Ambassador Smily who started early and has seen the world has this advice:

"Young women must understand that leadership begins with self-awareness, integrity, competence, courage, and service - not titles or positions. They should invest in education, develop their skills, build meaningful networks, embrace mentorship, and never allow societal limitations to define their potential. They must also understand that leadership is not about competing with others but creating opportunities, solving problems, and inspiring positive change.

"My advice is simple: prepare yourself before the opportunity comes, lead with character when it arrives, and use your influence to empower others when you succeed".

It is like Going Back to the Medieval Ages

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cent female representation. Our legal adviser is female, the deputy national is female, the organizing secretary is female and for the first time, we have a regional youth leader as female. So, yes, we are honouring that.

Even in the number of people who are running, female members have been encouraged-forms are free to females and in a position where we have a male and a female wanting the ticket, we have always advised the men to allow the women to compete and yes, it has worked like that. There was an agreement like that for us that females should be encouraged to participate effectively in this election.

And about the INEC Gender Policy, yes, we are following that. Like I said, our forms are free for females, they are encouraged to participate and they've been given responsibilities.

Women who will be flying the LP flag next year

Am not sure of the number and would not like to tell a lie. With the national leader being a woman, I can tell that we have at least 30-35 per cent women. 30-35 percent of the people who will fly the Labour Party flags in the next general elections will be women.

Reports of discrimination or violence against female contestants from Rivers State

Not sure how that will play out. Not even sure anybody would want me to know about it because they already know what my answer would be, what my reaction would will be. And so, the best thing for anybody who would commit that kind of heinous crime against the women of this state or at the national level, would be to make sure that I don't get to know because if I know, then hell eeh. No need to tell what I would do. I have never heard of that and I have never seen it happen. Any time anything looks like even discrimination or any look of it, I will bring it down! I sure will. So, we haven't had that.

Like I said earlier, what we have tried to do is, everywhere where women have indicated interest, we have made sure that that indication is not played down or that they are not removed because they cannot afford the cost, because for them, cost is zero and when you have a national chairman who is female, what do you expect? She is doing a lot to encourage women to be part of this.

"Rivers people have become spectators in a chess game between two powerful political players and the state is paying the price. Many of us raised concerns when Wike openly purchased forms for governorship and Assembly aspirants. That was never democracy; it was political investment, and every investor expects returns," -Peter Mazi, a political analyst was quoted as saying.

They Are Climate Change Victims-*Chinma George*

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So that is one challenge. Let's go back to energy challenge. Nigeria says it is transitioning to clean energy with 2030 as target date, and the major energy source many have moved to now is gas. Many times, when we make policies, we just think about people in the city. Some of these inner or hard to reach communities, they don't have access to facilities-they don't have gas stations. In the riverine communities, it is even more difficult. So, how can government make policies that will positively impact the lives of the real grassroots?

I think that for that to happen, the grassroots will have to stand up and demand their right. And there should be a lot of support from the NGOs for them. Why am I saying this? There have been a number of government projects supposedly targeting grassroots. For this project of moving away from firewood, there is a clean stove project that was rolled out, N9billion or something of that magnitude but again, corruption factors

It rolled out from the federal government?

Yes. As a matter of fact, it didn't go anywhere. That money was taken, not sure it was implemented at all. There are quite a number of projects that want to address this clean stove issue but I think they haven't really gone round to promote it. And it depends on network and information. One thing NGOs can do, is say these are the challenges we face, tell us where we can get support from-if it means lobbying from one government to the next level of government to ensure that these things are important and that these things are implemented. Because, if you create by-laws or any policy that is affecting peoples way of life, you have to create an alternative for it to thrive.

So, that is something that has to be done. I think a lot of people focus on the cities and there is not so much push in the rural areas. But there is PIND Foundation that is working in the Niger Delta. I know they came to the bank one time to say they are starting a programme for solar-to solarize the Niger Delta, provide solar to solely Niger Delta areas. So we actually need to look out for organizations that are focused on the Niger Delta. Then, the big elephant in the room. After government, the IOCs (International Oil Companies) because they are seriously profiting off the Niger Delta. Then again, making sure there is inclusivity because, often, it is a top echelon thing-there has to be a bottom-up approach; that means that a lot of grassroot people have to be there. They have to fight for their right even if to take it by force.

Do we have enough women in this clean energy sector? I know there was a time the World Bank set aside some money to bring women on board with the thinking that if women are in charge of energy, they are likely to make it affordable for women generally.

Eheh, there are some women in the energy space. There is a woman I know in the north, Osai. She does solar. It is even to identify what you need-is it clean stove, solar, lighting, gas-depending on the class and value chain. It has come to be said that gas is going to be our alternative or transition energy before we go other ways. So it is to identify women in the space and look for franchise to work with them so that you can also benefit.

What would be your advice to rural women in relation to climate change?

The general advice I will give now is to support the need for more awareness; we need to galvanize them, engage with them, understand what their problems are and also help to bring solutions to those challenges. There is something Dr. Emem Okon, Executive Director of Kebetkache said. A lot of people come to the Niger Delta and do research, that research is money. Forget the way I am putting it that this is a matter of money, but they are making money from it. So it is even to collaborate. Collaboration even with local government chairmen, the few women there. Let them understand the empathy. I think the rural women need support because right now, I see them as victims not necessarily as leaders, but as victims; they are trying their best to do what they can do but they need support.

What I can say is that they need support. You that you are out there, link them up with NGOs, people in power, even experts, let's understand what the issue is then you can help connect them to programmes. There are some programmes they can benefit from, but information is key.

Gloria Nwafor-Physical Disability Is Not A Death Sentence



Mrs. Gloria Nwafor

Mrs. Gloria Nwafor is the Executive Director of Care for the Physically Challenged and Destitute Foundation, and coordinator, Network of Women With Physical Challenges, Anambra State chapter. Paralyzed at three years, she owes her cure to the strange and miraculous escapades of her kid friends whose desire to make her join them in play, laid the foundation for the recovery of lifeless limbs and her success in life to God who supported her decision to become somebody despite being ruled out by her family as a result of her disability.

AmazonaAfrica met this woman of strong conviction at a consultative gathering on security matters in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Her story is as compelling as it is inspirational.

Can you tell us the state of women with disability in Anambra State?

The state of women with disability in Anambra State I ca say, is that society has started recognizing them and their capabilities. At least, with the sensitization and advocacies we do, it is now opening peoples' eyes on issues affecting persons with disabilities in all angles, especially, how they should be included amongst their co-women who, are not living with disability, and how they should be included in participation in governance.

So, especially in political processes and so on. We should not be looking at just as participants without being inclusive in decision-making. As it stands now, our advocacy is improving but not much has been done in the practical aspect of it. However, we are progressing gradually-for people to recognize the challenges women are facing, discrimination, lack of inclusion in decision-making I all the political parties and, even in community gatherings or governance. Again, participation even in the extractive industry. Their participation has not been properly accepted and assimilated. So all these are what we, women with disability are facing. You know Rome was not built in a day, we are gradually penetrating through this advocacy and sensitization. Even in the health sector, we are still fighting for it. In the agro sector where we are in, at least I have a cooperative for women with disability, and that gave me an edge. We have registered with NAIWAIB and SWOFON and other women groups which, we are contributing our own quota. On individual basis, we have nationally registered with NAWIB, so that we will be getting implements, government assistance from both the federal and state levels.

As coordinator of Women with Disability, NAIWAIB and SWOFUND under agric business in the Agricultural sector for farmers, these are the efforts we are making to make sure that women with disability are inclusive.

Do you have many women in your network?

Yes, we have so many women in the network.

You have a figure?

Hmnnm, first and foremost, the mandate of my organization is to document a data of persons with disability whether women or men. After our disaggregation, we will know the number of women. As am talking to you, at least, we have close to 200 women in Anambra State with physical disability; women only. But we document so many through the local government and I have coordinators in all the 21 local government areas that assist me in gathering all this data.

Your cooperative, what has it done?

Our cooperative is into financial services and at the same time, we havecollective farm where we farm. We have vegetable farm and we access funds and give micro loans to our persons with disability, particularly, women. The first set we gave last year have paid up under five months duration. They were given the loan by December 2025 and by May 2026, they paid up.

> ***"I am advising PWDs not to relent, that here is ability in disability. They should look inward and identify the talents given to them by God and then, push forward to make it functional so that they will stop being dependent on anybody. They should use the talent to feed themselves and cater for their needs."***

How much was the loan?

A hundred thousand (100,000) naira each. We are looking for more fund. As we document more women, most of them need funding, unfortunately, we have not been able to get such funds.

The ones that accessed the funds and were able to

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Gloria Nwafor-Physical Disability Is Not A Death Sentence

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The ones that accessed the funds and were able to payback, are they still back in business? Did the loan help them?

Yes, the fund helped them because, look at somebody that has been doing business for over two years, she has not saved anything, As a result of family needs, the little gains she will get, she will not save it but use it for family upkeeps. What I now did was to encourage them and introduced compulsory saving. So, as they were repaying N20,000 monthly, we added compulsory saving. For example, they were supposed to be repaying N20, 000 monthly and I mandated them to be returning N25,000 so he N5000 will be their saving. About two of them opted to save N10, 000. So within five months, the one who is saving N10,000 and repaying N20,000, was able to save N50000 and the one saving N5000 and repaying N20,000, was able to save N25,000.

We are making arrangement to extend the loan for them to continue because, there are specific needs. For example, some of them don't even have a phone, some don't have smart phones for them to follow-up in Whatsapp groups to be able to fill all those online forms. But on my own, I used to help if the form requires that you can do it for another person through your own platform. So, I am looking at a situation where, I have not given that their savings, it is still in our account and the organization that helped us in this cooperative is the African Leadership Strategy and Development Centre, Center LSD. They are the people who trained us and asked us to go and set up computers and even supported us in the registration and even the opening of accounts. They gave us some start-up funding for this ongoing loan.

As you know, we still need more as we are expanding in the number of our membership. We still need more funding to enable us spread our hands.

So you are sourcing for fund?

Yes, we are.

Now, what are the health challenges of PWDs in your state?

I will take it categorically considering their unique disabilities. For example, a hearing impaired person goes to the hospital to access health services, because he cannot talk for the health workers to understand him/her, the health workers do not know sign language operation, there is a very big communication gap between the two. So in one of the stakeholder meetings we had, I suggested that since we have three senatorial zones, there is no way government as it stands now, but I know that gradually, government can meet up if they follow the advice, lets in a local government, they designate one health facility and deploy one sign language specialist so that it will be announced that any hearing impaired person in that local government should go to. A specific date will be dedicated so that the person will be there and be able the interpret the person's illness.

Then, another one is environmental accessibility-those with wheel chair. If the environment is not accessible for anybody on wheelchair, he cannot access health services. Same thing is applicable for the visually impaired. All these things are the challenges of women with disability. And again, if the person is pregnant, and needed to be handled in the facility, some of the nurses may not have that free mind to, even when they come to the hospital, give them preferential attention, that is a barrier. They may be following protocol without knowing that they are supposed to be given preferential treatment considering their situation. And some of the nurses are not friendly and compassionate-all these are some of our observations and we women with physical challenges faces.

These observations you've taken them to government?



Mrs. Gloria Nwafor

Yes. We even do radio programmes, they invite me to speak on their behalf.

How old is your organization?

My organization has taken long. We registered since 2009 and it has been in operation since then, even though I was combining it with my civil service job but now, I am retired, a senior citizen.

You were working in the civil service?

Yes, I retired as a director of Community Development under the local government.

During your service year, as a director were you carrying out campaigns to families on handling persons with disability?

Of course! I come from a family and I had the same experience so, from my own personal experience I educate families that have persons with disability. Even those who do not have, even in school. We visit schools to tell the students to accommodate them and help them to achieve their educational goals.

Even in the health sector, we educate. I am working under the TB Network, ATM. My facility is in Onitsha. I educate the facility staff on how to handle persons with disabilities in case they see them in their facilities. We even take our advocacy and sensitization to schools and churches on the challenges of PWDs and what they can do to help and accommodate them.

What is the situation with the Anambra State Government, I know that some governments are not really doing much in terms of taking care of the needs of PWDs?

In your state what is it generally?

As it stands now, I must have to be realistic, the past government really did mightily to support PWDs, that is, Obiano's regime. In fact, it was in his own regime that Anambra State Disability Rights Law was enacted and it was in his own regime that the Disability Commission was established in the state and many PWDs were employed. In fact, they gained so much during that regime but with the present Soludo regime, maybe he might still do although, the first tenure has ended and the second tenure is now remaining a few years. We are still looking forward to what he can still do.

But the Disability Commission is still there?

The Commission is there but not really functioning

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because I discovered from my interviews and enquiry from the board that managed that place that they were owing them sitting allowance and so on. I can't say that they are not functioning but if they are, there would be lots of changes. But I hope that even with the present commissioner, things will still change because from the information I gathered, there are some steps that are being taken by the commissioner and her ministry to make sure that everything is put in place and a review of the Disability Right Law, I think is in progress.

I think that your network of both men and women with disability should pressurize the government…



Mrs. Gloria Nwafor

Yes, we have JONAPWD (Joint Association of Persons With Disability), Anambra State Chapter and we have an executive and a capable hand. But you know, you can do what you can do but it is only what the government says it will do that it will do. I think there are some efforts being made.

Many people with disability are doing great things now. What will be your advice to persons with disability concerning their own challenges?

I always use myself as example. I will just tell you that I was created to be a living example; a living person to use my personal challenges and how I overcame my disability challenges to teach others. I normally use it to teach others that, that somebody is a person with disability is not a **death sentence**.

God made us to understand from the scriptures, that we are created for a purpose and the purpose for which God created us is that we will be in this disability condition to achieve it. You must give account of your stewardship on earth, your disability notwithstanding. As such, you have to understand that your disability will not deprive you from achieving what God sent you here to achieve. What we are begging the society is to help us, encourage us and empower us to be able to achieve what we are supposed to achieve on earth.

I am advising PWDs not to relent, that here is ability in disability. They should look inward and identify the talents given to them by God and then, push forward to make it functional so that they will stop being dependent on anybody. They should use the talent to feed themselves and cater for their needs. That way, you don't have to wait for anybody to do anything for you. If you have the mindset of begging, you are off; but if you have the, "I need to contribute to my society," mindset, from there you will start thinking of what you will do to help yourself and be independent, depending on yourself, then contributing to society no matter how small.

My advice is that they should not relent. That they are living with disability is not a death sentence and that should not deprive them from achieving the purpose for which God created them.

Tell us a little about your own journey.

If I tell you about my journey as a person with disability, you will cry and that is the reason why I said that I am created to use my own disability to educate others that there is ability in disability. I became a person with disability when I was three years old. It didn't come through birth. It was an injection that was administered on me without knowing that I had polio. That injection paralyzed my legs from the hip down. I could not do anything except lie down. How you are seeing me now standing here moving about, is a miracle from God because these two legs (patting both legs) were paralyzed to the extent that because, then, if you brought a hot object and placed it on my two legs, I would not have any feeling. My parents took me to many hospitals without success before finally taking me to the Orthopedic Hospital. They carried up my legs on electric device, all to no avail.

Enugu?

Yes, Enugu. From there they now brought me back and dumped me in the house. My condition is a miracle in the sense that in our family compound, many children come there to play.

That was still in Enugu?

No, in my house at Anambra, Umuoyiba Ofuma. I was born and raised in Umuoyibo Ofuma town. We are five children born by my late mother and father. I am the last daughter and senior to one male child. When this injection was administered on me and I was taken to many places and nothing happened, my parents dumped me in the house because I could not do anything.

My age mates do come to our compound and they play as small as we were. They would see me lying down in the house without coming out to play with them. I don't know the way God used them to perform on me to cure my paralysis. They came and carried me to join them on the playground. They then initiated the idea of using broom to measure my legs from the hip down. First, they dug a round hole and placed my buttocks in that hole then used sand to cover my hip so that *could* be able to stand.. They did this for several times and at a time, I started sitting without anybody holding my hands. They now measured my legs, still dug a hole…

Still children?

Children. It is children that I am talking to you about! They still dug holes to size my legs and put my legs into the holes; they would hold my hands and be clapping for me, shouting, "Okwuru ma nene, Okwuru ma nene!"(standing while we watch). My two legs would be shaking as they me severally. At a point, they leaving my hands. They did this every day before starting to leave my hands and I will stand in that pit alone without falling or support. Before you knew it, I was standing up. What my father did was to go to the carpenter and construct what we call, "ugbo kpulu kpulu, a wooden tricycle, a mobility aid.

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Gloria Nwafor-Physical Disability Is Not A Death Sentence

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Used to encourage babies to walk

Yes. So my father had the carpenter construct that. I will hold it and be moving, they will be pushing me. From there, strength started coming to my legs. At a time this left leg started having life in it, outgrowing the right one, as you can see now. So life started coming in on this left leg and at a time, I started standing without holding unto anything; I started moving gradually. It took time. As at that time, there was no life in this particular right leg but this left one was coming to life and my spinal cord, my waist, everything was coming back to life. So, it was at that time that I stopped using wheelchair, I started placing two of my hands on my knees to move about. It was then I thought of entering school.

How old were you then?

I think I have reached up to 10-15 years before I entered primary school. I entered primary school and what normally happened was that I fell too many times, you can see the scares on my knees-the place I used to hit when I fall, the wound will not heal before I fall again. It was repeated falling, that is why you are seeing these scars (pointing at the scars) on my body. As God may have it, when I finished my primary school, I entered secondary school, secured employment and within that period, life has started coming to the other leg so, when you place fire or hot water on me, l will feel it. This was how I started moving, I was not using walking stick. My parents asked me, people advised me to use walking stick. I refused. I was a little bit stubborn, So I stopped holding my left leg, I only used the right leg and I did not use a walking stick all the period of my life. It is just now that I am retired that I started using this walking stick.



Mrs. Gloria Nwafor

You are how old?

I am 61. So, it is now that my age is going down and my bones are becoming weak that I started using the walking stick to support myself. But that does not stop me from doing what I am doing. Even now that I have retired, I have full time for my NGO work.

You were in the Civil Service?

Yes, I retired as a director in Community Development under the Local Government.

During your service as director, were you carrying out campaigns to families on handling persons with disability?

Of course! I come from a family and had the same experience. So, from my own personal experience, I use it to educate families that have persons with disability, even those who do not have and even in schools. We visit schools to tell students to accommodate children with disabilities and help them to achieve their educational goals-these are things we do.

Even in the health sector we educate them. I am working under TB network, ATM. My facility is in Onitsha. I educate the facility staff on how to handle them in case they see them in their facilities. We even take our advocacy sensitization to schools and churches to talk about the challenges of persons with disability and what they can do to help and accommodate them.

Even in school, even before I entered primary school, my mother died early, my brothers and sisters, even my father said that there is no need of training me in school because I will not be useful in anything. It was during the time I entered primary school that the Universal Basic Education, UBE commenced, so we were not paying school fees and we were given everything for our academics. My mother died when I was in primary three and since we were not paying for anything and my family members refused to take care of me in school, I managed to scale through my primary education. When I took my Common Entrance Examination and passed, because I was brilliant, my father, senior brothers and sisters said they would not train me in secondary school. When they told me this, I went in and I cried. After crying, I asked myself a question: 'Is it true that I cannot be useful without education or that I cannot be useful in life?'

I gave myself an answer: I said, 'No! I will be useful. But can I be useful without education?' I still answered myself: 'No!' I now told myself that I can be useful; for me to be useful, I must be educated. I said, God, help me, I need to find something doing since my family members are not going to support me. I want to have something doing to be getting money and I don't want to be a wayward person. I don't want to give myself to men so that they will mess me up. I want to be doing something and earning money by myself to be able to take care of my education.

God answered my prayers. Honestly, in the dream, God came to me showing me how to plait different styles of hair-weaving and thread. Then I was able to learn, when such a thing was not even in our area, not in our family. Nobody was doing such a thing to anybody. I started getting contract, many people were coming to our house, especially during the Christmas season. They book and I will plait/weave their hair according to their chosen style.

You didn't learn the weaving?

Yes. I was making a lot of money to enter secondary school. So, I trained myself and from there, I saved money to enter secondary school. I trained myself in secondary school without the support of any of my family members. I even gave my elder sister who was also in the secondary school money. I completed my secondary school education, secured employment at the local government and from there, went for in-service training. I did my Social Work and from there, I was given a scholarship by the local government for persons with disability. I took the advantage and entered the university.

Which university?

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. I read Vocational and

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Gloria Nwafor-Physical Disability Is Not A Death Sentence

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Mrs. Gloria Nwafor

Adult Education as a course with Economics option. And it was the money I was getting through my office work that I used to take care of myself. The local government, after training me as a social worker (I gained Ordinary National Diploma, OND in Social Development under the Federal School of Social Work, then used it to gain direct entry into Nnamdi Azikiwe University and completed my university education. In fact, as I am speaking to you now, I am the only graduate in my family.

That notwithstanding, God blessed me with a husband, I have four children-three boys and a girl, I am a grandma of two children-a girl and a boy. My last son is in Senior Secondary (SS1), my first son is in the university and working, training himself in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, my second son just entered Federal Polytechnic Oko. All these things are what God has done. After all these life experiences, how can I say that God did not bless me despite my disability?

This is a call to me to educate others that there is ability in disability. Had it been I succumbed to them, became sorry for myself, became a beggar, how would I have risen to the level I am today? God has been faithful to my life, God has been faithful. I am appreciating hi in every ramification. There is nothing he prevented me from being.

Your children, how do they feel?

They are very proud of their mum. As we are talking here, my daughter is in another programme in Owerri. She is the programme officer of CEDUG-Civic Society Documentation Agency, an international organization. She is the programme officer for Anambra State and the CEDOC media personnel. In 2024, she represented Nigeria to monitor elections in Kenya. God has been faithful to me. There is nothing I am lacking as a person living with disability. He gave me a handsome man.

How did you meet him?

We met in the same our area. He said God showed me to him in the dream, to look for me that I am his wife. That was how he found me. As at then, I believed him. Even when he had so many challenges from his parent's side, he was an orphan so the relations of his parents refused him to marry me. They said I a m a cripple (that was how they categorized me), that my husband should not marry a cripple, that he should look for a standard lady to marry. But because of the dream that he had, he said he was not going to marry any other person as nobody prophesied to him regarding that, insisting that he was the person that the spirit of God spoke to about who to marry. Even when he saw me with disability, he didn't know…

Before he saw you?

He didn't know. After his dream, he started having double mind and according to him, there were some conditions that God gave him that if he refused to marry me, those were the things that would happen to him, that I was destined to him. It was then after explaining to his people, that they said they should support him to come and marry me. That is how we got married.

Every cultural necessity that was supposed to be done for my marriage was done. And you can see, because they gave him the impression I will not be able to give birth and even if I give birth it would be through caesarian operation, as God would have it, none of my children was by caesarian birth. There is even evidence that such a thing was supposed to happen according to the level of my cervix but God knows how he does his things. He does everything by himself. So, am a proud woman. I was even telling God, because you did not deprive me of anything,in my next generation, if you still want me to be a person with disability, I will still be one, provided you do not anything from my intelligence and brain..

(Laughter)

Even during my educational years, I took first position from primary school, Nobody saw my back from primary school till I finished and nobody will be proud to say he supported me if not God who made me who I am today.

You really do have a story to tell

I have a story to tell.

Your dad, was he still alive when you started work?

My dad? Yes. My dad was alive and when I *gave birth to my first child; my daughter was* not up to two years when my dad died.

So how did your dad feel seeing you succeed?

Aahaa! Even the day I gave birth, I was crying that my mum did not see me when I was pregnant, not to talk of when I delivered, for her to see me carrying my baby. It was a hurtful and painful situation but there was nothing I could do about it. I couldn't go to fight nature. My father was happy. In fact, everybody has turned around when they have now seen that God has blessed me. There is no discussion in my family now without me being present. I love what God has used me to achieve and I still pray to him give me more opportunities and more connections for me to do more because as far as the mandate of our organization is concerned, it is to visit families, communities to identify the most abandoned persons with disability, collect their data and their individual priorities, we have them on our data bank. But how we can bridge those gaps is my challenge.

Personally, I don't have funding so I am calling on philanthropists, development partners to assist me. I will render proper account of how I utilize whatever fund that is given to my organizatio0n. Even the ones I have done, I have been rendering account from whichever source

But is your Organization registered?

Yes, with CAC since February 3, 2009 and under regulatory law, at least, my organization has met most relevant criteria. We pay our annual returns, FIRS, etc.

Women of the Moment

From A Durban Bus Driver's Daughter To The Nobel Peace Prize! South Africa's Navi Pillay Makes History!



Nobel Laureate Navi Pillay

At the age of 85, Durban-born Judge Navanethem "Navi" Pillay has been awarded the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize, becoming the **first** South African woman and the **fifth** South African to receive this remarkable international honour!

The story behind this achievement is even more inspiring.

Born in Clairwood, Durban, in 1941, Navi was the daughter of a bus driver. Her family could not afford university fees, but her school principal recognized her potential and members of her community helped raise the money to give her an education.

Just imagine that! A community coming together to help one young girl follow her dream, never knowing that she would one day become one of the world's most respected champions of human rights.

In 1967, Navi became the first woman to establish her own law practice in Natal. She defended anti-apartheid activists, fought for the rights of political prisoners and ultimately became a judge on some of the world's most important international courts.

Her work on the Rwandan genocide helped establish that rape and sexual violence could constitute acts of genocide. She went on to serve as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and continues her involvement in international justice today.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee recognized her lifelong commitment to promoting peace and international law.

With this honour, she joins fellow South African Nobel Peace Prize laureates Albert Luthuli, Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela and FW de Klerk.

And perhaps the most beautiful part of this story is remembering where it all began. A school principal saw potential. A community believed in a young girl. And that girl went on to help change international law.

-Photo Institute for African Women in Law

Ist Nigerian US Army Brigadier-General

Brigadier General Amanda Azubuike, a trailblazing Nigerian-American who made history as the first Nigerian woman to reach the rank of Brigadier General in the U.S. Army.

Wendy Bagged PhD In Aerospace



Wendy Okolo

On the 2nd frame is Wendy Okolo, who is breaking barriers in aerospace. Wendy bagged a PhD. in Aerospace at the age of 26.

At NASA Ames Research Center, she leads research on flight safety and controls optimization.

The two women are a true definition of excellence and a pride to Nigeria.

-OKENWA_OF_AFRICA@ECHOES_ON_THE_NIGER



Brigadier General Amanda Azubuike

WOMEN WHO INSPIRE

Clementine Hunter: The Painter They Could Not Stop



Clementine Hunter

She could not read or write. She spent half a century picking cotton. She found discarded paint at fifty-three. And before she died, she left behind more than five thousand works of art that now hang in America's most important museums.

Clementine Hunter was born around Christmas in 1886 on a plantation near the Cane River in Louisiana. Her grandparents had been enslaved. Her parents spoke only Creole French. From childhood, work was not a choice. It was survival.

At five, she was sent to a segregated schoolhouse. After ten days, she never went back. No one expected her to learn. The fields needed hands, not minds. She grew up unable to read, unable to write, unable to sign her name.

For the next fifty years, she worked. Cotton fields. Kitchens. Wash tubs. She raised seven children. Two were stillborn. On the morning she went into labor with one child, she picked seventy-eight pounds of cotton, went home, called the midwife, and gave birth. Days later, she returned to the fields.

That was her life. Work, endurance, repetition. No leisure. No education. No space for art.

Then, in 1939, something unlikely happened. At 53, Clementine was working as a cook at Melrose Plantation. The owner had turned the grounds into an informal artists' colony. Writers and painters came and went. One visiting artist left behind paint tubes and brushes.

Clementine found them while cleaning. She had never held a paintbrush before. But she looked at the colors and thought they should not be wasted. She picked up a brush and painted on what she had, a discarded window shade.

The image was a baptism on the Cane River. A scene from her memory. From her life.

She sold it for 25 cents. Then she painted another. And another.

She painted on window shades, cardboard boxes, bottles, gourds, scraps of wood, jar lids. Whatever she could find. She painted cotton picking, wash days, weddings, funerals, Saturday night dances, church gatherings. The everyday life of Black Creole workers in rural Louisiana, a world rarely recorded and almost never preserved.

No one taught her perspective or anatomy or color theory. Her figures were flat. Her colors bold. Critics would later call the work "primitive" and "childlike."

She did not care. She was not trying to impress anyone; she was documenting what she knew.

A writer living at Melrose recognized the power in her work and helped sell it locally. In 1949, when Clementine was already in her sixties, she had her first exhibition in New Orleans. National attention followed slowly. A magazine article in the 1950s introduced her to a wider audience.

By the 1970s, museums were paying attention. By then, her paintings were selling for thousands of dollars. Clementine herself remained poor. She still lived in a small house. She gave tours for twenty-five cents. She charged a dollar for photographs. She continued painting on found materials because proper canvas was still a luxury.

She could not sign her name, so she marked her paintings with a distinctive symbol, a backward C and an H interlocked. That mark became valuable enough that people began forging it. Her work was worth stealing.

She painted anyway. Past 70. Past 80. Past 90 years. In her seventies, she completed large murals inside the African House at Melrose Plantation, covering the walls with scenes of plantation life and a self-portrait of herself painting. Those murals still exist. They are permanent records of a world that would otherwise have vanished.

She painted until a month before her death. Clementine Hunter died in 1988 at the age of 101. She left behind more than five thousand paintings created over forty-eight years, an extraordinary visual archive of Black Southern life.

Today, her work is held by the Smithsonian, including the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, as well as major museums across the country. Louisiana honors her with a day bearing her name. Her life has inspired books, films, and an opera.

What critics once dismissed as unsophisticated is now understood for what it is: cultural preservation. Clementine Hunter did not paint fantasies. She painted reality. Labor, faith, grief, celebration. Ordinary lives made permanent.

She spent 50 years picking cotton. She found paint at 53 (fifty-three). She created thousands of works before dying at 101 (one hundred one).

She never traveled far. Never saw the museums that would one day hang her work. But she saw her world clearly, and she refused to let it disappear. Even if it meant painting on window shades.

They rejected her application without reading it. So she showed up and made them look her in the eye.

TALKING HEALTH

What Are The Benefits Of Eating Boiled Eggs?


Boiled Egg

Have noticed that there is a silent shift in eating habits? With people getting more aware about health, the nature and quality of what we push into our system is changing gradually. Nature is gaining more ground and our bodies are happier for it.

One noticed improved habit is the consumption of boiled egg, that cheap, easily available food. Take a look around you and you will find boiled eggs on display with many patronizing. Today, we examine what this easy food has to offer.

Benefits of Boiled Egg: Say no to omelet off boil; know the benefits of eating boiled eggs. Know the benefits of eating two (2) boiled eggs daily for your body. This will provide countless benefits to your body. Eggs are rich in protein. It is also rich in nutrients. It can also be said to be the abode of nutrients. Protein from eggs is high quality protein. The vitamins and minerals it contains are great for your overall health. So make sure to include two eggs in your daily diet to improve your health. Best wishes for a healthy life.

Protein (one egg contains 6 grams)

An adult needs 0.8 grams of protein per kilogram of their body weight. If one egg gives you 6 grams of protein, that will give you your total protein needs. If you include other pulses in your diet, it will meet your protein requirement.

Meat also contains protein. When you take all these together, it gives your body the protein it needs.

Vitamin A

Vitamin A is essential for eye health and can help your skin and immune system. It helps in the growth of your cells. It plays an important role in the reproductive health and division of cells. A day's worth of vitamin A can be found in two hard-boiled eggs.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium. Helps boost your bone health and immune system function. Helps prevent bone disorders in the body. Also cures rickets and osteoporosis. Gives one the vitamin D he/she needs.

Vitamin B12

Vitamin B12 (2 boiled eggs contain 1.6 micrograms of vitamin B12)

Vitamin B12 is essential for the formation of your red blood cells. It also helps your nervous to system function and DNA. It increases the energy level in your body. Boosts your brain health. An adult needs 2 micrograms of vitamin B12 daily. If you eat 2 eggs a day, it will give you your daily requirement of vitamin B12.

Vitamin B2

Eggs contain 0.6 grams of vitamin B2

Vitamin B2 helps in the metabolism of fat, protein and carbohydrates. These vitamins help in skin and eye health. Eggs give you the amount of B2 you need every day. An adult needs 1.3 mg of vitamin B2.

Folates

Contains 24 micrograms of folate

One egg contains 24 micrograms of folate. Folates are essential for DNA. It is important for red blood cell formation and overall cellular health during pregnancy. A person needs 400 micrograms of folates daily. The daily requirement of folates is found in eggs. So you should include other protein in your diet and meet your daily requirement.

Selenium

2 eggs contain 28 micrograms of selenium. Selenium is an antioxidant that your body needs. It prevents damage to cells in your body. Selenium also helps with thyroid function. It also helps your body's immune system to function better. Including eggs in your diet is one of the easiest ways to get selenium. A person needs 55 micrograms of selenium per day.

Full of Solines

2 eggs contain 294 milligrams of choline. This provides half a day's worth of saline for an adult. This nutrient helps the brain, liver function, and cell membrane fusion. It helps your brain function and memory function.

Iron supplements

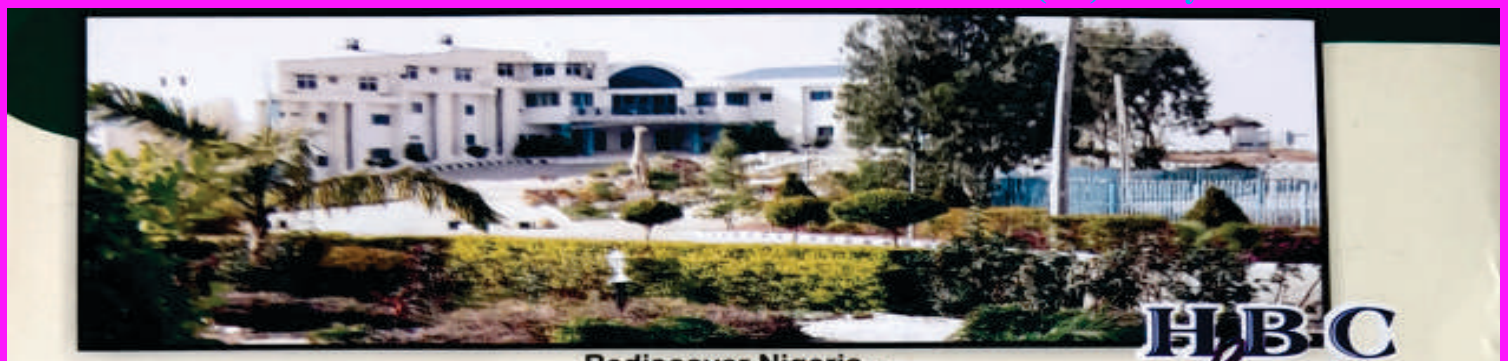
2 boiled eggs contain 1.2 milligrams of iron. Iron helps in the production of hemoglobin and myoglobin in the body. It also transports oxygen in the body. Provides energy to the body.

Zinc nutrients

2 eggs contain 1.1 milligrams of zinc. It provides your body with the zinc you need daily. A person needs 11 milligrams of zinc daily. Zinc boosts your body's immune system. Repairs cells. Heals wounds. DNA is very important for production. It also helps in protein production and retention of flavor and aroma.

"Be human first. Love nature. Bless everyone and find good in everyone around you."

- Amb (Dr) Smily Mukta Ghoshal



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