

Making it Happen for the Igbo Woman
(Report of the International Women's Day Summit 2015)
8 – 9 March 2015
Assumpta Cathedral Church and Owerri Hotel Plaza
Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria

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Introduction

The celebration of women across the world happens on the 8th day of March each year since 1911 when it was first held. The event is used to mark the economic, political and social achievements of women. The Igbo Women's Forum United Kingdom celebrated this year's ***International Women's Day and Launched an advocacy group called Nchekwa Oha Advocacy – Safeguarding the Community*** in Igbo land at Owerri Plaza Hotels, 190 Port-Harcourt Road, Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria on 8th -9th march 2015. The theme of the event was ***“making it happen for the Igbo Woman”***.

Several hundred women from different spheres of life, grass root women, delegates and groups were in attendance. Some of the featured speakers included **Dr Sarah Jibril**, Special Adviser to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on Ethics and Values, **Mrs. Obianuju Nwanneka**, National Deputy Woman Leader, Ohanaeze Ndigbo (Women Wing) and **Megan Clement**, Chairwoman, Igbo Women's Forum, United Kingdom (IWFUK), and founder of Nchekwa Oha Advocacy Group. The speakers inspired and interacted with women on the identified issues within their communities that need to be reformed. The Chief launcher of the advocacy group was **Dr Dozie Ikedife (Ikenga Nnewi)** from Nnewi in Anambra State, Nigeria. To him *'it's a much needed advocacy group in Igboland'*.

In the opening address by Ms Clement, she explained the event as a forum for grass root Igbo Women to articulate issues facing them and their communities, while harnessing and utilizing the nurturing qualities of women towards the achievement of positive outcomes and transformation within Igboland. The Keynote speaker, Dr Mrs Sarah Jibril emphasized on women's ability to having critical influences on the development of ethics, values, mentorship, good governance, leadership and development.

The summit was for two days of which the first day 8th of March 2015 was used by the women to give thanks to God in a church service specifically officiated by the Archbishop Anthony J. V. Obinna at Assumpta Cathedral, Owerri, Imo State.

The second day, 9th of March 2015 was a workshop where delegates identified ideas, issues, key barriers and problems relating to elderly, children, women and disabled. Some of which are trafficking, abuse, domestic violence, significant gender-based health disparities in the country, limited access to education, lack of quality medical services, unemployment, high illiteracy rates, increasing poverty levels, weak legal framework, lack of implementation of policies, harmful cultural practices and biased cultural behaviours.

The workshop was centred on legislative, policy and cultural issues. **Other activities carried out during the summit were:** Comprehensive deliberations on the issues outlined above and ways that will help in resolving them, interactive sessions, voting exercises and solution analysis.

Summit Pertinence

There are some who will argue that over the years the Nigerian-Igbo woman has made significant progress in self-actualization. To a large extent this is a fair assessment but an incomplete one if we consider that there are so many unexplored potentials, economically, socially and politically, which, if mined, would make the Igbo woman to have fully arrived. Lack of information, limited or no network and some backward traditional or cultural behaviours are but a few factors militating against the actualization of the full potentials of the Igbo woman. The President of Igbo Women Forum United Kingdom (IWFUK) Ms Megan Clement, in her speech during the inaugural summit stated

“We need this summit for South-Eastern Women of Nigeria to articulate their needs, the needs of their children and husbands from their perspective. This summit will help create an advocacy group that will focus on achieving all the articulated issues in the Blue Print to be created, for once, by the women for the women”

Summit Theme

The theme for the 2015 International Women’s Day was “Make it Happen”. Keying into this great idea, that, the Igbo Women Forum United Kingdom (IWFUK) has proposed through their President Ms Megan Clement to give their summit theme a unique slant and has opted for the following theme: **“Making it Happen for the Igbo Woman”**

Aim of the Summit

The summit aims to bring Igbo women from different works of life into a round table to articulate issues facing them, their children and husbands from their own perspective. This is to enable the ultimate goal of producing a Blue Print of what needs to be changed in the process of full actualization of the potentials of the Igbo woman and how these changes could be achieved.

Delegate Registration

The women arrived on Sunday, 8th March and registered their presence before the commencement of church service. A total number of two (2) delegates were selected from each Local Government Area of the following states – Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo, Delta and Rivers State (Delta and Rivers are only from the Igbo speaking LGAs). The criteria for appointing delegates are:

- The delegate Must be an Igbo Woman
- Must be aged 18 years and over
- Must live in the LGA she is representing.
- All states coordinators must ensure that at least one representative from each of the following groups is included:
 - o Disabled (inclusive of sufferers of HIV); Student; Market Trader; Widow; Married; Single; Divorced

Morning Session: Deliberation by grass root delegate women from South East Geopolitical Zone

Legislative Framework

Session Title	Deliberation by grass root delegate women on Legislation framework
Discussion Focus	Children (abused and disabled)
Session Presenter:	Barrister Okoroji
Moderator:	Megan Clement

Session summary

Barrister Okoroji led the comprehensive discussion and interactive session on the legislative framework while highlighting the issue of child abuse. She stated that children (whether disabled or not) all over the country are exposed to different types of safeguarding issues like, Violence, exploitation and abuse. Each of these issues comes with their own characteristics due to poor implementation of the Child Right Act 2003. Ms. Clement buttressed on the point that most abuse (violence, neglect, exploitation etc.) are often practiced by someone known to children including parents, other family members, caretakers, teachers etc.

Barrister Okoroji explained that only a small proportion of these abuses are reported and investigated, and smaller numbers of the perpetrators are held accountable. Therefore, she stated that reform in legislation, policies, services and social norms can improve the protection of children in multiple ways.

Ms. Clement further stated that legislations that fail to identify the needs of disabled children exacerbate their abuse. The delegates were able to identify most of these issues within their communities. During the discussion, one of the Ebonyi State delegates spoke about the urgent need to revive some traditional values and standards in Igbo community. Majority of delegates from Imo and Abia state added that with more campaign and awareness raising within the community will improve outcome for the Igbo child.

The Convention on the Rights of the Children was ratified by Nigerian government and implemented by the Child Rights Act of 2003. Unfortunately, this Act has not been adopted by all the States of the Federation and its effectiveness cannot be fully measured. Ms Clement stated that out of the 5 Igbo states (Enugu, Anambra, Ebonyi, Abia and Imo state) only Enugu state have not enacted the law in their state. However, that does not mean that the rights of children are better protected in the other 4 states. Ms Clement further stated that the said Act has not been amended since 2003, therefore cannot be effective in protecting children from abuse.

Major Takeaways

- The need for Child Right Act 2003 to be reformed

<p>Agreed Actions to be taken:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The need for the government and communities to work together in order to eradicate child abuse within the Igbo community ▪ For government as a matter of urgency set up a committee to look at the reform of the Child Right Act 2003. ▪ For government to create the appropriate ministry to oversee the Act in partnership with the police. ▪ As a matter of urgency for the government to roll out child abuse training for all officials that have direct access to children. ▪ As a matter of urgency for the government to set up a regulatory agency to monitor people that are allowed to work with children. ▪ Government to launch an on-going child abuse campaign within the community ▪ Government to involve the generally community particularly children and young people in any reform they intend to do on the Child Right Act 2003. ▪ Government to commission research to discover new and emerging trends.
<p>Estimated Impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children will be a lot safer ▪ There will be an effective system in place to cope with any identified issues both for the victim and perpetrators ▪ The law enforcement agent will be better trained in how to handle issues when they encounter it. ▪ The community will be well informed on how to seek help

Discussion Focus	Legislative Framework on Adult (Elderly And Disabled)
Session Presenter: Moderator:	Barrister Okoroji Megan Clement

The deliberations revealed that the elderly does not count as far as the government is concerned. All delegates felt the time has come for action by the government to relieve the plight of the elderly and disabled people as long overdue.

Barrister Okoroji buttressed the points raised by the delegates by stating that the **Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Bill**, which the House of Representatives had passed remained under review at the Senate. Government's responsibility for people with disability falls under the National Human Rights Commission and the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development. Although the federal government announced that plans for Persons with Disability Commission had been completed. These institutions advocated for the **Nigerian Disability Bill**, which was passed by the Senate but not the House of Assembly. It is only Plateau and Lagos states laws that provides for protections for the rights of persons with disability.

A delegate from Anambra State categorically stated that there is little or nothing done for the elderly people and laments on the inability of the government to enforce laws protecting the rights and interests of elderly and disabled people, including pensioners.

A special feature of this session is the voices of older women themselves who were in attendance to inform about their quality of life and highlight their experiences and views. Older persons and disability are issues addressed extensively in this session with references made to some of the legislations earlier mentioned during deliberations on abused and disabled children.

Consultation with a 67 years old delegate in attendance from Anambra state revealed that she would not mind being in a nursing home, and pointed out that the government should provide social welfare benefit, free/subsidized medical and social care services, mobility and transport, access to information for Elderly and Disabled Persons, and finally calls for full implementation of Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and enactment of legislations to uphold the rights, welfare and interests of elderly and disabled persons.

Majority of participants argued that each year, five out of every 20 older Nigerians (on estimate) is abused in some form. They pointed out that for the elderly or disabled persons who are in a non-institutionalized environment, a criminal neglect laws and policies would protect them from abuse and make it a misdemeanor to knowingly neglect or abandon an elderly or disabled person in a way that would threaten the life or health of that person. One of the delegates added that in most cases, a family member, close friend, or caretaker who becomes a person in a position of trust signs the bank account or other financial document as a joint owner. This enables the trusted person to conduct basic transactions such as withdrawals and transfers of funds not always the best interest of the elderly and disabled person.

They emphasized that aged people and persons with disabilities face social stigma, exploitation, and discrimination; and relatives often regarded them as a source of shame. Many families viewed persons with disability and elderly who could not contribute to family income as liabilities and sometimes severely abused or neglected them. Many indigent persons with disabilities begged on the streets. Law enforcement agents are usually reluctant to investigate violent crimes, especially those against elderly, women, children and disabled, who are unable to pay the costs of investigations or bribe the investigating officers. Thus, these perpetrators largely go unpunished.

Another delegate from Enugu State raised some questions on "who is an elderly? At what age would anyone be regarded as an elderly? And who is a person with disability?"

In answer to these questions, the participants argued that each day minimum of 5,000 (five thousand) people in Nigeria turn 60 (sixty) years of age and unanimously adopted the age of 65 years and above to be the age anyone would attain to be regarded as an elderly. Accordingly they agreed that all disabilities results from a physical, mental, or emotional health condition and consequently anyone who suffers from any physical, mental or emotional health condition is disabled. Further government action is needed to put into effect legislative strategies to ensure that maximum functional capacity can be maintained throughout the life of an elderly and disabled person

Major Takeaways	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Lobby the government on creation of elderly and disabled person legislation▪ Monitor the implementation of the legislation within our communities.
Agreed Actions to be taken:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Government to commission a research to discover new and emerging trends about ageing within the communities.▪ Government to set up committee to commence discussions on what support can be offered to the elderly and how it will be funded.▪ Government to set up committee with different stakeholders in the community on identifying NGOs that can support the government in meeting their statutory duties to the citizens▪ To Increase aggressive campaign to the people on what is their rights and the government statutory duty towards them.▪ To Lobby the government on creating a legislation that will make it a statutory duty for the government to make sure that basic needs of elderly people are met.

Estimated Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Implementation of Effective system that safe guards the elderly people from abuse and neglect▪ To have an effective legislation around elderly and disabled persons▪ Better informed community, encourage an effective support system and interventions for them while putting in place monitoring mechanisms which are transparent and accessible.▪ Setting up specific official bodies and institutions with the primary objective of ensuring that governments respond appropriately and coherently to the challenges of ageing and/or older persons and disabled▪ Appropriate provision of resources needed to implement the legislation.
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Policy Framework

Session Title	Deliberation by grass root delegate on national, state and local policies
Discussion Focus	Children
Session Presenter:	Amaka Ezukwo
Moderator:	Uju Nwanneka
Session Summary	The delegates analysed existing policies at the federal, state and local levels relating to children. With most of the participants expressed their views, made their contributions and observations. The discussions culminated into the uniform adoption of best approach to promote, enhance the interest of children and older people.
Major Takeaways	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ To give appropriate priority to the needs, rights and welfare of Igbo children;
Agreed Actions to be taken:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Increase aggressive campaigns and enlightenment of citizens about initiatives targeted at meeting the needs of children▪ Advocating for ratification, adoption and effective practical implementations of policies at all the sectors▪ Creating, organizing and implementing initiative/programs to meet the needs of children particularly the Igbo child▪ Lobbying government for more transparent funding system for effective implementation of the policies▪ To lobby and campaign to the government on creating an effective system for the implementation of the policies
Estimated Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Implementing and translating existing policies into practice▪ Creating comprehensive human rights education and culture of universality of child rights among Nigerians.▪ Establishing and applying strong adequate institutional tools and resources for successful implementation of policies in favor of children▪ Creating, organizing and implementing initiative/programs to meet the needs of children particularly the Igbo child▪ To encourage law enforcement agencies to prosecute any person who undermines and tampers successful implementation of such policies

Session Title	Deliberation by grass root delegate on national, state and local policies
Discussion Focus	Elderly
Session Presenter:	Amaka Ezukwo
Moderator:	Uju Nwanneka
Session Summary	<p>Special feature of this session is the voices of older persons –the older women among the participants who lent their voices on the issue to inform about their quality of life and highlighted their experiences and views. The deliberations centred on the implementation of specific Ageing plans at all levels, highlighting good practices, identifying gaps in policies on older persons in Nigeria and recommending further action by governments to mainstream ageing issues into national development frameworks,. This includes laws, policies and programmes; poverty reduction strategies; and budgets to meet the needs of older persons. The participants emphasized on the process of adjusting the challenges of ageing with the ultimate goal of creating a society for all ages. This will help to embrace the potential and contributions of the ageing population, formulate policy which will be supportive of an age-adjusted future, promote health and care services, rehabilitation, mobility and transport services, etc.</p>
Major Takeaways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To mainstream ageing issues into national development frameworks, including laws, policies and programs; poverty reduction strategies; and budgets to meet the needs of older persons; ▪ involvement of older persons in any policy and budgetary action to be undertaken in the light of older persons' concerns; ▪ Provide the resources needed to implement policy and put in place monitoring mechanisms which are transparent and accessible. ▪ Ensure that existing policies for example, health and social protection, are age- adjusted and reflected in national budget priorities. ▪ To create a society for all ages.

Agreed Actions to be taken:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ To sensitize and organize awareness campaign program for a culturally sensitive understanding of issues affecting older persons and similarly, culturally sensitive application of government action on ageing;▪ Advocating for effective practical implementations of policies a process of adjusting to the challenges of ageing with the ultimate goal of creating a society for all ages;▪ Encouraging systematic attention to issues of ageing through relevant policies and programs on health promotion, disease prevention, assistive technology, rehabilitative care, mental health services, promotion of healthy lifestyles and supportive environments as well as programs to introduce geriatric medicine in tertiary institutions curricula and health-care systems, training of personnel/caregivers etc.
Estimated Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Implementing and translating existing policies into practice.▪ Strengthening ageing policies into all sectors of public policy; and ensure that resources are available for the bottom-up evaluation of policies and programs.▪ Build, improve, share and communicate good practices in policy implementation and legislative action on the elderly to the community.▪ Establishing and applying adequate institutional tools and resources for successful implementation of policies in favor of elderly.▪ Including ageing in other policy areas, with a specific focus on institutional arrangements and holistic policy solutions.▪ Encourage law enforcement agencies to prosecute any person who undermines and hampers successful implementation of such policies.

Cultural Framework

Session Title	Deliberation by grass root delegate women on Cultural framework
Discussion Focus	Issues around women :Focusing on treatment of women at the death of their husbands
Session Presenter:	Megan Adaobi Clement
Moderated by:	Uju Nwanneka
Session Summary	<p>This Session generated sensitive reactions and contributions. Women did not need a facilitator to raise their concerns on the topic. A 40 year old woman in tears had this to say “I was just 22 years old when I lost my husband, it was an unimaginable experience, no compassion! no love! no concern! Particularly women from my husband’s family it was just me with my kids who were just 4 and 2 years old then” she noted that some unfavourable cultural practices are most times anchored and carried out by fellow women. She cited an example using herself, stating that fellow women called <i>UMU ADA</i> were the ones that shaved her hair aggressively with so much scorn, hatred and maltreatment, using a blade. She went further to say that it was same women that were mooring her and ridiculing her when she was thrown out of her late husband’s house by some members of her husband family because she had only female children. She emphasized that Attitudes must Change.</p> <p>The attendees affirmatively asserted that Many customary practices also did not recognize a woman’s right to inherit her husband’s property, even if she was the only heir, and many widows and female children of the widow become destitute when their in-laws/late husband’s family took virtually all the deceased property. Women are still regarded as part of the husband’s property and as such she cannot inherit her husband’s property, but must be inherited alongside his other property by another male of the family.</p> <p>Further deliberations and responses from the participants revealed that cultural practices draw much influence from religion- Christianity, Islam and African traditional religion. Traditional rulers are generally the custodians of culture for the individual communities, so also are Christian and Islamic religion leaders’ symbol of authority over Christian and Islamic matters respectively. Traditional rulers, Christian and Islamic religion leaders will play an important role in influencing the attitudes of the people particularly women in some of the issues. Ms Clement explained that those women are victims themselves as the try to live up to men’s unspoken expectations.</p>

Session Summary

They also found **out** that challenges to the promotion and protection of women's rights includes:

- harmful traditional practices (such as widowhood rites, child marriage and violence against women),
- the patriarchal structure of Igbo society,
- lack of protective law such as failure of the government to pass the abolition of all forms of discrimination against women in Nigeria and other related matters and failure of the government to domesticate the international law CEDAW, (the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women), despite having ratified it in the 1980s without reservation
- Inability of many women to escape violence and domination due to their disadvantaged economic status (poverty and illiteracy). Many women and girls depend on the financial resources of their husbands, fathers or male family members. These forces them to put up with domination for fear of the withdrawal of this financial support,
- A culture of silence that stigmatizes the victims of domestic violence rather than the perpetrators and lack of institutional support. An Enugu State delegate buttressed this point when she informs the women were told to "*go home and be a good wife*" when they brought complaints to the police, making women fear the label of being a "bad wife" for this reason, women bottle up their challenges and has little faith in the integrity or capacity of the police to redress crimes of domestic abuse. This can be attributed to corruption, poor police training and under-resourcing of the police as well as perceived pervasive institutional sexism.

<p>Agreed Actions to be taken:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Campaign for implementation of CEDAW international law. ▪ Attitudes must Change; modifying social and cultural attitudes of women and men through public education and awareness raising at the grass root level. ▪ Support to be offered to any woman who wants to go public on practices that are unfavorable to women ▪ Campaigning and lobbying traditional rulers to examine cultural beliefs and attitudes that result in harmful practices to women. ▪ Lobbying the police to have a mandatory training for their officers on issues of domestic violence of which experts in domestic violence within the group will facilitate at no cost to the police. ▪ Raise awareness on all relevant laws that protects women to all relevant stakeholders particularly grass root women. ▪ Raise awareness on women’s rights to the public, particularly women that are not to blame for the physical, sexual or psychological abuse to which they are subjected to ▪ Raise awareness to women on how they can report any form of abuse to law enforcement authorities/persons. ▪ Campaign and lobby the government on funding projects that promote women’s rights and/or provide services to vulnerable women. ▪ Raise funds to support projects that will support women’s affair. ▪ Lobby for collaboration with other NGOs and government agencies in order to meet the needs of women ▪ Campaign and lobby the government on reviewing laws on women’s property rights and all other laws discriminating against women, for instance women not been able to post bail for a person in prison.
<p>Estimated Impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Change of attitude among men and women; Adequate protection of women and Strong institutional support for them; ▪ To encourage law enforcement agencies to prosecute any person who undermines and hampers successful implementation of favorable policies and legislations on women; ▪ Government’s fulfillment of its obligations, redemption of its image and show of its commitment to the wellbeing of women by domesticating the protocol; Passing the bill on violence against women into law; Reviewing laws on women’s property rights and all other laws discriminating against women; making adequate budgetary allocations to issues that promote women’s rights, bridge gender gaps and Integrating women’s right issues and gender education into the school curriculum; ▪ Creation, organization and implementation of initiative/programs to address all forms of harmful cultural practices meted out on women at the death of their husbands and other related matters

Afternoon Session: Launch of Nchekwa Oha Advocacy Foundation.

The afternoon session was for the launch of Nchekwa Oha Advocacy Foundation. The women agreed that there is need for an advocacy group to be launched in order to anchor all the deliberated issues. The foundation will focus on Legislative, Policy and Cultural issues; these issues will be identified and reviewed annually during the celebration of International Women's Day.

Welcome Address by Megan Adaobi Clement – Chairwoman of Igbo Women's Forum UK

I welcome you all to the Igbo Women's Conference and the Launch of Nchekwa Oha Advocacy Foundation.

I am excited to address you as Chairwoman of Igbo Women's Forum (IWF) UK about today's event which will combine Women only conference this morning as part of our celebration of International Women's Day (IWD) and the launch of Nchekwa Oha Advocacy Group. The celebration of women across the world happens on the 8th of March each year since 1911 when it was first held. The occasion is used to mark the economic, political and social achievements of women. Organizations, governments, charities, educational institutions, women's groups, corporations and the media across the world celebrates the day, although in Igboland we have not fully joined our colleagues across the world to celebrate it.

IWF UK decided to celebrate this year's IWD with our sisters and mothers in Igbo land hence the reason for this event. This year's theme from the International Women's Day Organization is 'Making it happen'. For us in IWF UK, ours is tagged 'Making it Happen for the Igbo Woman'.

To make it happen for the Igbo woman, we must come together and articulate issues facing us. The issues in the community are not solely for women but our wider communities as women are known for their nurturing qualities. Therefore, **WE Must** use the God given skills to restore our communities. Our focus for the day will centre on issues of legislation, policy and cultural nature. In this respect, we are reminded of *Diane Mariechild* who wrote 'A woman is the full circle. Within her is the power to create, nurture and transform'.

We are not afraid to push the boundaries of what we know, and seek to enhance the world with our hearts and minds. These simple yet powerful qualities are part of what is needed to make outstanding differences in the lives of people around us, thereby starting a ripple of change for the greater good of our communities. The other part is the need for our society to recognize and embrace our strengths while remembering the essence of where we come from and who we are as Igbo women.

As we struggle to gain complimentary position with our male counterparts, there are still times when we find ourselves battling with one another. This is a legacy of an intolerant society's viewpoint of a woman's place in the grand scheme of things; a viewpoint that has entrenched itself in the minds of some of our women through no fault of their own, but a point that has no place in the new realities and changing needs of our society.

After the articulation of issues facing the women in Igbo land, it is imperative for us to have an organisation that will anchor the campaign for achieving positive outcomes. Through careful consultation with the strategic stakeholders and grass root women, it was agreed that an advocacy group will be the appropriate option in making sure that the articulated issues are well anchored.

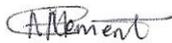
Hence the Launch of “Nchekwa Oha” (Safeguarding the Community). One of the essential pillars on which Nchekwa Oha rests on is the notion of “buying shares before expecting dividends’. Nchekwa Oha will sew, confident that it will reap where it has sewn. Together we shall make it happen for the Igbo woman.

Nchekwa Oha is an advocacy group that will make sure that the voice of the grass root women are heard through appropriate people and organisations. Nchekwa Oha will roll out advocacy training to all primary and secondary schools in all the Igbo speaking LGAs for students, teachers and parents who are willing to participate. Nchekwa Oha will hold its annual review meeting on the 8th of March as well as celebrate the International Women’s Day.

If we work together, I believe there will no limit to what we can achieve. The changes that our society is going through demands nothing less than unified ideals and clear thinking stemming from equality on all fronts of life and business alike. It is our responsibility to leave a legacy befitting the needs of our children for the future of all our communities.

I encourage all women to continue being the backbone of our men, children, family, and community and be the comfort and strength of our fellow Igbo Women.

God bless you all.



Megan Adaobi Clement
Chairwoman IWFUK
Founder Nchekwa Oha Advocacy Foundation

Statement on Policy as Key by Cllr Anna Mbachu, Councillor in Waltham Forest Local Authority UK

Cllr. Anna Mbachu’s speech reminded women the importance of policy within the government system. She went further to illustrate this relevance by explaining how policy helps establishments to serve its customers in a consistent manner.

Statement on The Place of Advocacy in Development within Igboland by Paschal Nneji, Senate Candidate under APGA for Owerri Senatorial Zone in Imo State.

Chief Paschal Nneji expressed his happiness over the launch of Nchekwa Oha Advocacy Group. He explained that no government can be effective without the involvement of such groups, and they are such organisation who challenges leaders such that the voice of the people can be heard, particularly the voiceless in the communities. He commended the Igbo Women’s Forum UK for taking the initiative to organise such forum for grass root women to meet and articulate issues directly affecting them.

Chief Nneji pledged his continuous support for Igbo Women, particularly women from his senatorial Zone, promising to support them yearly to attend the conference in any Igbo State it will be held.

Statement on women being the agents of change by Dr Mrs Sarah Jibril, Special Adviser to the President on Ethics and Values

The highlight of Dr Mrs Sarah Jibril's speech was "women must unite to bring the desired change needed in our communities". Her Excellency expressed her joy with the day's event and told all Igbo women present the need to work hard for the community.

She encouraged us to constantly remind ourselves and people around that we are Teachable, Changeable, Developable and Transformable. She encouraged the board members for Nchekwa Oha Foundation/IWFUK to launch a project to reach out to Igbo sons and daughters in prison abroad, and this was widely agreed by the women. She expressed sadness over the many Igbo sons who for one reason or the other found themselves in prison outside of the country and they have no one to advocate for them or even tell their families of their predicament.

Statement on Youths and Advocacy by Mazi Isiguzoro, present Youth Leader for Ohanaeze Ndigbo Nigeria and Worldwide.

Mazi Isiguzoro's speech was centred on the need for the youths to be involved in advocating for change within their community through appropriate ways. He explained that unless youths get involved and speak out with one voice, the desired change might not easily be achieved. He stated that the time has come for the Igbos to start speaking out both within our communities and outside of it. He applauded the IWFUK for this initiative of creating a forum for grass root women to share their worries in a very structured manner. He stated that Ohanaeze Youths are willing to work in collaboration with Nchekwa Oha and IWFUK in making sure that the needs of Igbo people are met.

This offer of partnership was warmly welcomed by the women.

Launching Keynote Address by Dr Dozie Ikedife (Ikenga of Nnewi), Former Ohanaeze President-General, Nigeria and Worldwide; and Chairman Council of the Elders Anambra State, and Conveyer Council of Elders in South East Geopolitical Zone.

Dr Dozie Ikedife, the Ikenga of Nnewi started by commending the IWFUK for such initiative of bringing grass root women into a round table discussion on issues that directly affects them. He went further to say that it is always a thing of joy when our people in Diaspora returns home to help their motherland.

He explained that it is always fruitful when women gather with one mind to deliberate on issues affecting the society and he believes that our deliberation earlier in the morning will be fruitful. He employed all the delegates to spread the word of the agreed recommendations that were reached in the morning.

Dr Ikedife unveiled the logo and declared Nchekwa Oha Advocacy Foundation Launched. He called on Ms Clement to give a brief explanation of the Logo.

Explanation of Nchekwa Oha Advocacy Foundation Logo by Megan Adaobi Clement



The Map – Targeted region

The **Olive Leaf** signifies the good of charity, peace and prosperity. Lime Green/Green Family is a color of growth and vitality, associated with new life and renewal. It encourages generosity, kindness and sympathy.

Mother and Child signifies foundation, care, love, values, nurturing and future

Hands with diff shades of colours signify the diverse people, culture, religions with diverse issues reaching out for support.

Amaka Ezekwo of IWFUK gave a closing remarks on behalf of IWFUK

Dr Ikedife called on Uju Nwanneka the Deputy Woman Leader of Ohanaeze Women Wing to say the closing prayers and he declared the event closed

Advisory Board Members for Nchekwa Oha Advocacy Foundation

Lolo. Hephzibah Chika Ibeneme (Hon) – (Chairperson Advisory Board for Nchekwa Oha) also President-General Igbo Women and Youths Nigeria and Diaspora (I-WYND).

Hon. (Dr) Collins Nweke – Municipal Legislator Ostend City Council Belgium.

Dr Dozie Ikedife - (Ikenga of Nnewi), Former Ohanaeze President-General Nigeria and Worldwide and Chairman Council of the Elders Anambra State and Conveyer Council of Elders in South East Geopolitical Zone

Dr Mrs Sarah Jibril - Special Adviser to the President on Ethics and Values

HRM. (Dr) Patrick Acholonu, 11th Igwe of Orlu, Imo State