



BREAKING THE SILENCE: Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria's World of Work



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The fundamental aims and objectives of the NIGERIA LABOR CONGRESS (NLC) are to protect, defend and promote the rights, well-being and interests of all working people in the country, and to promote and defend a nation that is just, democratic, transparent and prosperous. The NLC encompasses 43 sector unions that together represent more than 4 million members.

The SOLIDARITY CENTER is the largest U.S.-based international worker rights organization helping workers attain safe and healthy workplaces, family-supporting wages, dignity on the job and greater equity at work and in their community. Allied with the AFL-CIO, the Solidarity Center assists workers across the globe as, together, they fight discrimination, exploitation and the systems that entrench poverty—to achieve shared prosperity in the global economy.

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ON THE COVER:

Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) women celebrated 2020 International Women's Day with a call for their government to ratify International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention C190 and end gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work. Photo: Nkechi Odinukwe/Solidarity Center

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Executive Summary

NIGERIA IS AFRICA'S LARGEST ECONOMY and home to a growing population of over 200 million¹ people. It is also home to the largest trade union movement on the continent, with the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) its largest union centre. The world of work in this mineral-rich country is characterised by pervasive gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH), and its unions are grappling with this major human rights and workplace health and safety issue.

All workers, but primarily women workers, are at risk of experiencing abuse, harassment and violence based on their gender and/or sex, the precarious nature of work in most sectors, unequal power relations and multiple intersecting forms of discrimination. A dearth of worker-led research about the scope and incidence of GBVH in the world of work, a lack of coordination amongst key stakeholders, inadequate legal frameworks, poor implementation and enforcement of laws and workplace policies, and entrenched gender discriminatory norms continue to hamper union and civil society efforts to prevent and address the problem. The situation has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic,² which has exposed the majority of income-earning women workers in Nigeria (who are mostly found in casual, low-skilled, low-paid jobs) to even higher risk of GBVH.

The NLC has a women and youth structure established in September 2003 known as the National Women Commission. This structure works with NLC affiliates and other stakeholders to promote gender equality by empowering women and young workers to take on leadership positions in unions and mainstreaming gender in all union-related activities. It is also tasked with facilitating programs that address endemic GBVH in the world of work. During the February 2019 NLC National Delegates Conference, women workers through this structure successfully supported the adoption of the NLC sexual harassment policy, which paved the way for women leaders to also play a leading

role in the adoption of the first global, binding treaty that recognizes the fundamental right to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH), known as International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 190 (C190).

With the adoption of C190 in Geneva, Switzerland, in June 2019, NLC women workers initiated a national campaign to advocate for its ratification by the Nigerian government and for the government to provide comprehensive protection against GBVH for all marginalised workers, particularly women.

With the adoption of C190 in Geneva, Switzerland, in June 2019, NLC women workers initiated a national campaign to advocate for its ratification by the Nigerian government and for the government to provide comprehensive protection against GBVH for all marginalised workers, particularly women. The campaign has, however, been hampered by lack of worker-specific data to challenge employer and government denial of the magnitude of GBVH across workplaces.

As GBVH continues unabated, including with the targeting of workers by terrorist groups, women workers and trade unions in Nigeria have found it challenging to convince employers and the government to prioritize actions that address GBVH due to lack of a information that affirms GBVH as not only prevalent across workplaces but also harmful to workers. The participatory research described in this report is a clear and targeted effort by women workers to provide concrete evidence regarding the scope and incidence of GBVH in the world of work. It is their way of breaking the silence, to tell their stories of survival, strength and courage.

Nigerian women workers strategically identified two locations for the study, Abuja and Lagos, and interviewed 919³ women workers. Data was captured across eight sectors including the informal economy, manufacturing, healthcare, education, construction, media, hospitality and the public sector. Women workers drafted the questions and carried out a series of one-on-one interviews with peers.

Whilst the data is not statistically significant, it does offer key information about the scope and incidence of GBVH in the Nigerian world of work that is helpful to inform interventions by unions, employers and the Nigerian government to address these abuses.

Key Findings about GBVH in the World of Work in Nigeria

- GBVH occurs in the country's world of work at a very high rate. According to the results of the participatory research, no age group or sector is free from this menace.
- The nature and form of GBVH experienced by women workers across all sectors and various age ranges include physical violence, sexual violence—including rape, sexual harassment, and verbal and sexist abuse—bullying, coercion, economic or financial abuse, stalking, psychological abuse, intimidation and threats of violence, and domestic violence.
- An alarming 57.5 per cent of women workers interviewed across all sectors stated that they experienced GBVH in the world of work. Respondents below 30 years old and between the ages of 30 and 39 experienced the highest rates of GBVH.
- Nearly 44 per cent of all women workers said their supervisor or superior had said or done something that made them uneasy due to their gender or sex, including sexist comments,⁴ touching,⁵ winking, pinching, sexual violence,⁶ grabbing,⁷ touching of inner palm inappropriately during handshakes,⁸ hugging,⁹ kissing,¹⁰ sending sexually explicit pictures on phones¹¹ and stalking.
- More than half (52.2 per cent) of all women workers interviewed reported that they had been threatened whilst at work or on their way to and from work.
- Only 19.6 per cent of respondents stated that they reported incidents of GBVH in the world of work.
- More than one-third (35.9 per cent) of respondents said that even when violations were reported, justice was rarely upheld.
- About 44.4 per cent of respondents said they had suffered sex discrimination affecting career advancement.
- Nearly one-third (28.8 per cent) of respondents said they had been pressured for sexual favours at work¹² and touched in a way that made them feel uncomfortable.¹³ Access to qualitative training on GBVH in the workplace appears to be limited as only 24.3 per cent of respondents said they have received training on how to protect themselves against these abuses, including sexual harassment.

An alarming 57.5 per cent of women workers interviewed across all sectors stated that they experienced GBVH in the world of work.

Recommendations

Based on this research, the NLC's recommendations for unions, employers and the Nigerian government to prevent and address GBVH in the world of work include:

- Increased education and awareness—amongst workers, managers and supervisors, the general public and policy makers—of what GBVH in the world of work is including its root causes and impacts. Notably, it impacts and is the responsibility of all workers to end.
- Nigerian government ratification of ILO Convention 190 concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work, including GBVH.
- Development of workplace policies to address GBVH and sex discrimination that include: a safe, confidential process for reporting incidents; transparent processes for investigation of allegations; remedies for workers who experience GBVH; penalties for perpetrators; and changes to how work is organised to address power imbalances and other risk factors for GBVH in the world of work.
- Adoption of national legislation incorporating the definition of GBVH from ILO C190, which protects the entire world of work, and covers all workers regardless of contractual status, including workers in the informal sector.

Conclusion

This research validates the harrowing experiences of Nigerian women workers as they try to earn a living whilst experiencing GBVH in the world of work. This women-worker led research reinforces the need for a collective approach by employers, workers and government institutions to ensure a safe and gender-responsive work environment that enhances women workers' job experience and protects the rights they have to their bodies, resources and opportunities. It also provides much needed data in support of specific policy and legal changes to prevent and address GBVH in the world of work.



Introduction

NIGERIA IS HOME TO A GROWING POPULATION of more than 200 million¹⁴ people, and its informal economy contributes 65 per cent to gross domestic product (GDP).¹⁵ The Global Gender Gap Report (2017),¹⁶ produced by the World Economic Forum, places Nigeria at 122 out of 144 countries in closing the gender gap. Women earn less than their male counterparts for comparable work, and in many instances, men with less education earn more than better-educated female peers. Nigeria is also home to the largest trade union movement on the continent. Its largest labour centre, the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), has more than 4 million members.

Gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) is pervasive in the country's world of work and has become a major human rights and workplace health and safety issue with which unions are grappling. All workers, but primarily women workers, are vulnerable to being abused, harassed and victimised due to the precarious nature of work in most sectors, unequal power relations and multiple intersecting forms of discrimination. A dearth of worker-led research, lack of coordination amongst key stakeholders, inadequate legal frameworks, poor implementation and enforcement of laws and workplace policies, and entrenched gender discriminatory norms continue to hamper union and civil society efforts to prevent and address GBVH. The situation has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic,¹⁷ which has exposed the majority of income-earning women workers in Nigeria (who are mostly found in casual, low-skilled, low-paid jobs) to even higher risks of suffering GBVH.

Women workers and trade unions in Nigeria have found it challenging to convince employers and government officials to prioritise actions that address GBVH in the world of work due to a lack of information that affirms GBVH as not only prevalent across workplaces but also harmful to

workers. This research is a clear and targeted effort by women workers to provide concrete evidence regarding the scope and incidence of GBVH in Nigeria's world of work. It is their way of breaking the silence to tell their stories of survival, strength and courage.

Women workers and trade unions in Nigeria have found it challenging to convince employers and government officials to prioritise actions that address GBVH in the world of work due to a lack of information that affirms GBVH as not only prevalent across workplaces but also harmful to workers.

To learn about experiences with GBVH, Nigerian union women targeted the country's capital, Abuja, and its largest city, Lagos, for interviews. They interviewed 919¹⁸ women workers. Data was captured across eight sectors including the informal economy, manufacturing, healthcare, education, construction, media, hospitality and the public sector. Women workers carried out a series of one-on-one interviews with peers. Workers were randomly selected for interviews.



Methodology

TO ENSURE THAT THE FINDINGS REPRESENTED THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN ACROSS WORKPLACES, the women workers leading the participatory research decided to carry out a series of one-on-one interviews with peers in different sectors and during the COVID-19 pandemic. To prepare for the process of interviewing co-workers and collecting stories, the women worked with support from the Solidarity Center to ensure a participatory, worker-centred and worker-driven process. The Solidarity Center provided training to help sensitize women workers on the issue and build their capacity to talk to and hear co-workers, and collect information. At the end of trainings, 19 women workers identified questions they wanted to ask other women and developed the research questionnaire.

During the pilot stage, which occurred between September 7, 2020, and October 29, 2020,¹⁹ a total of 425 women were interviewed, one-on-one, across workplaces in Abuja and Lagos by the 19 women interviewers.²⁰ Most of the interviews were carried out in person, although a few were conducted through phone calls due to the pandemic and its restrictions on movement and gatherings.²¹ The NLC and Solidarity Center ensured that adequate precautions were taken to maintain the safety of those conducting the interviews and the interviewees. At the end of the pilot, the women came together to review the questionnaire and provide feedback from the field.

In the second stage of the interview process, which took place between December 7, 2020, and February 26, 2021, the same 19 interviewers spoke to 494 women workers. In all, 919 women workers²² were interviewed.²³

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

44.3 per cent of women surveyed were under 30 years of age, 37.3 per cent were 30–39 years, 13.2 per cent were 40–49 years old whilst 5.2 per cent were age 50 and above. Table 1 outlines level of education and civil status of women workers interviewed.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents According to Socio-Demographic Characteristics Across Sectors

SECTOR (Total number of respondents [N]=919)									
VARIABLE	Informal (n=152)	Manufacturing (n=178)	Public (n=252)	Healthcare (n=119)	Education (n=89)	Construction (n=51)	Media (n=28)	Hospitality (n=50)	Total (n=919)
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	N (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n(%)
Residence									
Abuja	102 (67.1)	51 (28.7)	121 (48.0)	119 (100.0)	89 (100.0)	51 (100.0)	28 (100.0)	50 (100.0)	611 (66.5)
Lagos	50 (32.9)	127 (71.4)	131 (52.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	308 (33.5)
Age									
< 30 years	81 (53.3)	97 (54.5)	82 (32.5)	38 (32.5)	30 (33.7)	40 (78.4)	22 (78.6)	17 (34.0)	407 (44.3)
30–39 years	47 (30.9)	69 (38.8)	109 (43.3)	109 (43.3)	36 (40.5)	8 (15.7)	6 (21.4)	21 (42.0)	343 (37.3)
40–49 years	12 (7.9)	11 (6.2)	40 (15.9)	40 (15.9)	18 (20.2)	3 (5.9)	0 (0.0)	10 (20.0)	121 (13.2)
50+	12 (7.9)	1 (0.6)	21 (8.3)	21 (8.3)	5 (5.6)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (4.0)	48 (5.2)
Level of Education									
No formal education/ Primary	53 (34.9)	10 (5.6)	4 (1.6)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.1)	1 (2.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (6.0)	72 (7.8)
Secondary	54 (35.5)	62 (34.8)	19 (7.5)	3 (2.5)	5 (5.6)	22 (43.1)	0 (0.0)	12 (24.0)	177 (19.3)
Tertiary	38 (25.0)	96 (53.9)	225 (89.3)	108 (90.8)	75 (84.3)	28 (54.9)	28 (100.0)	28 (56.0)	626 (68.1)
Prefer not to say	7 (4.6)	10 (5.6)	4 (1.6)	8 (6.7)	8 (9.0)	0(0.0)	0 (0.0)	7 (14.0)	44 (4.8)
Marital Status									
Single	58 (38.2)	63 (35.4)	44 (17.5)	24 (17.5)	10 (11.2)	26 (51.0)	15 (53.6)	11 (22.0)	251 (27.3)
Married/ Civil relationship	65 (42.8)	87 (48.9)	165 (65.5)	165 (65.5)	66 (74.2)	16 (31.4)	10 (35.7)	30 (60.0)	530 (57.7)
Divorced/ Separated/ Widowed	28 (18.4)	24 (13.5)	39 (15.5)	3 (2.5)	5 (5.6)	7 (13.7)	2 (7.1)	6 (12.0)	114 (12.4)
Prefer not to say	1 (0.7)	4 (2.3)	4 (1.6)	1 (0.8)	8 (9.0)	2 (3.9)	1 (3.6)	3 (6.0)	24 (2.61)
Years of Experience on the Job									
< 5 years	72 (47.3)	62 (34.8)	36 (14.3)	22 (18.5)	29 (32.6)	31 (60.8)	4 (14.3)	0 (0.0)	256 (27.9)
5–9 years	51 (33.6)	51 (28.7)	54 (28.7)	31 (26.1)	24 (27.0)	17 (33.3)	13 (46.4)	6 (12.0)	247 (26.9)
10–14 years	17 (11.2)	31 (17.4)	55 (21.8)	27 (22.7)	23 (25.8)	1 (2.0)	9 (32.1)	18 (36.0)	181 (19.7)
15 years & above	12 (7.9)	34 (19.1)	107 (42.5)	39 (32.8)	13 (14.6)	2 (3.9)	2 (7.1)	26 (52.0)	235 (25.6)



Findings

GBVH IS ENDEMIC IN THE COUNTRY'S WORLD OF WORK, as evidenced by the majority of women workers interviewed reporting that they had experienced some form of GBVH on the job. Information in Table 2, below, shows that 57.5 per cent of all respondents said they had experienced GBVH at work as a result of their sex or gender. Breaking down by age, 59 per cent of the women workers who had suffered GBVH as a result of their sex or gender were under 30 years of age; 59.8 per cent were between the ages of 30 to 39; and 47.9 per cent were within the age range of 40 to 49 years old. Meanwhile, 52.1 per cent of women workers aged 50 and older also said they had experienced one form of GBVH or another. For this sample, no age group or sector surveyed was free from GBVH.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents (Based on Who Had Suffered GBVH as a Result of Their Gender or Sex), By Age

SECTOR	< 30 years	30-39 years	40-49 years	50+	Total
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Informal Sector	58 (71.6)	35 (74.5)	10 (83.3)	10 (83.3)	113 (74.3)
Manufacturing	58 (59.8)	51 (73.9)	3 (27.3)	0 (0.0)	112 (62.9)
Public	46 (56.1)	67 (61.5)	18 (45.0)	9 (42.9)	140 (55.6)
Healthcare	31 (81.6)	33 (70.2)	17 (63.0)	3 (42.9)	84 (70.6)
Education	2 (6.7)	10 (27.8)	7 (38.9)	3 (60.0)	22 (24.7)
Construction	36 (90.0)	5 (62.5)	1 (33.3)	0 (0.0)	42 (82.4)
Media	9 (40.9)	2 (33.3)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	11 (39.3)
Hospitality	0 (0.0)	2 (9.5)	2 (20.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (8.0)
Total	240 (59.0)	205 (59.8)	58 (47.9)	25 (52.1)	528 (57.5)

The nature or form of GBVH suffered at work by respondents across sectors and ages included physical violence; sexual violence, including rape, sexual harassment verbal and sexist abuse; bullying; coercion, economic or financial abuse; stalking; psychological abuse; intimidation and threat of violence; and domestic violence. Women in the healthcare sector reported the highest level of physical abuse (44.5 per cent) whilst women workers in the construction and media sectors reported the highest level of sexual violence, including rape and sexual assault. Over 20 per cent of respondents across all sectors said they had suffered sexual harassment as a result of their sex or gender. The sectors where respondents reported the highest level of verbal and sexist abuse were manufacturing (83.7 per cent) and the media (39.3 per cent). Women workers in healthcare²⁴ and construction²⁵ reported the highest rates of bullying on the job. The rate of coercion amongst healthcare workers was equally high. Respondents younger than 30 or between the ages of 30 and 39 experienced higher rates of bullying and coercion, especially in manufacturing, and the public and healthcare sectors.

No sectors were free from economic or financial abuse; findings, however, reveal that women in the informal economy (42.1 per cent) experienced the highest rates of this form of GBVH, with more than a third of respondents aged 50 or over reporting that violation. Workers in the healthcare sector recorded the highest percentage of stalking and psychological abuse, intimidation and threats of violence. Women across all sectors have suffered domestic violence; respondents in the informal economy experienced the highest level, at over 25 per cent.

Respondents also reported the length of time they had experienced GBVH in the workplace, from once to over longer periods of time. Young women workers below the age of 30 and women 30–39 years old were most vulnerable to violations that lasted between one and four years.²⁶ Abuse that lasted for up to five years or more was most common amongst women workers ages 30–49. In addition, 18.5 per cent of all respondents said they have suffered constant GBVH at work whilst 81.5 per cent of respondents reported one-off violations.

When asked whether their supervisor or superior has ever said or done something that made them uneasy due to their gender or sex, 43.9 per cent of all respondents answered in the affirmative. Some actions identified by respondents that made them feel uneasy included staring,²⁷ sexist comments,²⁸ inappropriate and offensive comments about weight or appearance,²⁹ gestures, touching,³⁰ winking, pinching of body (breast, buttocks, hips),³¹ sexual violence,³² grabbing,³³ touching of inner

Young women workers below the age of 30 and women 30–39 years old were most vulnerable to violations that lasted between one and four years.



palm inappropriately during handshakes,³⁴ hugging,³⁵ kissing,³⁶ making sexual compliments or complimentary remarks,³⁷ screaming,³⁸ sending sexually explicit pictures on phones,³⁹ and stalking.

When asked whether they had been threatened by anyone because of their gender or sex whilst at work or on their way to or from work (text messages, verbally or in another form), 52.2 per cent of all respondents reported that they had suffered threats to or from work. Women workers in the construction,⁴⁰ informal economy⁴¹ and healthcare⁴² sector were most vulnerable to threats whilst transiting to and from their job. More than half (54.7 per cent) of all respondents said they had faced threats over one to four years whilst 13.9 per cent said the experience lasted for more than five years.

GBVH in Nigeria's world of work has few boundaries. Workers interviewed said violations occurred at the workplace,⁴³ in the community, whilst on transit to and from work, and at home. An alarming 40.4 per cent of respondents across all sectors had suffered GBVH at the workplace, with respondents below 30 years old and between the ages of 30 and 39 experiencing it at the highest rates. When asked whether they had complained or reported the abuse at the workplace, only 19.6 per cent of respondents responded in the affirmative. Some of the reasons given for not reporting violations include: fear of losing their job; fear of losing their relationship; lack of protection against the perpetrator; and fear of stigmatisation. A considerable number of women workers⁴⁴ did not report the violation because they were confused about what to do when the abuse occurred. When asked how the issue was handled where they made a report, only 13 per cent of respondents said that the perpetrator was punished whilst 25 per cent of respondents said no action was taken after they made their report. More than a third (35.9 per cent) of all respondents said that even when violations were reported at workplaces, justice was rarely upheld.

A considerable number of women workers did not report the violation because they were confused about what to do when the abuse occurred.

Respondents said they felt that women workers are not well protected from GBVH due to an absence of anti-GBVH policy at their workplaces and the recurrent stigmatisation of survivors. Respondents also shared their experiences with sex discrimination through their responses to a question about whether they had the prerequisite qualifications to move to another level of career growth. About 44.4 per cent of respondents said that based on their workplace handbook or condition of service, they had the prerequisite qualifications to advance to another level in their career. In some sectors, women had not been promoted for more than nine years.⁴⁵ About a third (28.6 per cent) of all respondents across all sectors said they had received a promotion in the last five to nine years.

Almost 29 per cent of respondents also said they had been pressured for sexual favours at work.⁴⁶ When queried further, respondents also admitted that they have been touched in a way that made them feel uncomfortable.⁴⁷ Women workers were quick to identify activities and actions that made them feel unsafe when relating to their supervisor in the workplace. They include:

- Unfavourable and uncomfortable times for meetings⁴⁸
- Use of derogatory names based on gender, which was particularly common amongst workers in the informal economy and public sector, at 17.1 per cent and 19.1 per cent, respectively.
- Scheduling meetings in isolated places
- Women being asked to be escorts for male co-workers for business visit/travel

Workers across all sectors below the age of 30 and between ages 30 and 39 report the highest rates of these forms of GBVH in the workplace.

When asked whether their employer has a sexual harassment policy at the workplace, only 23.1 per cent of all respondents answered in the affirmative.⁴⁹ Women workers also shared that even where such a policy exists, it is not effectively implemented. Only 2.5 per cent of respondents agreed that there was full implementation of the workplace sexual harassment policy whilst an overwhelming 42.9 per cent said that such a policy was not implemented at all where it exists.⁵⁰ In workplaces where a sexual harassment policy is in place, 16.1 per cent of respondents said the procedure for reporting sexual harassment in their workplace was through written complaint and suggestion boxes; 25.8 per cent said it was through verbal complaints;⁵¹ while 4.4 per cent mentioned a petition. Other respondents said either they were unaware of a reporting mechanism (14 per cent) or that there was no known procedure for reporting sexual harassment in their workplaces (20.7 per cent).⁵²

Respondents also shared that there was no safe reporting channel to report gender-based violence and harassment, including sexual harassment in workplaces. Only 17 per cent of respondents felt that reporting channels were safe. Sectors like the media and construction reported that safe channels do not exist at all.

As to possible available support to survivors after a GBVH complaint has been lodged, only 18.9 per cent of respondents felt that survivors received appropriate counselling and medical support. A third (33.3 per cent) of respondents⁵³ were of the opinion that no action is ever taken when GBVH complaints are made in workplaces.

Women workers' experiences around provision of a safety policy by employers for workers as they travel to and from work showed that 64 per cent and 60.6 per cent of respondents in the hospitality and media sectors, respectively, felt that their employer had a safety policy that provides protection to them on their commute. The type of safety policies identified by respondents ranged from public transportation to a company bus policy, especially for women workers in hospitality (63.3 per cent), manufacturing (35.9 per cent) and the public sector (34.2 per cent). Women workers in the informal economy, and education and healthcare sectors recorded the lowest response regarding access to a safety policy, with 9.2 per cent, 12.4 per cent and 15.3 per cent, respectively.

Level of access to qualitative training on GBVH in the workplace appears to be limited as well. Only 24.3 per cent of respondents said they had received training on how to protect themselves against abuse, including sexual harassment.



Recommendations and Conclusion

BASED ON THIS RESEARCH, it is clear that GBVH at work remains a critical barrier to gender equality and decent work for all in Nigeria. The NLC makes the following recommendations to improve efforts to prevent and address GBVH in the world of work:

Labour Unions

- Increase education and awareness of what GBVH in the world of work is—and that it is not just about women, but about all workers.
- Actively advocate for the ratification of ILO Convention 190 concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work, including GBVH.
- Strengthen coalition-building with local nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) to sustain a campaign against GBVH in the world of work.
- Develop policies that guide negotiations with employers around GBVH.
- Promote the implementation of workplace policies that discourage sex discrimination.
- Integrate language to prevent and address GBVH in the world of work in all union constitutions, by-laws and collective bargaining agreements.
- Increase development of workplace policies to prevent and address GBVH in the world of work by employers and unions that include a safe, confidential process for reporting incidents of GBVH, transparent processes for investigation of allegations, remedies for workers, penalties for harassers and changes to how work is organised to address power imbalances and other GBVH risk factors.

Employers

- Adopt workplace policies that prevent and address all forms of GBVH in the world of work including a safe confidential process for reporting incidents of GBVH, transparent processes for investigation of allegations, remedies for workers, penalties for harassers and changes to how work is organised to address power imbalances and other GBVH risk factors.
- Support the ratification and implementation of ILO Convention 190 concerning the elimination of gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work, which also protects supervisors.
- Educate all workers (including managers) about GBVH and how to prevent and protect themselves against GBVH.

Government

- Ratify and implement ILO Convention 190.
- Adopt national legislation that covers formal and informal workers, and embraces the definition of GBVH from ILO C190, which prohibits sexual harassment and many of the additional abuses that women in this survey said they had experienced.
- Work with employers, workers and other stakeholders to increase awareness about GBVH prevention.
- Encourage policies that provide safe, non-threatening and gender-responsive interventions and workspaces.

Conclusion

This research validates the harrowing experiences of Nigerian women workers as they try to earn a living whilst experiencing GBVH in the world of work. This women-worker led research reinforces the need for a collective approach by employers, workers and government institutions to ensure a safe and gender-responsive work environment that enhances women workers' job experience and protects the rights they have to their bodies, resources and opportunities. It also provides much needed data in support of specific policy and legal changes to prevent and address GBVH in the world of work.

Endnotes

- 1 <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/nigeria-population/>
- 2 <https://www.theigc.org/blog/the-shadow-pandemic-gender-based-violence-and-covid-19/>
- 3 611 women were interviewed in Abuja and 308 interviewed in Lagos, respectively.
- 4 Women workers in the media and healthcare sector recorded highest incidences of sexist comments, at 39.3 per cent and 30.3 per cent, respectively.
- 5 Women workers in manufacturing reported the highest incidence of touching (11.8 per cent), followed by public sector (12.3 per cent) and the media (21.4 per cent).
- 6 Sexual violence was reported most widely by respondents in the manufacturing sector (17.4 per cent).
- 7 8.2 per cent of respondents.
- 8 Women workers in the media and manufacturing recorded highest incidences of touching of inner palm inappropriately during handshakes, at 26.6 per cent and 12.4 per cent, respectively.
- 9 Women workers in the public sector recorded highest incidences of hugging at 11.1 per cent.
- 10 4.4 per cent of respondents.
- 11 This was particularly prevalent with women workers below age 30 and between 30 to 39 years old.
- 12 Workers in the construction (45.1 per cent), manufacturing (38.2 per cent) and public sector (34.9 per cent) recorded very high responses to this question]
- 13 Women workers in construction, media and the public sector recorded 49 per cent, 39.3 per cent and 37.7 per cent rates, respectively.
- 14 <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/nigeria-population/>
- 15 <https://www.businessamlive.com/nigerias-informal-economy-accounts-65-gdp-imf/>
- 16 http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf
- 17 <https://www.theigc.org/blog/the-shadow-pandemic-gender-based-violence-and-covid-19/>
- 18 611 workers were interviewed in Abuja and 308 in Lagos, respectively.
- 19 The preliminary process was completed within a seven-week period by women researchers who dedicated full time to the process since their shifts at work had been staggered as part of measures to ensure social distancing in worksites.
- 20 For the pilot interviews, 6 trained interviewers in Lagos and 13 trained female interviewers in Abuja were mobilised.
- 21 Each worker interviewed at least 20 female co-workers at this stage. Some were, however, unable to interviews up to 20 workers due to challenges encountered during the #EndSARS protests.
- 22 An effort was made by researchers to capture the voices of male workers in the formal and informal economy whose jobs predispose them to precarious working conditions and unequal power dynamics. About 116 workers were interviewed across different sectors but the results from the few number of men interviewed was not statistically significant when pooled with women worker responses.
- 23 One of the major challenges encountered during this process was COVID-19 social distancing restrictions in certain sectors and worksites known to have a high prevalence of GBVH. The nature of the interview process required that workers be interviewed at their worksites but due to the pandemic, certain industries like hotels were on lockdown. This affected the number of women workers who researchers could access. Frontline health workers were found to be the most accessible category of women workers during the period of this research.
- 24 31.1 per cent.
- 25 29.4 per cent.
- 26 This is particularly true of women workers in manufacturing, construction and the public sector.
- 27 Women media workers reported the highest incidence of staring, at 39.3 per cent.
- 28 Women workers in the media and healthcare sectors recorded the highest responses, at 39.3 per cent and 30.3 per cent, respectively.
- 29 Women workers across all sectors complained about this action, but public-sector workers had the highest response with 30.2 per cent.
- 30 Women workers in manufacturing (11.8 per cent), public sector (12.3 per cent) and the media (21.4 per cent) reported this at the highest rates.
- 31 Women workers across all sectors complained about this action but media workers had the highest response at 17.9 per cent.
- 32 Reported mostly by respondents in manufacturing sector (17.4per cent).
- 33 8.2 per cent of respondents said they have experienced grabbing by their superiors whilst on the job.
- 34 8.1 per cent of respondents,
- 35 5.2 per cent of respondents.
- 36 4.4 per cent of respondents.
- 37 13.4 per cent of respondents.
- 38 10.9 per cent of respondents.
- 39 This was particularly prevalent amongst women workers below age 30 and between 30 39 years old.
- 40 92.2 per cent.
- 41 65.5 per cent.
- 42 64.7 per cent.
- 43 Workplaces include union and NGO offices.
- 44 20 per cent of respondents.
- 45 86 per cent and 78.6 per cent of women workers in the hospitality and media sectors said they had the qualifications to move to another level.

- 46 Workers in the Construction (45.1 per cent), manufacturing (38.2 per cent) and public sector (34.9 per cent) recorded very high responses to this question
- 47 Women workers in construction, media and public sector recorded 49.0 per cent, 39.3 per cent and 37.7 per cent rates respectively.
- 48 42 per cent and 20.2 per cent of the respondents in the media and construction sector reported this.
- 49 Media, education and construction sectors recorded highest responses.
- 50 High responses from informal economy and construction.
- 51 Construction, manufacturing and the informal sector have the highest response for a verbal complaint mechanism.
- 52 The public sector and informal economy had the highest number of responses to this option.
- 53 High responses from the public sector, manufacturing and informal sector.

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Comrade Emmanuel Ugboaja

General Secretary
Nigeria Labour Congress

PHOTOS

Page 1: The Medical and Health Workers' Union of Nigeria also joined the struggle for the ratification of ILO Convention C190.
Photo: Nkechi Odinukwe/Solidarity Center

Page 5: Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC) members celebrate 2020 International Women's Day and call on their government to ratify International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention C190 and end gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work.
Photo: Nkechi Odinukwe/Solidarity Center

Page 7: The National Association of Nigerian Nurses and Midwives (NANNM) also rallied for ratification of ILO Convention C190 and an end to gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work. Photo: Nkechi Odinukwe/Solidarity Center

Page 9: Women workers and their allies around the world, like these NLC members, have joined a global campaign for the ratification of ILO Convention C190. Photo: Nkechi Odinukwe/Solidarity Center

Page 10: Workers and their unions rally each year during the international 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign for an end to GBVH in the world of work, including these NLC members in 2019. Photo: Nkechi Odinukwe/Solidarity Center

Page 13: Workers and their unions across the world, including these Nigeria National Union of Textiles, Garments and Tailoring members, rallied on 2020 International Women's Day for their governments to take action to stop against gender-based violence and harassment in the world of work. Photo: Nkechi Odinukwe/Solidarity Center

