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FROM : Amembassy LAGOS

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SUBJECT : Status and Rights of Women in Nigeria

REF : Lagos 9227

FOR IO/IWP

1. ASF FYI
- ~~2. EARLY FYI~~  
(Chris Jones?)
3. ~~Law~~ FYI
4. Debbie -  
Should we get copies in library?

Enclosed are a study of Laws and Customs Affecting Women and the Resolutions issued by a National Seminar on Women held in Benin City on June 13-15, 1979.

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Enclosures:  
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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FORM 4-62 DS-323

Drafted by:  
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Clearances:

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LAWS AND CUSTOMS AFFECTING WOMEN

A. POLITICAL AND CIVIC RIGHTS

1. All adults of 18 years and above are entitled to vote - Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, sec.
2. Therefore all women above the age of 18 can vote. Also all women above the age of 21 are entitled to contest any political election. Thus there are no laws preventing the full participation of women in politics.
3. We are not aware of any customs either preventing their full participation, however, it would appear that since women in purdah are not allowed out in the daytime, special provisions may be needed to ensure that they are able to cast their vote. The official voting hours which end at 6 p.m. usually will exclude this group of women.

Perhaps one may suggest that either special women's voting booths are created or the official hours be extended to dusk i.e. around 7 p.m.

Constitutional status

1. As citizens women are entitled to all the rights - including all the fundamental human rights in the Constitution and can challenge anybody who attempts to interfere with the exercise of any of the rights.
2. But in practical terms, they may not be as well protected as the men. For example Section 20 of the Republican Constitution provides that no person shall be held in slavery or servitude. But our system of customary marriage tends to encourage servitude.

Under customary law, a man is allowed to claim back his dowry when he is divorced from the woman, whether or not he or the woman instituted the divorce proceedings. This custom therefore, does not recognise all the services which have been rendered by the woman during the subsistence of the marriage.

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In some areas, e.g. among the Igbira, it is allowed that the sum to be claimed back should be calculated in accordance with the number of children the beget for the man. But what happens to the childless woman? This system inevitably makes women servile even in the face of excessive cruelty by the man.

A suggestion might be that dissolution of customary law marriage should no longer depend on the refund of the dowry but that such dissolution should be registered in a court for the avoidance of doubt.

Citizenship

A foreign woman married to a Nigerian citizen can apply for citizenship, but a foreign man married to a Nigerian woman does not have the same right.

However citizenship rights can now be passed on to a child if either parent or grandparent is a Nigerian citizen.

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CIVIL LAW

A woman has full legal capacity when she may legally exercise the maximum amount of power permitted in the society. Acting in her own name and without assistance, to enter into contracts, to acquire and own property, to enter into other legal transaction, sue or be sued. In Nigeria, women do not have full legal capacity, by that definition.

An unmarried woman, who is 21 and above has full legal capacity to the same extent as a man. She can sue and be sued in contract and in tort. She is liable for her debts and she can acquire rights in property. This means she can buy or sell property in her own name. She can engage in business, profession, choose her own residence and generally make her own decisions without the approval of anyone.

The inequality of the sexes is in respect of married women particularly those married under native law and custom.

1. A married woman cannot control her own property especially if the property is acquired after marriage. Therefore she cannot legally make contracts in respect of her property if this will jeopardise the husband's right in such property.
  2. She cannot enter into loan or hire purchase agreements without the husband's consent.
  3. She cannot obtain a passport without the husband's consent. There is no law requiring such consent but administrative practice.
  4. Her domicile follows that of the husband, therefore, during the subsistence of the marriage, she is merely an appendage of the husband and not an individual i.e. a woman living in Nigeria cannot start divorce proceedings against her husband if he is living outside Nigeria.
  5. However, her husband is not liable for her personal debts and so she can be sued in both contract and tort.
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- 6. She cannot sue her husband for debt during the subsistence of the marriage.
- 7. If she contracts a christian or Statutory marriage - because these are monogamous marriages - she cannot be forced to give evidence against her husband in any court proceedings.

FAMILY LAW

Nigeria recognises both the monogamous and polygamous systems of marriages. Although there is a tendency to give an enhanced status to wives of a monogamous marriage. This is not necessarily an advantage because there are also several restrictions which are imposed on wives of monogamous marriages. For instance, the legal unity of husband and wife of a monogamous marriage means that they are regarded as one, and that one is usually the husband. Whereas no such legal unity is presumed in polygamous marriages, so the parties have much more practical freedom.

Capacity to Marry

1. Age - The age of marriage is the age of puberty. There are statutes which have fixed the age of puberty but it is generally accepted that a girl reaches puberty around the age of 12 - because it is believed that when a girl begins to menstruate, she has in effect become a woman. Note some variations - e.g. in Northern States Borgu, the age is 13. In the Eastern States, it is now 16.

2. Subsisting Marriage

A person who has a subsisting statutory or customary law marriage, cannot contract another statutory law marriage. Similarly a person who has a subsisting statutory law marriage cannot contract a customary law marriage.

In this regard women need to be educated because when their men who have contracted statutory law marriages take other 'wives', the second and/or third marriages are illegal and void.

Women who believe that because customary law recognises a plurality of wives, therefore, they are legally married are mere 'concubines' of the man, even under customary law and the men, if they claim to have performed a customary law marriage are guilty of the criminal offence of bigamy for which they can be jailed for 7 years if found guilty.

Consent

1. Whichever type of marriage is proposed, parental consent is necessary, if either of the parties is under 21 years of age. Usually the consent must be the father's. But it is recognised that the mother's consent is sufficient if the father is dead, insane or absent for good reason.
2. Traditionally, the consent of the parties was never required. In fact, the girl's consent is assumed once the parents have chosen a prospective husband. But modernity have caught up with this custom. In some Native Authority Areas, the consent of the girl must now be sought and recorded. E.g. in Bia, Tiv, Borgu and Idoma in the Northern States.
3. In Yorubaland, if a girl is married out without her consent, one is committing a criminal offence under Section 361 of the Criminal Code.
4. In the Eastern States, the Age of Marriage Law passed in 1950 insists on the girl giving her consent.

Prohibited Degrees

The rules regarding prohibited degrees of marriages between parties is not the same for all societies in Nigeria. The statutory prohibition is on the basis of affinity and consanguinity. But the large majority of our people still give due regard to custom in this respect.

The general rule for most areas is that marriage is forbidden between two persons who are related by blood no matter how remote the degree of relationship. In fact, there are indications that in some parts of Yorubaland that parties who have lived in the same compound and been brought up as members of the same family - even though they are not actually related by blood - are forbidden to marry.

But on the other hand, the Yorubas do not forbid marriage between persons who are merely related by affinity, i.e. by marriage. This is forbidden by the Ibos and to some extent by the Ijaws.

#### Dowry

This is a recognised payment throughout the country and even persons who contract statutory law marriages still pay and accept dowry. The problem here is how to prevent the practice becoming commercialised.

A Committee set up in Eastern Nigeria some years ago found that the payment of dowry has been turned into a commercial enterprise and that the better educated the girl, the higher the dowry demanded. This led to the increase in the number of highly educated girls who could not find husbands or who were forced to marry rich old men because they were the ones able to pay the high price. Whereas the Committee could not recommend the abolition of dowry, it did recommend the fixing of a maximum. But the law is more honoured in its breach.

Women must be made to realise that being 'bartered' and "sold" to the highest bidder does not enhance their status, it even confirms the 'superiority' of men.

#### Registration of Marriages

1. There is no problem in this regard in respect of statutory law marriages because they are celebrated either in the Marriage Registry or in church and are therefore recorded.
2. But with customary law marriages, registration has not been made compulsory. The result is that very few people avail themselves of the law on registration. There are provisions for registration in all parts of the Federation. But the duty is on the husband. Perhaps it could be made a right for the woman to demand evidence of registration. This is to protect them and their children especially in disputes relating to property and inheritance.

4. On the death of the husband, the wife is entitled to one-third of the husband's estate, if there are children of the marriage. If there are no children, she is entitled to one-half if the husband dies intestate i.e. without making a will.
5. She has a right to dispose of, by will or otherwise, any real or personal property which belongs to her personally and which is separate.
6. She has a right to be maintained by the husband and she can pledge his credit for necessaries but she has no right to any part of her husband's income and capital.
7. She also has a duty to give her husband her services.
8. Any money saved from housekeeping money given by the husband belongs to the husband, so if she purchases any property of substance with the money, the property belongs to the husband.
9. She has a right to her own income and her own bank account.
10. If she keeps a joint account with her husband and they disagree as to who has a right to the money in it, her claim will depend on the following factors:
  - (a) If she has been paying in sums from time to time, she will normally be entitled to half the money in the account, even if she has paid in less than half or more than half.
  - (b) If she has paid nothing into the account and she has usually drawn money to cover household expenses, it could be decided that the husband owns the amount.
  - (c) If she has paid in all the money in the account, it will probably be decided that all the money belongs to her.
11. She has a right to stay in the family home, as long as she fulfils her marital duties and has not forfeited her right to cohabitation by committing a matrimonial offence e.g. adultery, refusal to have sexual intercourse, desertion etc.

Note: The man's adultery does not have the same effect.

C. RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN MARRIAGE

CUSTOMARY LAW

1. A woman is entitled to maintenance from her husband and if he fails to do so, she can pledge his credit for all her necessaries.
2. Under customary law, such wife must be given a separate room or hut.
3. Under Islamic law, the man is entitled to only four wives and he must not show any favouritism, even to the senior wife. In fact under Islamic law, womanhood is not a great disadvantage because whether married or not, she has a right to trade with her property, and this does not form part of the husband's property. She is allowed to give away gratuitously at least one-third of her property without the husband's consent. The other two-thirds with his consent but this is merely to prevent her wasting it not to give the husband a specific right in the property.
4. If a wife, under customary law, obtains money or property by trading she is entitled to keep it and the husband has no special claim to it nor can he compel her to turn it over to him.
5. But any ante-nuptial property, i.e. property she had before marriage which she brings to the matrimonial home belongs, in most parts of the North and the East, to both husband and wife; but in Yorubaland belongs entirely to the husband.
6. A wife has no rights in her husband's property or income under customary law, apart from the right to support.
7. She has equal right with the husband, in the custody and guardianship of their children; if married under Statute, but under customary law, she is entitled to custody only while she is suckling the child, even though in some areas, e.g. Igbirra, until the child is 7 years old; under Islamic law, she gets custody of the children until the age of puberty of the male and until the female child gets married.

- 8. She has the right to claim maintenance for her child from the father, even where she is not married to the father of the child.
- 9. She had a duty with the husband for the moral upbringing of the children which includes right to reasonable chastisement/punishment.
- 10. In all customary law systems, when a marriage is terminated by divorce, the wife has no right to the husband's estate. In this respect Muslim law seems to have made a departure in that if it is a revocable divorce - that is, one that the husband can revoke if he has a change of heart - the woman has a right to inherit some of her husband's estate, if he dies intestate during three months of their separation. This is because a woman must not get married within 3 months of her separation from a former husband.

UNDER STATUTORY LAW

- 1. She has a duty to give her services to the husband i.e. she must cook, care for his house and his health.
- 2. As a result of amendments made to law - the Matrimonial Causes Decree, 1970, Sec. 70 - the wife now has a duty to maintain her husband and the courts may order financial relief in favour of the husband, where the wife is in a better position than the husband. This is only in respect of monogamous type of marriage.
- 3. A woman once divorced has a right to remarry any other person but certain customary practices in some areas limit this right.

Among the Angas, she cannot marry into the family or the village of her former husband. This is in direct contradistinction to the 'levirate' custom known generally to most systems whereby a wife whose husband dies can be inherited by the next male kin, so she can be kept within the family.

D. PENAL LAWS

The existing penal laws do not distinguish between all citizens in the protection of their property, freedom reputation and personal safety. But in conformity with prevailing social mores, there are some special provisions which govern women.

1. Rape - defined in Sec. 6 of the Criminal Code - as "carnal connection which takes place otherwise than between husband and wife." Thus, a husband cannot be guilty of rape upon his wife. The problem here is in respect of customary law marriage. Suppose a wife leaves a husband and the dowry has not been refunded and therefore they are still considered 'legally' married. Should the estranged husband decide to force the woman to have sexual intercourse, he cannot be guilty of rape.

He may be guilty of wounding, doing grievous bodily harm, or assault, depending on the circumstances.

2. Prostitution - All forms of soliciting are forbidden. Whether done in public or private. Secs. 224-6 of the Criminal Code.

3. Abduction - Anyone, who with intent to marry or carnally know a female of any age, or to cause her to be married or carnally known by any other person, takes her away or detains her against her will is guilty of a felony and liable to seven years imprisonment. - Secs. 222-4 of the Criminal Code.

4. Adultery

Adultery is not specifically a crime but by Sec. 518(b) of the Criminal Code "sexual intercourse between two unmarried people who are not husband and wife is a crime as a conspiracy to effect an unlawful purpose."

Under the Maliki Code of Islam, however, adultery by a woman is a criminal offence.

5. Criminal Responsibility

The wife of a christian or statutory marriage is not criminally responsible for doing or omitting to do an act which she is actually compelled by her husband to do or omit. - Section 33 of the Criminal Code.

A husband and wife of a christian marriage are not criminally responsible for a conspiracy between themselves alone - Sec. 34 Criminal Code.

Also they cannot be criminally liable for doing or omitting to do any act with respect to the property of each other, whilst they are living together.

Whilst living together either cannot initiate criminal proceedings against the other - Sec. 36 Criminal Code.

None of these provisions apply to wives of a customary law marriage!

One of the classes of persons exempted from capital punishment are pregnant women - Section 368(2) of the Criminal Procedure Act and Section 270 of the Criminal Procedure Code,

Instead, a woman certified as being pregnant at the time of judgement and found guilty of a capital offence can be sentenced only to life imprisonment.

E. HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING

The number of women dying from unnecessary and preventable causes which are the effect of pregnancy and child-bearing in Nigeria is catastrophic. It has been estimated that one Nigerian woman dies every 45 minutes from pregnancy or its related causes.

Numerous factors are responsible:

1. Non regulation of the optional maternal age - In the course of our investigation we came across many women who were still producing children in their late 40s. A woman had died in child-birth - her eleventh - at the age of 51.
2. Immoderate birth order - There are several cases of women who had their children at 10 months interval.
3. Tied with (2) is unreasonably spaced pregnancies. Some women resumed child bearing after an interval of 10 - 12 years at ages ranging between 40-45, because they had changed husbands.
4. Inadequate health facilities.
5. Circumcision of the women in childhood. The custom which enjoins parents to circumcise female children has been medically proved to be harmful to women especially during childbirth. When the incision is made in childhood, adhesions form over the years, and it makes the passage smaller and less elastic. Result - difficult labour and child-birth, sometimes leading to the death of the mother.

Besides this, circumcision is done mostly under the most unhygienic conditions and the baby may pick up an infection, which may damage the reproductive system.

This custom must be eradicated where it still exists.

Family Planning

The past and present status of Nigerian women in family planning has been and is still being determined to a large extent by the social, economic, educational and inherited traditional role of women. The need to enhance and upgrade the status of women in this regard, must be recognised.

1. Child rearing practices in Nigeria should be seen as a joint responsibility of both husband and wife.
2. Education and health facilities should be within easy reach of village women. This would help in lowering rural rates of illiteracy and child morbidity.
3. Women should be given the right to determine when and how many children they should have by allowing her the right to use safe and scientific means without having to get the consent of the husband in all circumstances.
4. Adoption of family planning will advance the status of women because it will ensure the survival and health of mothers and children. It may enable more women to further their education, which will lead to a general improvement in maternal and infant nutrition and relieve the drudgery, without leisure or relaxation, through which many women live their lives.

ABORTION

The National Population Council recommended in 1976 that women should have access to abortion on request for health and welfare reasons. This was supported by the Nigeria Medical Association and the Society of Gynaecologists and Obstetrician of Nigeria.

1. Legally, abortion may be permitted if such surgical operation is performed in good faith and with reasonable care and skill for the preservation of the mother's life.
2. In any other circumstances, abortion is a crime, punishable with varying terms of imprisonment from 14 to 7 years depending on the means used to procure the abortion - Sections 228-230 Criminal Code and Ss. 232-6 of the Northern Penal Code.

It is suggested that it should be a right for the woman to be able legally to ask a physician to terminate her pregnancy for reasonable cause, within the first three months of the pregnancy.

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PROTECTION OF MATERNITY

There are no laws ensuring adequate maternal medical care for the woman.

There are laws, however, ensuring that all women in permanent employment

~~are~~

(a) Granted maternity leave - six weeks pre-natal and six weeks post natal with full pay.

(b) Granted one working hour each day during the first three months after the birth, to feed the baby.

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F. EMPLOYMENT

1. There is no law against a married woman seeking and gaining employment, but there is no equal work for equal pay for all categories of women employees. Some do have equal pay - e.g. Civil servants but even here, the fact that they have "equal pay" does not mean that they have equal opportunities for training and promotion.
2. Seclusion of women means that a woman must remain within the walls of the husband's compound. These women in 'purdah' are deprived of the right to take part in the social life of their communities and are generally prevented from leading active economic lives.
3. The classification of particular jobs as "men's work" or "women's work" is largely cultural. E.g. in Construction industry, men lay blocks yet women carry up, sometimes several stories, pots of heavy wet cement mixtures on their heads!
4. No woman shall be employed on night work in a public or private industrial undertaking or in any branch thereof, or in any agricultural undertaking.  
The problem to watch here is any attempt by any employer of labour to use this to retrench female employees.
5. The tax deduction on a married woman's pay is unfair; she is not given free pay allowance for children, and the myth of the husband being wholly responsible for the family allows the man a free pay allowance on the wife.

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G. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1. Traditional education limits the scope of a woman to those skills which will make her a good home maker.

Unfortunately formal education had made little difference; basically girls are still discouraged from 'masculine' subjects like "Mathematics, Sciences."

Activities like dressmaking and home economics are confined to girls and carpentry and mechanical technology to boys, irrespective of individual abilities and interests.

The introduction of Universal Primary Education has encouraged the enrolment of more females in schools but in many tribes, families see nothing wrong in withdrawing girls from school to look after their siblings or help mother in petty trading.

2. The drop-out rate of girls from school is twice as high as for boys between the ages of 11 years and 13 years particularly in the Moslem North because of the insistence on early marriage for girls.

3. An educated woman's status is high not only in her family of origin but also in her family of marriage and with her children. Her education enables her to assist in the formal education of her children. She remains a partner and therefore maintains a leadership position until they are adults. Such children in turn are likely to grow up respecting women.

H. CUSTOMS

Speaking in general, the women of Nigeria are seldom of the chattel type and correspond little to the widely held idea of the down-trodden slave or unregarded beasts of burden.

Nevertheless, there are some customs which highlight the lower status of women in society. Those we mention here are by no means exhaustive and are merely noted as a pointer for further studies on and elimination of such discriminatory customs.

CIRCUMCISION - Otherwise known as CLITORIDECTOMY

The circumcision of girls is probably one of the most common that is, common to all the tribes, in Nigeria. In some areas it is performed when the girl is a baby but in many cases it is not done until the girl has reached the age of puberty. For example, among the Ishaq, she is circumcised within a week or so of her going to her husband's home and it must be ascertained that she is a virgin on the day of circumcision. There is neither a scientifically nor a morally justifiable reason for this custom.

CHILD BETROTHAL

The custom of betrothing a girl child to a man before the girl is old enough to realise or appreciate what is happening has both cultural and religious basis. A child may be promised to a friend. The fact that the friend is old enough to be the girl's father is immaterial. Even where this is not the case, forcing a child into marriage cannot enhance the status of the girl.

WIDOW INHERITANCE

The position whereby a widow is either left in the unhappy position of returning destitute to her own family, when she is too old to be 'inherited' or alternatively remaining with the husband's family and be sometimes unwillingly married to one of the kinsmen is not particularly agreeable in a modern and industrialised world.

SPECIAL

These groups of customs are by no means general but the fact that they exist even in very small areas should give cause of concern.

1. In some parts of the country - notably among the Ishan of the Bendel State and the Ibo of both Anambra and Imo States, a widow must shave off all her hair on the death of the husband and go about in rags for a year. Presumably as a sign of mourning her loss but it is not easy to see what the hair has to do with a person's feelings for a dear departed unless of-course it is intended to make the widow unattractive to any other man for a period of time.

2. A custom which is claimed to still be in existence among the Okkobbor - Ibioblo of the Rivers and Cross River States - would seem to be a relic of endogamy and originally and still intended in punishment of those who married outside the clan.

From evidence it appeared that a woman who had espoused a man of another town grew weary and fled from him back to her birth place. Under such circumstances, custom surrendered her to the will of the members of all the principal "companies" of the town. On the night of her arrival, the chief "society", twenty to thirty strong, assembled at her father's house bringing gifts of palm-wine and claiming full rights over the woman from sunset to dawn. This is repeated by all other societies in order of rank. After each of the principal clubs had exacted fulfillment of the custom, should the woman still survive, a small dowry was offered for her by some fellow townsman and she is given to him to do with her as he pleases!

3. Amongst many tribes, e.g. the Fulani and Hausa and some Yorubas, when a wife becomes pregnant, she returns to her family for the birth and return to the man only after she has weaned the child. This of-course encourages polygamy and has been known to lead to estrangement of the wife from the husband.

4. It is believed that among the Ibo, the mother of a new baby does not nurse the child for the first day or two after the birth because the women declare that the first milk is "bitter" and quite unfit for the child. Instead the old woman in attendance - usually one of the child's grandmothers - attempts to suckle the child, a custom as disgusting as it is futile.

5. The problem of dowry had already been discussed. It must be realized that all sorts of complications are inherent in the dowry system, but many women are astonished at the suggestion that it should be done away with.

6. There is evidence that amongst some tribes mainly in the Bendel State, all married women are returned to their family of origin for burial and if the woman was unfortunate not to have had any children, she was considered "bad luck" and she must be buried almost clandestinely!

7. A custom which is believed to be still in existence among the Gbari of the Plateau State is that a woman menstruating is kept isolated far from the rest of the family. In fact, she is exiled to the remotest part of the farm and is not allowed to touch anything on the farm so that she might not "blight" the crops!

#### GENERAL

Many of the customs which are particularly unfavourable to women are encouraged and fostered by the institution of polygamy.

Polygamy itself is favoured and fostered equally by men and women; in some respects the latter are the chief supporters of the system. It is therefore well to remember this fact when attempting to solve the many problems that arise from customs. Women who have no contact with western opinion are satisfied with polygamy and can derive some vanity from it. To belong among many may connote the idea that the man is rich, whatever may be the actual realities of the situation.

There are of-course, advantages in polygamy, and we are in no way overlooking them, nor can we presume to advocate its abolition but nevertheless, we must realise the need to expunge the disadvantages which tend to emphasise the inferior status of women.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Illiteracy in the modern world is a basic form of disenfranchisement. Equality of access to education is not now in question but equality of opportunities and adequacy of facilities are still problems. Government is investing a lot in education, women must stop the high drop-out rate of females. But Government may need to legislate for compulsory education to a fixed minimum age.
2. Women have not gained full equality in the choice of work, in pay for work, in promotion and fringe benefits. Women need to work for both economic equity and social fulfilment, therefore they must be given the full opportunity. One area of injustice is the high rate of taxation of her already meagre salary.
3. Despite the long and struggle free history of female suffrage, the roster of representation of women in government at policy and decision making levels is pitifully brief.
4. The rights of inheritance of women need urgent attention. Daughters are discriminated against under customary laws of succession and wives have no rights of succession at all to their husband's estates.
5. The question of the refund of dowry upon dissolution of marriage under customary law even whether or not the woman was at fault or instituted the divorce proceedings.
6. Tradition and customs occupy a central role in the status of our women and is one of the instruments that perpetuates inequality. Any attempt to bring about a modification of equality must be directed at the traditional beliefs and customs.
7. Coupled with attempts to change or modify traditional beliefs and customs should be a system of educating women about their rights and how to make full use of them.

8. There is no doubt that the existence of a National Commission on Women's Affairs and Women's Bureaux can contribute immensely not only to the task of identifying priority areas of women's problems but also proposing and implementing concrete solutions.

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THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN'S SOCIETIES IN COLLABORATION WITH THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE  
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE  
BENIN, BENIN STATE, JUNE 13 - 15, 1979

RESOLUTIONS

The National Council of Women's Societies in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare held a National Seminar in Benin, Benin State from 13th - 15th June, 1979. The theme was "WOMEN IN DEVELOPING AREAS IN NIGERIA". The Seminar studied the problems of women in the rural areas and recognizing that women in the rural areas form over 60% of Nigerian women and are responsible for a large amount of our economic and cultural wealth and that such women have been considerably neglected in the process of National Development hereby

1. RESOLVE THAT:

- (i) Government should be urged to expedite rural Development by collaborating with representatives of relevant Ministries responsible for Rural Development with a view to achieving integrated rural development.
- (ii) More attention be given to the provision of health services and family planning services in the rural areas.
- (iii) Strategy for rural development should be reviewed particularly in the areas of property ownership, inheritance, marriage and other facilities.
- (iv) Traditional laws and customs which are inimical to the identification of women as individuals should be reviewed particularly in the areas of property ownership, inheritance, marriage and other facilities.

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FEDERAL MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

PRESS RELEASE NO. 270

LAGOS, JUNE 27, 1960

SEMINAR CALLS FOR A REVIEW OF LAWS HINDERING  
IDENTIFICATION OF WOMEN AS INDIVIDUALS

A national seminar has recommended a review of those traditional practices and other laws that tend to hinder the identification of women as individuals, particularly in the areas of property ownership, inheritance, marriage and credit facilities.

The three-day seminar, held in Benin-City, capital of Bendel State, was jointly sponsored by the National Council of Women's Societies and the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.

It examined, among other things, the problems of Nigerian women in the rural areas and noted that in spite of the fact that they were responsible for a large amount of the country's economic and agricultural wealth, they were considerably neglected in the process of National Development.

The seminar, which was attended by participants from various parts of the Federation, also resolved that women who participated in farming in the rural areas should be involved in the use of modern agricultural methods and allied technology, in addition to their being encouraged to

Resides, State and Local Governments were urged to establish more programmes for the education and vocational training of women since education constituted the key to full integration of women in national development.

On the other hand, women in the rural areas were enjoined to arouse themselves and be alert to the social change in their environment. They should also utilize all available facilities to improve the quality of their lives.

Full text of the Seminar's resolutions follows:-

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- (v) State and local Governments be urged to establish more programmes for the education and vocational training of women since education is the key to full integration of women in National Development.
- (vi) Inducements should be given to professionals to encourage them to live and work in the rural areas in order to accelerate the rate of development of the rural areas.
- (vii) Women who participate in farming in the rural areas should be involved in the use of modern agricultural methods and allied technology and encouraged to participate more in agricultural training programmes.
- (viii) Every effort should be made to identify the talents of women in the rural areas especially in the consideration of appointments into boards and committees.

2. URGE:

- (i) Women in the rural areas to arouse themselves and be alert to the social change in their environment and utilize all available facilities to improve the quality of their lives.
- (ii) Women generally to identify themselves with the problems of other women.
- (iii) Women to appreciate their civic responsibilities and the need to fully exercise them.

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