

## Non-Governmental Organizations and Non-Profit Organizations

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### I. Introduction

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) can play important roles in promoting the rule of law and in the development of international law. As part of this issue's review of developments during 2012,<sup>1</sup> the Section of International Law's NGO and NPO Committee has chosen to highlight the work of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA, in Spanish), and in particular, the Association's national chapter in Nigeria.<sup>2</sup>

### II. International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA)

FIDA is an acronym of the original Spanish appellation *Federacion Internacional de Abogadas*, translated in English as "the International Federation of Women Lawyers."<sup>3</sup> The Association was formed in 1944 by a group of seven women lawyers from Cuba, El Salvador, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the United States as a strictly non-governmental, not-for-profit, non-political, non-religious association of women called to the practice of law.<sup>4</sup> At its founding, FIDA's primary role was the promotion of the rights of women and children.<sup>5</sup> With the advent of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>6</sup> and other human rights instruments, the Association broadened its objectives to include human rights for all.

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1. For developments in this area of law in 2009, see Karla W. Simon, *International Non-Governmental Organizations and Non-Profit Organizations*, 44 INT'L LAW. 399 (2010). For developments in 2008, see Karla W. Simon, *International Non-Governmental Organizations and Non-Profit Organizations*, 43 INT'L LAW. 695 (2009).

2. See *Who We Are?*, FDIA, <http://www.fidafederation.org/who-we-are/> (last visited Jan. 27, 2013).

3. *Id.*

4. *History*, FIDA, <http://www.fidafederation.org/history> (last visited Jan. 27, 2013).

5. *Id.*

6. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, G.A. Res. 217(III) A, U.N. Doc. A/RES/217(III) (Dec. 10, 1948).

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The Association was admitted into the family of U.N. NGOs in 1952, and it became a member of the CoNGO (Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations). In 1954, it was formally granted a Consultative Class 2B status at the United Nations. Today, the Association has memberships in more than seventy countries in every region of the world along with thousands of individual members.<sup>7</sup>

FIDA Nigeria was established as an affiliate of FIDA International in 1963, to fulfill the objectives of the Association in Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation. It currently operates via national branches in thirty-one states across all of the country's geopolitical zones and in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory.<sup>8</sup>

The mission of FIDA Nigeria is four-fold:

- (1) To enhance and promote the welfare of women and children;
- (2) To promote the study of comparative law;
- (3) To promote the legal and social principles and aims of the United Nations; and
- (4) To establish friendly international relations on the basis of equality and mutual respect for all peoples.

FIDA Nigeria carries out its mission by:

- (1) Extending activities in every locality by the formation of committees and global partners;
- (2) Furthering the dissemination of knowledge of the law;
- (3) Advancing opportunities for women in the political, social, civil, and educational fields as well as in industry, business, and the legal profession;
- (4) Seeking passage of legislation to advance and protect the rights of women and children; and
- (5) Working for the equal rights of women under the law.

FIDA Nigeria also cooperates with organized judicial associations to create better relationships between the bench and the bar. It functions through education and training, enlightenment campaigns, advocacy, policy development, publishing, resource counseling, and providing free legal services to indigent women and children.

During 2012, FIDA Nigeria took part in the following activities:

- (1) *Pro bono legal services.* Through its various branches, the Association provided pro bono court representation, mediation, and counseling to indigent women and children. Pro bono advocates assisted in a range of cases, including: divorce, child custody, maintenance, inheritance and widow rights, rape, child defilement, domestic violence, violence against women, and workplace discrimination cases.
- (2) *Violence Against Women.* Violence against women is considered so critical that FIDA Nigeria launched a national campaign in opposition to Violence Against Women—including massive media advocacy and whistle-blowing ceremonies during the an-

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7. *Who We Are?*, *supra* note 2.

8. *About Us*, FIDA NIGERIA, <http://www.fidanigeria.org/about.php> (last visited Jan. 27, 2013).

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nual, globally recognized “16 Days of Activism” campaign held from November 25 to December 10, 2012.<sup>9</sup>

- (3) *Community Mobilization Program on Women’s Reproductive Rights, Maternal Mortality, and Domestic Violence*. In collaboration with IPAS Nigeria,<sup>10</sup> the Association organized grassroots mobilization and sensitization programs on women’s reproductive rights, maternal mortality, and domestic violence.
- (4) *Community Outreach*. Efforts at community outreach during 2012 included activities in the Abuja Gishiri Surburbs,<sup>11</sup> as well as Minna,<sup>12</sup> Enugu,<sup>13</sup> and Kano.<sup>14</sup>
- (5) *“Raising Her Voice” Project*. In a project supported by Oxfam<sup>15</sup> and funded by the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development, FIDA Nigeria and the Women’s Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative engaged in efforts to promote women’s participation in the governance of Nigeria. Activities included: (a) human rights capacity-building training for women leaders on the African Union (AU) Protocol;<sup>16</sup> (b) advocacy visits to religious leaders in Lagos State to discuss the rights of women as protected by the AU Protocol; (c) an advocacy visit by FIDA Adamawa to the Adamawa State Legislature; (d) creating awareness of the provisions in the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Bill<sup>17</sup> through national television and radio programs; (e) documenting instances of violence against women in

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9. See *UN Women Watch Events Calendar*, WOMENWATCH, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/calendar/> (last visited Jan. 27, 2013); Center for Women’s Leadership, *16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign*, RUTGERS, <http://16dayscwg.rutgers.edu/> (last visited Jan. 27, 2013).

10. The Institute of Public Analysts & Political Scientists (IPAS) is a global non-profit organization that works to eliminate deaths and injuries from unsafe abortions and to increase women’s abilities to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights. *What We Do*, IPAS, <http://www.ipas.org/en/What-We-Do.aspx> (last visited Jan. 27, 2013). IPAS’s work is grounded in the belief that women everywhere must have the opportunity to determine their futures, to care for their families, and to manage their fertility. *Id.*

11. In collaboration with women’s professional groups such as the Medical Women Association of Nigeria, Women in Optometry, and the Association of Women Pharmacists of Nigeria, wide-ranging free services were rendered to members of the community, including free eye tests, HIV tests, diabetes tests, blood pressure monitoring, and health and wellness counseling.

12. In alliance with IPAS Nigeria, FIDA Nigeria organized a seminar on reproductive health and rights in Minna to inform market women about their rights and to train them to organize for much-needed access to health care.

13. FIDA Nigeria members held an interactive session with grassroots women’s groups gathered at the Palace of the Igwe (the ruling monarch) of Nike. Among the issues discussed at this session were: the implications of customary or statutory marriages, cohabitation, domestic violence, and polygamy.

14. In Kano, FIDA Nigeria held a sensitization and awareness-creating outreach program on reproductive health rights and maternal and infant mortality for grassroots women.

15. Oxfam is an international confederation of seventeen organizations in over ninety countries, working together with partners and allies to find lasting solutions to poverty and injustice. *About Us*, OXFAM INT’L, <http://www.oxfam.org/en/about> (last visited Jan. 27, 2013).

16. The “Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa” was adopted at the African Union meeting in Maputo in July 2003. African Union [AU], Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, CAB/LEG/66.6, 2d Ordinary Sess. (July 11, 2003).

17. The Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Bill seeks to eliminate violence and punish perpetrators of gender-based violence in Nigeria. *Support Nigerian Violence Against Persons Prohibition Bill*, SAY NO VIOLENCE, <http://saynotoviolence.org/join-say-no/support-nigerian-violence-against-persons-prohibition-bill> (last visited Jan. 27, 2013). Several attempts to pass the bill into national law have failed in the past, but the bill has been re-introduced. *Id.*

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North East Nigeria—specifically, in Adamawa, Borno, the Niger States of Nigeria, and Abuja (Federal Capital Territory); and (f) participating in the Review, Advocacy, and Public Hearing in respect of the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Bill and other legislation.

- (6) *Voter Registration.* FIDA Nigeria, through her several branches, embarked on public sensitization program during the national voter registration exercise. FIDA Nigeria sponsored messages on radio stations across the nation to sensitize and urge the public—especially women—to register to vote and to vote during the elections.
- (7) *Advocacy Visits to Traditional Rules and Persons of Influence.* On different occasions, FIDA Nigeria made visits to engage the support of prominent royal fathers, leaders of thought, and persons of influence toward reducing gender-based violence and promoting women’s rights.

In addition to its activities within Nigeria, delegates from FIDA Nigeria also participated in the last four sessions of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.<sup>18</sup> During these sessions, FIDA Nigeria co-hosted parallel events in collaboration with the Alliance for Peace Building, the Women’s International Center, the Restorative Justice Association, the Women’s Intercultural Network, and the Women Environmental Program Nigeria.

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18. See Comm’n on the Status of Women, *About the Commission*, UN WOMEN, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/> (last visited Jan. 27, 2013).