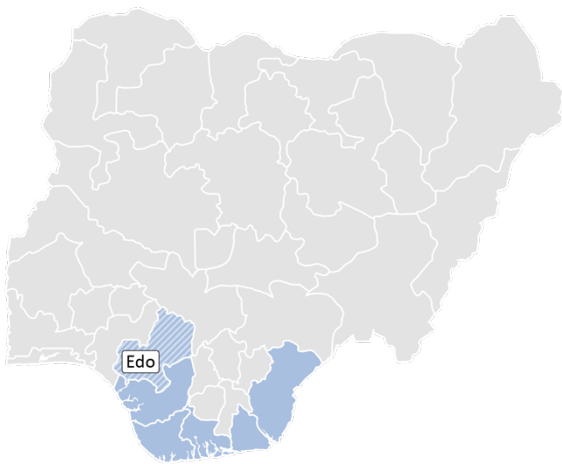




EDO STATE SNAPSHOT: **SOCIAL NORMS & WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT**



The Edo State brief is a part of a larger review of social norms, women's economic empowerment, and policy across six states – Abia, Borno, Edo, Kaduna, Lagos, and Niger – from varied geo-political zones in Nigeria. These states were chosen to reflect diverse contexts among Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) priority states. The full report consisted of a desk review, 36 in-depth interviews (IDIs), and two focus group discussions (FGD) with key stakeholders across the selected states and at the national level.

Throughout Nigeria, women are exposed to patriarchal social norms relating to decision-making, employment, land ownership, and access to school. Across states, this leads to negative outcomes for women's economic empowerment resulting in women often having limited access to public services, finances, legal and social protection, health services, education, and opportunities to participate in the economy. Women also make most of Nigeria's poor.

Of the six states included in the larger review of social norms, women's economic empowerment and policy, **Edo State** has the third highest cumulative rates of economic empowerment for women ages 15 to 49. Women have high rates of educational attainment (91.6%) and employment (71.7%). Though low, women in Edo also have the third highest rate of ownership of a bank account (33.1%). However, they have the lowest participation in decision-making (20.3%) and the third highest prevalence of GBV (42.8%). Ownership of land and house assets, which is under 2% for all states except Abia (7%), is 1.4% in Edo (2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey).

Multiple factors relating to traditional beliefs, the social hierarchy, and the state's position within the global economy contribute to women's disempowerment. In 2015, Nigerian nationals,

primarily from Edo state, were the most common trafficking victims in the EU after those trafficked within the EU internally. Women and girls from Edo state are often trafficked by people they know based on false promises of paid employment, professional training, and education and experience life-threatening conditions as they are transported across borders. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is practiced as a ritual in preparation for a girl reaching womanhood and remains prevalent despite religious repositioning and the known harm it inflicts on girls. Women are also commonly excluded from land ownership because lands are acquired only with the approval of the elders and the chief. Additionally, belief in the supernatural often leads to harmful widowhood practices, as wives are frequently held accountable when their husbands die of illnesses that are not easily identifiable (Osezua, 2016).

Gender norms contribute to women's marginalisation from decision-making within the home and community and to their exclusion from public offices and critical economic resources. Women are expected to tend to the household while men make decisions for the family as part of their role as the household head. They are also expected to stay silent during town hall meetings and, if they do speak, they should cover their heads and remain seated so as to not appear disrespectful of the men. Consequently, women's perspectives are rarely articulated and even less

often addressed (Sewall et al., 2011). Furthermore, female sexuality is highly controlled, and there is a high prevalence of male preference in childbearing, inheritance and succession.



In Edo State, they [women] are not allowed [by others] to own landed properties even when they want to buy, so I think it all boils down to empowerment because she can [legally] own whatever she wants and use them just like the male counterpart if she is empowered.

In-Depth Interview,
Government Official

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COMMON GENDER NORMS RELATED TO WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT



Families consider sons more deserving of care and investment.



Husband controls wife and provides permission for her to access health care, engage in income-generating activities, access financial services, and move outside the home.



Men should be the key decision-makers in their families and communities.



Women are not expected to control their own assets or property.



Women are expected to take care of most domestic and nurturing chores within the household.



In some circumstances it is appropriate for men to use violence to discipline their wives.¹

¹ Unlike the other norms, the issue of appropriateness to use violence to discipline wives did not arise from the interviews, it comes from the literature (2018 NDHS).



In terms of participation in decision-making, the association between education and participation in decision making is manifested in all the chosen states except Edo. Only 20.3% of women studied participated in decision making, with 91.6% attaining education in Edo state. This may be attributable to the strong patriarchal tendencies in Edo State. Participation in decision making has three components: decisions about their own healthcare, major household purchases, and visits to their family or relatives.

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GENERAL GENDER EQUALITY-FOCUSED LAWS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMMES

- Inhuman Treatment of Widows (Prohibitions) Law (2004)
- Law on Violence Against Women (2007)
- Edo State Trafficking in Persons Prohibition Act (2018)
- Edo State Female Circumcision and Genital Mutilation (Prohibition) Law 1999

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT-FOCUSED LAWS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMMES

- Law for Monitoring Maternal Mortality (2001)
- Law on Safe Motherhood
- VAPP Act (2019)

OBSERVATIONS ON POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Acquiring assets for women has remained difficult in Edo state despite the available laws and programs. According to a study participant, shelters provided to trafficking survivors were not well-maintained with poor conditions and services. This is compounded by difficulties in accessing the proper mechanisms for uniting victims with their families.