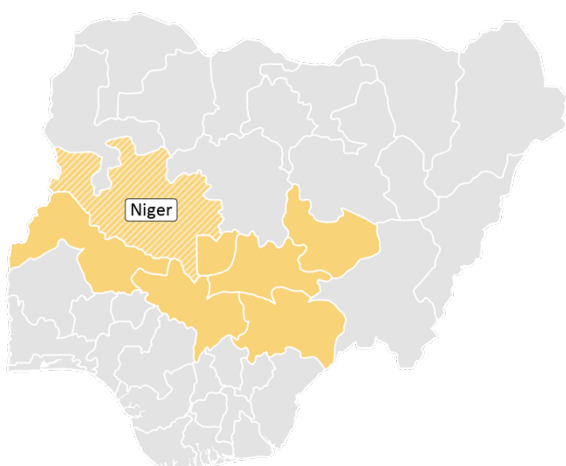




NIGER STATE SNAPSHOT: SOCIAL NORMS & WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT



The Niger 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.

Niger State has the second lowest cumulative rates of economic empowerment for women ages 15 to 49. Women in Niger State have the lowest rate of education attainment (34.9%) and ownership of a bank account (8.3%), the second lowest rates of employment (62.1%) and participation in decision-making (22%), and the second highest prevalence of gender-based violence (45.3%) (2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey).

In northern Nigeria, focus on girl's education and women's empowerment has led to an increase in women with paid employment, but primarily in positions deemed acceptable for women, such as nursing, midwifery and teaching (JICA 2011). They tend to still dominate less well-paid jobs or those rejected by men, such as being engaged as paid household help to assist with household chores (Ulrichs, 2016:12; Hunt and Samman, 2016).

Overall, women are disproportionately engaged in the informal sector in petty trade, small scale production, and microenterprises (Enfield, 2019; PwC, 2020; The World Bank Group, 2019) and in positions that lack social protection.



Women from the northern states fare worse than their southern counterparts on multiple indicators, (National Population Commission, Nigeria and ICF International, 2019). For example, the poverty level varies from very high in the North where Niger state has a poverty headcount rate of 66.11%. (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

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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).

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GENERAL GENDER EQUALITY-FOCUSED LAWS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMMES

- 2010 Law to Provide and Protect the Right of the Child in Niger State and other related matters
- Women Empowerment as Priority Area in State Development Blueprint (2015-2019)
- Legislations Prohibiting Early Marriage

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

- Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)/Microfinance Agency

OBSERVATIONS ON POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The government and development partners are working with women on shea butter processing. Support includes training, skill acquisition and support to start-up.