



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN LAWYERS (FIDA) NIGERIA RIVERS STATE

QUATERLY E-NEWS LETTER

DEC 2024- MARCH 2025

A WORD FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

As we continue our journey of promoting, protecting, and preserving the rights of women and children, I am filled with gratitude for the work being done by our team, members, and partners. This quarter has seen several FIDA Nigeria objectives achieved, and

I am excited to share these updates with you in this first edition of our quarterly e-newsletter.

From grassroots sensitisation to advocacies, media programs, and awards received both at the State and National, it is clear that our collective efforts are making a meaningful impact.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to each and every one of you, our members, for your dedication, hard work, and commitment to our shared vision.

I also especially thank our donors and partners.

As we look to the future, I am confident that together, we will continue to drive positive change and achieve great things.

Mrs Tamunoibuemi Life-George

Chairperson, FIDA Nigeria, Rivers State Branch



INSIGHTS FROM THE EDITOR - RACHEL C. PRINCEWILL

Editorial Column



My Lords, Your Worships, Distinguished
Learned Silks, Benchers, Esteemed Seniors
and Colleagues

We are happy to introduce to you the 1st edition of International Federation
of Women Lawyers FIDA Nigeria Rivers State Branch quarterly e-newsletter.

As we step into this first edition of our quarterly e-newsletter, we are opportune
to remind you of the power of information and shared perspectives. In this
issue, we will bring to you insightful advocacy, practical engagements, proactive
deliberations, legal opinions, and updates that are pertinent, including thought
provoking opinions. Our goal is to keep you informed and inspired.

We appreciate your continued support, germane contributions and encourage you to
share your feedback with us. Your thoughts and engagement will help shape the
conversations that drive us forward.

Happy reading!

Rachel c.Princewill (AICMC)

Publicity Secretary/Editor FIDA Nigeria Rivers State Branch

FEATURE ARTICLE

WOMEN AND GIRLS LEADING CHANGE

—What I want young women and girls to know is this: You are powerful, and your voice matters.//
— Kamala Harris

INTRODUCTION

For women and girls to break barriers, claim new territories, and lead meaningful change, they must first understand, assert, and exercise their fundamental human rights. As human beings and right holders, they cannot and should not be denied these rights. Recognizing and upholding these rights lays the foundation for a fair and just society, empowering women and girls to reach their full potential—not just for their personal growth but for the betterment of their families, communities, and the world at large

THE URGENCY OF GENDER EQUALITY

Discrimination against women and girls manifests in laws, policies, and societal norms that exclude or restrict their opportunities solely on the basis of gender. Nations worldwide must commit to advancing the rights of women and girls by enacting and enforcing laws that ensure their full participation in all aspects of society and governance. Moreover, harmful gender norms must be challenged at every level, ensuring a world where women and girls can thrive without limitations.

LEGAL FRAMEWORKS PROTECTING WOMEN AND GIRLS

1. THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (UNCRC)

The UNCRC is a landmark treaty that recognizes all children, including girls, as individuals with inherent rights. It acknowledges their unique vulnerabilities and mandates the protection and promotion of their rights, including nondiscrimination, freedom from harm and abuse, and full participation in family, social, and cultural life.

KEY PROVISIONS:

- a. **Article 3:** In all actions concerning children—whether by public or private institutions, courts, administrative authorities, or legislative bodies—the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration. This serves as a guiding principle for policies and decisions affecting children, including girls.
- b. **Nigerian Context:** Section 1 of the Child Rights Act (2003) aligns with this principle, affirming that the best interests of the child shall be paramount in all actions concerning them.

1. FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF GIRLS

Women and girls are entitled to certain inalienable rights that must be upheld and protected:

Right to Life, Survival, and Development

Right to Protection from Harm

Right to Education

Right to Freedom of Expression and Speech

Right to Participation in Society

Right to Non-Discrimination

In addition, specific protections are designed to shield women and girls from harmful practices and injustices, including:

Protection from Harmful Practices: Safeguards against female genital mutilation (FGM), child marriage, and forced abortions.

Protection from Violence: The right to be free from physical, psychological, sexual, and domestic violence.

Protection from Exploitation: Protection against child labor, sexual exploitation, and human trafficking.

Protection from Discrimination: Women and girls must not be subjected to discrimination based on gender, circumstances of birth, race, nationality, or any other factor.

LEGAL BACKING:

Chapter IV, Section 42 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria prohibits discrimination based on gender or other factors.

Section 10 of the Nigerian Child Rights Act further reinforces protections for children, including girls, from discrimination.

1. THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW)

CEDAW is a pivotal international treaty that outlines the rights of women and provides a roadmap for achieving gender equality.

KEY ARTICLES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE:

Article 2: Requires states to condemn discrimination, ensure legal protections, and enact laws that eliminate gender-based inequalities.

Articles 3–6: Mandate the adoption of appropriate measures to promote the full development and advancement of women in all fields.

Articles 7–9: Guarantee women’s equal rights in public and political life, including voting, political participation, and nationality rights.

Articles 10–13: Demand the elimination of gender discrimination in education, employment, healthcare, and economic life.

Article 14: Recognizes the unique struggles of rural women and their vital contributions to the economy.

Article 15: Affirms women’s equality before the law.

Article 16: Ensures equality in marriage and family relations.

THE ROAD AHEAD: A CALL TO ACTION

A future where women and girls have equal opportunities is not just an ideal—it is a necessity. The journey toward rights, equality, and empowerment must be fueled by solidarity, collaboration, and an unwavering commitment to justice. To create a fair and just society, we must:

1. Support initiatives that empower women and girls.
2. Advocate for stronger policies and laws that uphold gender equality.
3. Demand the enforcement of existing legal protections for women and girls.

CONCLUSION

The fight for gender equality is not just about legal frameworks—it is about creating lasting change. Women and girls must speak up, take action, and lead the transformation they seek. Their voices, their leadership, and their resilience will shape a future where equality is not just a vision but a reality.

The time for change is now. Women and girls, stand up and lead the way.



About the Author

AFFIONG ENE-OBONG is a seasoned child rights lawyer with a passion for delivering top-notch legal solutions. Born in the Netherlands and nurtured in Nigeria, Affiong developed an early interest in law driven by the desire to make an impact in the justice system.

She is a Lawyer, Author of four published books, Founder/ Editor-in-Chief of Yellow People Magazine and Yellow People Media. Her dedication and passion for legal research, passion for children, women and persons with special needs has earned her opportunities to inspire, impact and transform lives through excellence, integrity and commitment to making the world better.

HIGHLIGHT OF BRANCH ACTIVITIES IN DECEMBER 2024 ELECTION AND SWEARING IN OF NEW EXCO



On the 10th of December, 2024, the International Federation of Women Lawyers, FIDA Nigeria, Rivers State Branch, held her Triennial General Meeting thus marking the closure of the tenure of Mrs. Adata Bio- Briggs led Executive Committee which commenced in December 2021.

Highlights of the Meeting was the Election and inauguration of the new Executive Committee, that will pilot the affairs of the Branch for the period of December 2024-December 2027. The following persons emerged as the new FIDA Nigeria, Rivers State Branch Executives:

Tamunoibuemi Life-George - (Chairperson)

Okorite Kelvin Yobo - (Secretary)

Concellia O. Enwereuzoh - (Treasurer)

Oluchi Ofoegbu - (Financial Secretary)

Rachel Princewill (Publicity Secretary)

Sotonye Kelechi - Nwuzi (Assistant Publicity Secretary)

Tosan Jaja - Welfare Secretary





On the 5th of February 2025, an uncontested bye Election was conducted where Dr. Vivian Akunesiobike and Dr. Cizaram Obanu were elected as the Vice Chairperson and Assistant Secretary of the Branch respectively.

ADOCACY AND COMMUNITY SENSITIZATION IN DECEMBER 2024

FIDA Nigeria, Rivers State branch attended Human Rights Day hosted by the National Human Rights Commission on the 10th of December 2024. The branch was represented by the assistant publicity secretary, Sotonye Kelechi-Nwuzi. The theme of the event was —Legal Provision of the Rights of Women and Girls: Holding Perpetrators Accountable and Planning Action for Advocacy for the



Passage of Laws on Protection of Women and Girls from Harmful Practices peculiar to the State. Highlights of the advocacy was the urgent need of reforms and enforcement of the existing laws to safeguard women and girls from harmful practices that are deeply rooted in cultural and societal norms.

On the 11th of December 2024, the chairperson of the branch, Mrs. Tamunoibuemi Life-George, along with other branch members, attended and participated in a townhall meeting organized by Action Aid to commemorate the 16 days of Activism. The Chairperson assured participants at the forum of FIDA Nigeria continued support in fighting for the rights of women and children. She reiterated that the organization services are provided free of any cost.



BRANCH ACTIVITIES: JANUARY- MARCH 2025

LEADERSHIP RETREAT AND TRAINING FOR THE NEW EXCO

The Staff and Exco of the branch had a two-day retreat from the 10th -12th January 2025. Some of the key outcomes were realignment to the mission and vision of FIDA Nigeria, strengthened unity and team building amongst members of the Exco and the drafting of an actionable work plan for the year 2025.





MARKET SENSITIZATION

WOJI RUMUROLU MARKET.





As part of the International Women's Day program of activities, members of the branch paid a sensitization visit to the women at Rumurolu Market where they were the women were taught about their rights and the extant laws in Rivers State that protect and preserve those rights. Some women were also gifted with wrappers.



ALETO-ELEME MARKET

In line with the workplan of FIDA Nigeria, Rivers State Branch, led by the Chairperson, Mrs. Tamunoibuemi Life-George visited the Aleto-Eleme community market on the 18th of March 2025. Both men and women were sensitized on their rights and the extant laws available to them and were also encouraged to visit the center to report complains and seek legal redress where applicable. It was indeed a fruitful and successful exercise.



SCHOOL SENSITIZATION

GOVERNMENT GIRLS SECONDARY SCHOOL, RUMUOKWUTA



To celebrate the International day of Women and Girls in Science, members of the Branch led by Mrs. Iniobong Irene Peple paid a sensitization visit to Government Girls Secondary School Rumuokwuta. The students were sensitized and educated on the theme; —Unpacking STEM Careers: Her Voice in Science.||

EDUFORT HIGH SCHOOL



Sotonye Kelechi-Nwuzi and Cecily Ibeka Okoronkwo paid a sensitization visit to Eudufort High School on the 14th of February 2025 to speak with the students, parents and guardians on the topic, —My Body, My Privacy- Empowering Children to Recognize and Prevent Abuse.||

ADVOCACY VISITS

CHIEF JUDGE

On the 20th of January 2025, members of the branch Exco paid a courtesy visit to the Chief Judge of Rivers State, Hon. Justice S.C. Amadi. The branch sought further engagement with the Chief Judge in key areas of pro-bono legal services to indigent complainants and partnership in filing of processes. The Chief Judge commended the organization for her efforts in decongesting the prisons and court docket and affirmed his commitment to advancing the rights of women and children in the state





RIVERS STATE MULTI DOOR R COURT HOUSE

On the 20th of February, 2025, FIDA Nigeria, Rivers State Branch led by her chairperson, paid a courtesy visit on the Director Rivers State Multi-Door Courthouse, His Worship. Victor E. Nweke Esq to present a proposal for partnership and collaborative efforts. The Director promised to synergize and partner with FIDA Rivers. To further this partnership, when available, a room in the Court House will be given to the branch to enable her carry out mediations and other forms of ADR.



LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, LEGISLATURE AND EXECUTIVE





**PARTNERSHIP AND
COLLABORATION VISITS**



THE JUDICIARY

On the 21st of January 2025, members of the Branch and Exco paid a courtesy visit to one of our pioneer members and past chairperson of the branch, Hon. Justice Elsie Thompson.



The visit was aimed to harness the wisdom at the feet of our esteemed mother of the Branch. My Lord urged the new Exco to build in developing themselves and all members of the branch as well. She further implored the Branch to invest in self and personal development as this is the key to increase self-esteem and self-confidence of branch members.



On the 25th day of January, Members of the branch Exco on the 29th of January 2025 paid a courtesy visit to our senior, Hon. Justice Margaret Opara. My Lord expressed her belief in the new Exco and urged for increased momentum in pushing the agenda of FIDA Nigeria and indeed the state at large, forward.

On the 10th February, 2025, The Chairperson, FIDA Nigeria, Rivers State Branch, Mrs. Tamunoibuemi LifeGeorge led a delegation of members of the branch and Exco to pay a courtesy visit to the Chairman, Police Community Relations Committee (PCRC), Mr. Voke Emore, to discuss potential collaboration and strengthen ties between the police, FIDA and the community.





Key Discussions and Outcomes:

- **Collaboration & Support:** The Chairperson emphasized the need for partnership and familiarization, highlighting the importance of police support in FIDA's work. The Chairman assured that with the commencement of said collaborative partner, police backing is guaranteed, given their strong relationship with the Commissioner of Police (CP).
- **Community Engagement:** PCRC expressed enthusiasm about working with FIDA, noting that there is much to be done for the community.
- **Training & Capacity Building:** The Chairperson encouraged training programs for police officers and paralegals, suggesting that retired police officers be trained as paralegals to help their communities. The chairman also proposed taking this initiative to the Commissioner of Police for support.
- **Strengthening Ties:** It was suggested that some FIDA members be inducted into PCRC to bridge communication gaps and foster a stronger working relationship.

The Chairperson was presented with a certificate of collaboration by the Chairman as a show of his support and appreciation of the efforts FIDA Nigeria, Rivers State Branch.

THE NIGERIA POLICE ELEME AREA COMMAND HEADQUARTERS- ELEME RIVERS STATE



Members of the Branch paid a visit to the Nigerian Police, Eleme Area Command to bring to the notice of the commander, a case of a woman who was violently assaulted by her husband and sustained several injuries to her face and her head. The husband is now at large and absconded with the three children of the marriage in the process. In her response, the Area Commander instructed that investigations into the matter be commenced immediately and committed to ensuring that the perpetrator be brought to justice.



NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION, PORT HARCOURT BRANCH



FIDA Nigeria Rivers State Branch paid a visit to Mrs. Cordelia U. Eke, the Chairman of Nigerian Bar Association Port Harcourt Branch. Being a FIDA member as well, she commended the branch on its growth and progress and the sheer magnitude of the work being done at the Center on a daily basis. She thanked the Chairperson for extending such a visit to her office and promised improve partnership with the branch. Mrs. Eke reiterated her commitment to supporting FIDA in its noble endeavors and encouraged the executives to prioritize personal and professional development for Branch member.



MEDIA SENSITIZATION VISITS



SPOTLIGHT CASE

On the 4th March 2025, the outcome of the branch partnership with the Police



Community Relations Committee (PCRC) paved way for further actions, as Dr. Vivian Akunesiobike and Sotonye Kelechi-Nwuzi together with the Chairman (PCRC), Mr. Voke Emore, paid a visit to the Commissioner of Police, Olugbenga Adepoju at the Police Headquarters, Moscow Road, Port Harcourt.

The reason for the visit was to report a complaint received by Sotonye Kelechi-Nwuzi and Mrs. Ibis Briggs, regarding the assault of a young lady and her baby at the Rumuolumeni Police Station after her husband was arrested.

The complainant/victim and her baby were beaten with a belt and pushed to the ground which left the baby with a swollen eye. The Complainant's phones were also seized.

In partnership with the PCRC, FIDA Nigeria, Rivers State Branch escalated the matter to the Commissioner of Police who took up the case and commenced investigations into the allegations laid against the officers of the division.

The officers in charge have been ordered to release the phone of the Complaint and further internal investigations as well as disciplinary actions against the offending officers for their actions are underway.

Members of FIDA Nigeria, Rivers State Branch extend their gratitude to the Commissioner of Police for his swift action and the Chairman of PCRC, for partnering with the branch to ensure that justice is served and the rights of women and children continue to be protected.

SPOTLIGHT EVENT INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2025



To celebrate International Women's Day, FIDA Nigeria Rivers State Branch partnered with HAGREB Foundation to conduct a one day workshop on the theme —Empower, Equip, Accelerate. The program had three guest speakers; Hon. Justice E.N Thompson, Hon. Justice Omonigho Nwbani and Mrs. Chioma S. Jack (FICMC, MCI Arb Uk, A. DRI, Registrar and Deputy Director of the Rivers State Multidoor Court house.

Hon. Justice Elsie N. Thompson took the first topic and explained with practical steps and examples, the importance of knowing who you are and taking care of your overall well-being, especially your mental health and the challenges that come with it.

Hon. Justice Nwibani in her presentation, implored FIDANs to —Prepare to be Preferred. She further shared her personal journey on how she prepared to become a High Court Judge of Rivers State.

The Deputy Director, Rivers State Multi-Door Courthouse, Mrs. Chioma S. Jack spoke on the importance of self-development, resilience, determination, consistency and staying prepared in order to achieve one's career goals.

The workshop was well attended with the notable presence of nine female Judges of the High Court of Rivers State who also contributed to the theme of the day, Empower, Equip, Accelerate.







FIDA ADR CENTER HIGHLIGHTS

HIGHLIGHTS OF CASES FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY COMPLAINTS

98 Complaints were received physically at the centre in the month of

Mediations Ongoing	Mediations Concluded	Mediated cases	Non Mediated cases	Litigation Ongoing	Litigation Concluded	Legal Advice/ Enquiries
204	29	70	68	138	1	NIL

BREAKDOWN OF COMPLAINTS FOR FEBRUARY, 2025

Abandonment	Domestic violence to /Battery /Assault	Failure to provide necessities	None Access to children	Access to property	Threat to life	Rape	Marital/Family
1	31	25	15	NIL	11	4	6

HIGHLIGHT OF CASES FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH: COMPLAINTS

86 Complaints were received physically at the centre in the month of

Mediations Ongoing	Mediations Concluded	Mediated cases	Non-Mediated cases	Litigation Ongoing	Litigation Concluded	Legal Advice/ Enquiries
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203	27	79	138	137	1	NIL
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BREAKDOWN OF COMPLAINTS FOR MARCH, 2025

Abandonment	Domestic violence to /Battery /Assault	Failure to provide necessities	None Access to children	Access to property	Threat to life	Rape	Marital/Family
4	36	26	13	3	11	2	5

NOTICE OF PRO BONO OPPORTUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIP INVITATION

The International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) invites interested legal practitioners and private firms to collaborate with us in providing pro bono legal services to those in need.

We encourage:

1. Legal practitioners to visit our Legal Centre and undertake cases on a pro bono basis, providing critical legal assistance to marginalized communities.
2. Private firms to partner with FIDA in handling matters on a pro bono basis, demonstrating their commitment to social responsibility and access to justice. In support of these initiatives,

we require:

3. Monthly updates on case files handled through this partnership to be submitted to the FIDA Legal Centre, ensuring transparency and effective case management.

Together, we can promote access to justice and make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.

Contact us to learn more about this opportunity and to express your interest in partnering with FIDA.

FELICITATIONS

CONGRATULATIONS FIDA RIVERS!



It is with great pleasure that I congratulate FIDA RIVERS on another remarkable achievement with the launch of the maiden edition of the FIDA Rivers E-Newsletter. Although FIDA has been known for its several publications, the E-Newsletter stands out because it is in line with the global trend of digitalization and paperless communication. This Newsletter is another proactive step by FIDA

RIVERS and I commend the Publicity Secretary and her team for the innovation. I urge them to sustain this tempo and continue to remain pace-setters in building a just and better society for women and children.

Cheers!

Cordelia Uwuma Eke (Mrs.) FICMC ACI Arb(UK)



CALL FOR PARTNERSHIPS

Join us in making a lasting difference. The International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Nigeria, Rivers State Branch, is dedicated to safeguarding the rights, dignity, and well-being of women and children, particularly those in vulnerable and underserved communities. Through our unwavering commitment, we provide legal support to indigent individuals, ensuring that justice is not a privilege, but a right for all.

Today, we invite you to be a beacon of hope for those who need it most. Your support can transform lives—whether it's empowering a widow to regain her strength or offering a child the chance at a brighter future. Together, we

Donate today and be the reason someone smiles tomorrow. Your generosity will leave an indelible mark on their lives.

Account Number: 4150001303

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Promote the course of FIDA.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

FIDA Nigeria, Rivers State Branch, extends our heartfelt gratitude to all our esteemed partners, stakeholders, patrons, and members for their invaluable contributions to the success of the current administration in the first quarter. Your guidance, financial support, and collaborative efforts have been instrumental in making the achievements highlighted above possible.

We look forward to continuing our fruitful collaborations in the coming year, as we work together to further our mission.

A special note of appreciation goes to the Publicity Committee of FIDA Nigeria, Rivers State Branch, for their unwavering dedication, hard work, and tireless efforts in ensuring that the FIDA flag continues to soar high. Your commitment is truly commendable.

EDITORIAL TEAM



RACHEL C. PRINCEWILL (AICMC)
(Publicity Secretary/Editor)



SOTONYE KELECHI-NWUZI
(Assistant Publicity Secretary/Editor)



NONYE SUNDAY
(Secretary, Publicity Committee)



LYDIA PRECIOUS-DIKE
(Contributor)



OKORITE BRIGGSS-YOBO



LADY ADATA BIO-BRIGGS

All members of the FIDA Nigeria Rivers State Branch Publicity Committee



FIDA Nigeria Rivers State Branch remains committed to her mission which is to promote, protect and preserve the rights, interests and well-being of women and children through the use of legal frameworks for achieving a just, peaceful and equitable Nigerian society where women and children's rights, interests are guaranteed.

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=

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FACEBOOK

<https://www.facebook.com/FidaRivers?mibextid=ZbWKwL>

EMAIL

fidarivers@yahoo.com

CALL US

07059997721

