AJOKE AYISAT AFOLABI FOUNDATION

10TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY REPORT



THEME:
WIDOWS ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT THROUGH GENDER ANALYSIS LENS

SEPTEMBER 27, 2018

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AAAF
Ajoke Ayisat Afolabi Foundation
10TH
YEAR
ANNIVERSARY
THEME
WIDOWS ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT THROUGH GENDER ANALYSIS LENS
Thursday
September 27
2018
Henry Fajemirokun Hall
Commerce House,
1 Idowu Taylor, Victoria Island
Lagos State.
11:00
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1.0 BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Ajoke Ayisat Afolabi Foundation (AAAF) registered as a non-profit in 2008, celebrated its 10th year anniversary with the theme: *Widows Economic Empowerment through Gender Analysis Lens* on Thursday, September 27, 2018.

The event, which held at the Henry Fajemirokun Hall, Commerce House, 1 Idowu Taylor Street, Victoria Island, Lagos was attended by about 300 participants drawn from government ministries, agencies and departments like the Lagos State Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation (WAPA), the Consumer Department of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and office of the Wife of Ogun State Governor, civil society groups, the organised private sector, media, and beneficiaries, as well as, International Organisations like the Department for International Development-United Kingdom (DFID-UK) and the National Commission for UNESCO. The event Chaired by HE Dame Abimbola Fashola, former First Lady of Lagos State and CEO LEARN was graced by HE Princess Sarah, former Deputy-Governor of Lagos State and CEO Sarah Sosan Foundation (see Figure 1).

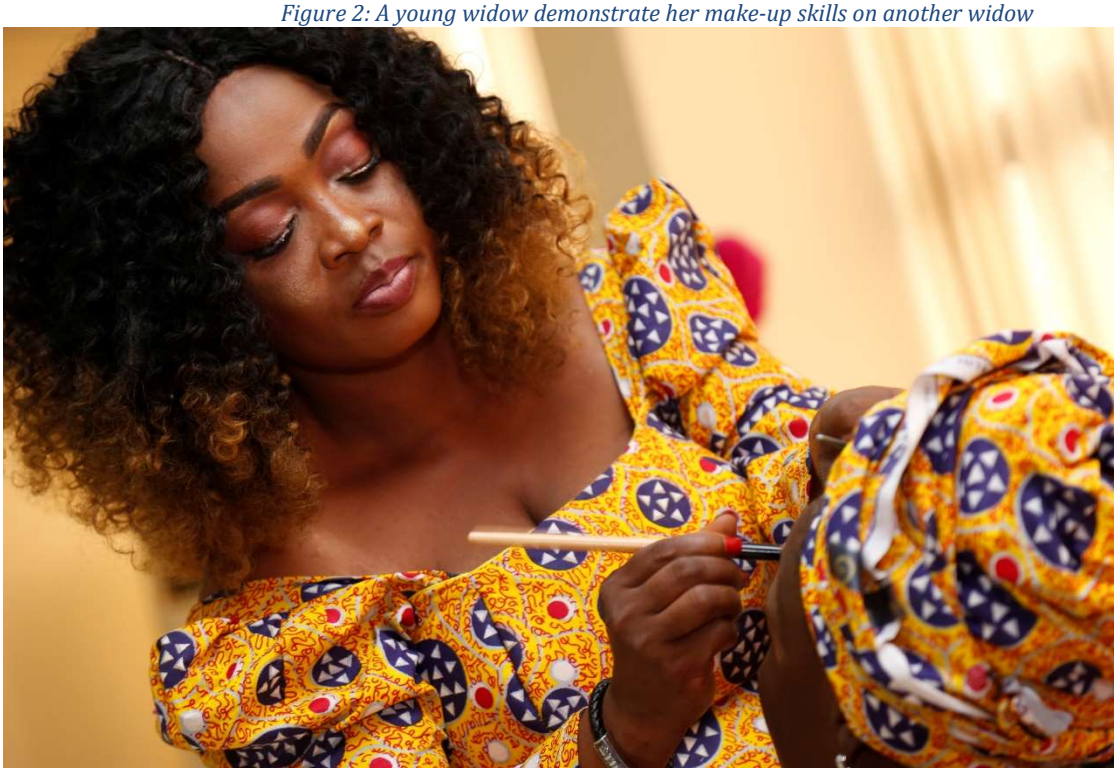
Figure 1: Cross-section of Dignitaries at AAAF 10th Anniversary



Welcoming the guests, Dr. Wale Afolabi, President, AAAF, congratulated friends, colleagues, families, partners and followers on social media platform, stating that the milestone was an opportunity to highlight the socioeconomics footprints of the Foundation. He stated further that through these years, AAAF has emerged a leading voice for the economic empowerment, training, and education of over 20,000 widows, orphans and vulnerable children, noting that, it has been a decade of interesting findings. For instance, in a survey of 150 widows, results indicate **81% of widows are below 50 years, and 72% have Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSCE) as their highest level of Education!**

Concluding his remarks, he thanked the **SIFAX Group** for its generous donations and the **World Bank Group, Staff, Community Connection Campaign** for supporting the Foundation's SACK-Poverty Project in 2018. Similarly, reports from AAAF Zaria office in the last 5 years highlighted support for more than 10,000 persons through skills in tailoring, ICT Programming, shoe making, POP and empowerment opportunities. The President concluded by sharing AAAF expansion plan in Nigeria, particularly, as it relates to the establishment of a Southeast office.

Figure 2: A young widow demonstrate her make-up skills on another widow



Other Key Highlights of the event include:

- Presentation of a short documentary on AAAF activities
- Goodwill messages by partners
- Key Speeches by Special Speakers
- Song and dance presentation by beneficiaries
- Panel Discussion to deliberate on issues of concerns to widows and their households
- Presentation of business starter-kits to 20 widows
- Product Exhibition to showcase products made by beneficiaries

2.0 PRESENTATIONS:

2.1 The Documentary:

Participants were treated to a 15-minute documentary on the activities of the foundation over the past ten years. It showcased the work and assistance to widows, persons living with disabilities and vulnerable children. Reports from the documentary suggest more than N500 million has been invested in education, skills empowerment and business support for more than 20,000 vulnerable households inclusive of widows, orphans and vulnerable children. In the words of Mrs. Foluke Ademokun, AAAF Executive Coordinator, '***not only do we teach women to fish, we provide them skills to build and own their fish ponds, to help them invest resources and contribute to society'***. Some specific services outlined in the documentary include:

- ✓ Support children with knowledge to eliminate poverty
- ✓ Enrolment of women in skills of their choice such make up, painting, baskets, Ankara craft, hair dressing, catering etc
- ✓ Quarterly community health outreach services and health empowerment program
- ✓ Provision of Scholarships to indigent children
- ✓ Linkages to legal aid
- ✓ Seminars, classroom and field education to boost the knowledge of children

Figure 3: Audience participants at the Event listening with rapt attention



2.2 Goodwill Messages

The forum offered opportunities to key partners to give special messages of goodwill, while sharing their work experience collaborating with the Foundation.

i. Mrs. Chrystal Chibugwu representing Nigerian Network of NGOs (NNNGO) expressed their profound appreciation to AAAF for its humanitarian response to poor and vulnerable members of the Nigerian society. She stated that because women are further impoverished by sole financially dependent on spouses who like all mortals are subject to death, it is therefore, important acquire skills that will enable them to be self-reliance. While acknowledging the excellent contributions of AAAF to

achieving Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 8, she welcomed participants to a viable deliberation on behalf of NNNGO.

ii. The Managing Director of United Capital, Mrs. Tokunbo Ajayi in her remark thanked AAAF and expressed the willingness to support the Foundation's effort towards alleviating the challenges faced by widows in Nigeria.

iii. The Director of NGOs, WAPA, Mrs. Adejoke Olasunkanmi-Oshodi, representing Lagos State Commissioner for Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, Hon. Dr. Lola Akande, congratulated key stakeholders on the milestone achievement. According to her, the theme for the celebration points to the myriads of injustice women face, noting that AAAF has significantly offered solutions to these problems. She stated that AAAF is a good example of partnership between state and non-state actors, as the Lagos state government shares the passion of AAAF and has partnered with the Foundation towards responding to the needs of widows and other vulnerable groups. She alluded to the SDGs, stating that the Lagos state government has been inclusive and ensuring that no one is left behind. She informed guests that the state currently has 17 skills acquisition centres, and have set up an Employment Trust Fund to promote job creation opportunities in the state.. She wished the occasion a fruitful deliberation.

iv. Representing the Director Consumer Protection, Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Abuja, Mr. Abubakar Albasau, said he was impressed and overwhelmed by the quality of work presented. He noted that though women are the centre of every household, they are mostly excluded. He admitted the intervention was a learning point, which he will present to the CBN, admitting that the department never considered how its work could impact widows though they focus on vulnerable women, generally. He went further to describe CBN's National Financial framework and Development Initiative, promising the Bank through its Development Finance department will explore collaborating opportunities with the Foundation areas of mutual development concerns. In conclusion, he advised participants to email; apd@cbn.gov.ng **or/and call 0700callcbn (07002255226)** to register complaints on banking irregularities

i. UN Women representative to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Ms Comfort Lamptey, in her goodwill message noted that to empower women economically, livelihood provisions must be linked with deliberate actions that are inclusive of advocacy targeted at improving access to public goods and services for women and girls. While informing participants of UN Women broader interests in facilitating women's involvement in macro economy, she introduced the organisation's technological innovation "Buy from Women Enterprise Platform" aimed at boosting marketing and supply chains opportunities for women small holders in the agricultural value chain process.

Figure 4: ***from L-R AAAF Executive Coordinator, Foluke Ademokun, fmr Deputy Gov of Lagos State, Princess Sarah Sosan, President AAAF-BOT, Dr. Wale Afolabi, ED, Human Resources (SIFAX Group), Dr Fola Rogers , and AAAF Zaria Team.***



2.3 Keynote Speeches

ii. The Chairperson of the occasion, the former First Lady of Lagos state, Dame Abimbola Fashola in her opening remarks, delivered by Mrs. Adetorunke Odetoyinbo, congratulated the Foundation on its 10 years of responding to the needs of the less privileged in the society. She encouraged all stakeholders to collaborate on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 5 in order to end poverty and gender inequality, respectively. Subsequently, she declared open the proceedings.

iii. In her remarks, Princess Sarah Sosan, former Deputy Governor of Lagos state congratulated all the widows and vulnerable children who have benefitted from AAAF till date, noting the enormous work involved in running a Foundation. She prayed that the widows will not only be receivers but partners who will touch lives in the society and become worthy ambassadors to Nigeria. She thanked partners such as DFID for their good work, and for committing to support the Foundation.

Figure 5 Mrs Okeowo Oyeleye representing Ogun First Lady



Figure 6 Mrs Grace Ajayi delivering Key Note Speech



iv. Mrs Grace Ajayi representing Mr. A. A. Kehinde, the Secretary General of the Nigerian National Commission of UNESCO of over 190-member countries, in her remarks expressed delight at the auspicious occasion. She commended AAAF for intervening in the UNESCO mandate, which she noted is further brought to the grassroots through the intervention of AAAF. She enumerated the work of her agency to include eradicating extreme poverty, ending gender inequality and providing skills and opportunities geared towards causing social transformation. She stated that achieving SDG 4 is critical in achieving inclusivity and ensuring no one is left behind. She enjoined the beneficiaries to operationalise and make what they have learnt count! Finally, she urged them to endeavour to transform not only their lives but their family, the state and the world, imploring the government to do more and support AAAF foundation and other NGOs so that greater outcomes can be achieved.

v. On her part, the wife of the Governor of Ogun state, Her Excellency, Mrs. Olufunso Amosun, thanked AAAF for inviting her as a Special Guest Speaker, nothing the theme of the event was apt and directly relates to a myriad of challenge women face such as cancer, human trafficking and other forms of gender-based violence, which are prevalent across the globe. Participants were treated to a video presentation on the work of Uplift Development Foundation, founded by the First Lady of Ogun state. The scope of the video covered services, such as, feeding more than-5,000 aged, providing free eye scans, vocational skills, cancer awareness program, environmental care, waste to wealth program, football program talent hunt, micro credit scheme and health program for women living with HIV resident in Ogun state. Speaking through her representative, Mrs. Okeowo Oyeleye, the First Lady of Ogun State and Founder of Uplift Development Foundation, noted that over 20.000 women have benefitted from interest free loan in the state and though women's issues are becoming increasingly publicised and supported, there is need for additional intervention in the following areas:
    - Provision of training, skills acquisition and micro financing for women in rural communities
    - Increased access to health and
    - Improved women's access to information and safety from violence.

She concluded by commending AAAF for supporting UDF initiatives in Ogun state.

2.4 Presentations of Songs and Dance by Beneficiaries

In addition to participating in the Feedback session, beneficiaries engaged in songs and dance to demonstrate their artistic skills and appreciation, as well as, a call for action. Two separate groups of beneficiaries comprising women and children showcased talents of indigenous dance and rendition of '*We are the World*' respectively.

Figure 7 AAAF widow during a presentation



3.0 DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Panel Discussion:

The thrust of discussion by the panel was centred on the characterisation of "woman" as a heterogenous group characterised by varying level of vulnerabilities and requiring different levels of approach of gender planning, programming and policy. The discussion also recognised the complexities of widowhood status, first on the account of being a widow and second on being a victim of feminised poverty. Similarly, the discussions considered findings from the AAAF work indicating that because of low education and skills, widows are in dire need of life's essentials such as housing, gainful employment opportunities and access to emotional therapy in order to upturn widow-headed household vulnerability.

Figure 8: (L-R) Discussants from NNEW, DFID-UK, LCCI, CBN and the Moderator



The discussants, Olajumoke Fashanu, Chair of Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) Women Group and CEO First Home Mortgage, Modupe Oyekunle, President NECA's Network of Entrepreneurial Women (NNEW), Margaret Fagboyo, Project Manager, Department For International Development-United Kingdom (DFID-UK) and Abubakar Albasau, Consumer Protection Department, Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) robustly deliberated on issues identified as challenging to widows and their households.

The session, which was moderated by Chizoba Akunne of Lagos Women 2030, was very engaging. Fielding questions from the moderator on the social evaluation of widow, Olajumuke Fashanu of First Home stressed the importance of understanding the housing needs of widows in assessing their vulnerability, noting that while some require social housing others may require affordable housing. She added that her work with other women establishing eligibility criteria for the housing needs of widows will benefit tremendously from the AAAF's database on widows. She encouraged participating widows to open accounts with banks as a first step, to owning their homes. While they wait for the circulation of registration forms, which she promised will be free. She committed to inviting AAAF and other groups who might be interested to its Summit which will take place on 11th and 12th October 2018.

In her contributions, Margaret Fagboyo (DFID-UK) noted that women are traditionally disadvantaged and would be better served through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which promote inclusion. She reiterated the need for women to own their own accounts, seek education, involve and encourage their husbands to write WILLS to reduce the challenges they may face on account of their spouses passing interstate. She stressed the need for women to have

their own identity, have a job of their own and earn a livelihood. While informing participants of a DFID project, which promotes access to health in Northern Nigeria, she indicated the possibility of a replication of the same intervention in the South. In conclusion, she stated that she will leverage on the opportunity of her birthday anniversary on June 23, 2019 to engage AAAF women.

On its part, the Nigerian Network of Entrepreneurial Women (NNEW) says it offers valuable resources to help women grow their businesses and achieve life ambitions, while influencing policy thrusts for the economic empowerment of women. The body was represented on the panel by Titilayo EKO, its Executive Director.

Abubakar Albasau of the CBN anchored his intervention on the research base of the bank's intervention. He reiterated the need for women to own accounts with banks as a first step in accessing credit. According to him, the CBN provides training on financial literary covering the process of credit administration, effectively. He advised participants with challenging banking experiences to reach the CBN through contact information noted earlier in the report. He committed to working with the AAAF to reaching more women, especially widows.

The discussion was concluded with a question and answer session providing opportunities for participants to clarify issues and make contributions to the discussions.

4.0 PRESENTATION OF BUSINESS STARTER KITS

In its commitment to alleviating poverty and empowering widows economically, AAAF President presented a range of business starter kits such as baking oven, commercial gas cookers, pepper grinder, big-sized coolers, chaffing dish, branded trader's umbrellas, wares, to 31 beneficiaries to commence their business start-ups. The in-kind support was aimed at facilitating self-sustenance initiatives for beneficiaries. This was followed by rendition from students of Hope Children School for the Deaf, Products exhibition by selected beneficiaries and the presentation of an award to AAAF by the promoter of Divine School, an educational institution for children of leprosy victims based at Ogbomosho, Oyo state, Nigeria. The event came to a close with a vote of thanks by the Executive Director of AAAF, Ms. Foluke Ademokun concluded her gratitude to participants for being a part of the event by reiterating AAAF's commitment to helping widows achieve their life potentials

Presentation of Start Up Kits to Beneficiaries of AAAF by Olori S.A Ajede (Ogirimadagbo of Ilodo) (fig 9) and Dr Wale Afolabi













Presentation of Award to AAAF by Beneficiaries from Ogbomosho



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Product exhibition by AAAF children and mothers (Bead Jewelleries and Cosmetics; Organic Soap and Bath Wash)



Figure 9 the students from Hope Fountain School for the Deaf makes their presentation



5.0 OPPOURTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The anniversary provided collaborative opportunities to work with a range of partners and for effective leverage, we commit to the following:

1. AAAF to work with **Consumer Protection Department of the Central Bank of Nigeria** to promote access to transformative skills and funding for vulnerable beneficiaries
2. The Foundation will strengthen its **policy advocacy strategy** to give traction to programmes that empower and protect widows socially, as well as, promote inclusion
3. The AAAF will **engage broadly and share evidence of interaction with widow-led households** on the need to recognise and address their peculiar level of vulnerability due to frail social architecture
4. Based on difficulties associated with housing for widows, AAAF will **engage Women In Hosing**, a non-profit focused **on improving access to housing for widows**, to explore potential opportunities on affordable housing
5. In line with advancing the trajectory of the Foundation, AAAF management will **engage the Board of Trustees on the next phase of project** implementation, while tracking offers from other stakeholders to assist.
6. AAAF in conjunction with key stakeholders should **develop overarching strategy** that will responds to key issues of housing, income generation, caregiving and psychosocial trauma affecting widows specifically on account of inherent discriminatory practices associated with their status
7. following **the commitment of National Commission on UNESCO to promoting transformative education in Nigeria**, collaborative opportunities between the commission and AAAF should be strengthened for the benefits of vulnerable beneficiaries
8. Similarly, in an effort to lift women out of poverty, the UN Women would do well to **utilise a gender analysis lens** to consider widows who are the rung of the vulnerability ladder. Findings suggest there is need to identify and engage widows, who on account of their losses are confronted with a combination of gender and endemic cultural discriminations, thereby being further impoverished.

ANEXTURE 1 _COPIES OF ATTENDANCE SHEET