Gender and Religious Freedom Consultation

Abuja, Nigeria
28th - 30th March 2019
Gender and Religion

Challenges and Dynamics of Nigerian Society

Gender and Religious Freedom Consultation (Abuja, 28-30 March. 2019)

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My 5 Hats

- Scholar/Researcher,
- Gender & Development Consultant,
- Christian women leader & activist
- Woman
- Wife
We envision a Nigeria where:

- There is justice, equity, development and peace for all, particularly women and girls who often face discrimination.

The CWEENS’ mission is to put *the Gospel in Action* through loving service, creative projects, female capacity development and peace-building.

**WE ARE COMMITTED TO JUSTICE AND PEACE**
Proverbs 29:7:
• The righteous considers the rights of the poor.

Psalm 89:14:
Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne.
• SHI: SAFE HARBOUR INITIATIVE to tackle GBV
  • A Shelter for Victims/Survivors of Violence: Kampke House
  • Beneficiaries receive trauma counselling, peer support, skills training, medical/education assistance

• OBS: Observatory on Violence Affecting Women & Girls (VAWG)
  • A platform to report, refer, respond to & document VAWG
FACT: Persecution is a highly gendered experience
GENDER-SPECIFIC RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IS GLOBAL
WORKING DEFINITION:

Religious persecution is the *systematic* mistreatment of an individual or group, on account of their religious *identification* or *faith*, by another individual or group. It consists of *open* or *hidden* acts of hostility, persistent annoyance or harassment.
Persecution is an act of violence; violence is an instrument of persecution

(UN ASEAN Report, 2017)

“Persecution against any identifiable group or collectivity on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender or other grounds are universally recognized as impermissible under international law”

Article 7.1.h of ICC Statute
OVERLAPPING LEVELS OF ANALYSIS: Nature & Source
2 BROAD CATEGORIES

Rooted in social, political, economic & cultural **structures** of injustice and inequality

Inter-personal interactions often empowered by the above
• Gender-specific religious persecution against Christians from outside the Church

• Gender-specific religious persecution against Christians from inside the Church
Intersections of Gender, Religion & persecution

African Traditional Religions (ATRs)
• The value, identity & roles that society & culture ascribe to individuals based on their sex, as well as the relations of power & privilege between males & females
The term “gender-specific religious persecution” refers to:

• “Persecution that targets individuals or groups on the basis of their SEX.”
IN NIGERIA BOTH MALES AND FEMALES ARE VICTIMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN THE FORM OF GENDER-SPECIFIC RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

30/03/2019
Types of GSRP: Points of Vulnerability

- Spread
- Severe
- Sustained

Sexual violence

Socio-Economic Deprivation

Battery & Torture

Harmful Traditional Practices

Emotional & Psychological Trauma
Statistical Pattern: 82.3% of victims are FEMALE
Boys conscripted as child Soldiers (NE); Men targeted for extermination during attacks

Christian minority areas: Males deprived of access to employment & other opportunities
- Political exclusion
- Taking their wives
- Child labour & trafficking

MALE GENDERED EXPERIENCES
CHIBOK GIRLS: Kidnapped, raped, denied access to education, forced into early marriage & forcefully converted to Islam: EXTERNAL, STRUCTURAL & DIRECT
The nature of the battlefield has changed. Warfare is no longer fought in remote battlefields between armies but in our homes, our schools, our communities, and – increasingly – on women’s bodies.

- Heyzer, 2004
Complex, compounded and continuous vulnerability and victimization
STORIES of EXTERNAL GSR PERSECTION

- Usa
  - Boko Haram insurgency
  - Re-victimized by socio-cultural norms (ATR)
  - Deprived of social safety nets
  - Abandonment

- Parmata
  - Abduction
  - Forced marriage
  - Forced conversion
  - Failed governance (educational system/security)

- Zainab
  - Forced marriage
  - Persecution for conversion
  - Harmful traditional practices (cultural and religious (ATR))
STORIES OF INTERNAL
Gender-Specific Religious Persecution
The Church in Nigeria needs to look inward.
**Physical Violence**: Hauwa is married to a security officer who battered her consistently for 15 years of their marriage and kept her in a state of total dependence depriving her of opportunity to earn income, further her education and associate with family and friends. Asked why she endured it for 15 years, she replied: “They said the Bible said we should submit.” (Language of headship & submission)
Dorcas was married for 22 yrs when she discovered her husband had HIV/AIDS. She withdrew her life savings to get him treated. The Dr advised the use of condoms to prevent cross infection. He became violent when she suggested they follow the Doctor’s advice and reported her to his pastor who supported him and advised her to sacrifice her life for her husband’s sexual pleasure as other ‘good’ women had done.

Hanatu, a middle aged govt. employee married a pastor about 20 years ago. He beat and raped her repeatedly. But for several years, in order to ‘protect his ministry’ she & his co-workers in the mission kept silent about his sexual exploitation of house helps, neighbours & relatives as well as domestic violence & embezzlement of mission funds.
Sarah: 24 year-old victim of ethno-religious violence in Plateau State; forced to sleep with her in-law for shelter & food. Helped by missionary.

Rejection of GEO Bill by Muslim & Christian legislators in 2016
1,400 CASES
Directly handled by CWEENS between 2014-2018 besides referrals
The signs are everywhere! But, like the proverbial ostrich the Church is burying its head in the ground.
Most people are clueless about just how widespread and severe VAWG is.
GENDER-SPECIFIC RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IS:

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GENDER-SPECIFIC RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IS…

- PREVALENT
- RECURRENT
- INSTITUTIONALIZED
HOW IS IT SUSTAINED?

- Discriminatory doctrines devalue & disempower women
- Women and girls internalize societal devaluation – 12 yr old
- Pseudo-patriarchy: women-on-women persecution
- Delegitimizing discontent
EFFECTS OF GSRP

SHAMING
- Blame the victim

SHUNNING
- Community rejection

STIGMATIZING
- Loss of reputation

SILENCING
- Don’t complain
- Don’t report
371.1 & 333.0/1000
Mortality rate for adult men & women: its RISING!

5 of 10 girls raped by 15
A recent study; UN Women baseline public/private

Society is waking up slowly
There is a gender-specific problem; things are changing. Praise God!
WAY FORWARD
Acknowledgement

Awareness creation – Women liberation Jesus Style.

Action! Address injustice, criminality and impunity
THANKS!
Any questions?

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• “Why? O Why am I a Woman?” Priscilla Papers. CBE, 2002


