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CWSI MID-YEAR NEWSLETTER

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VOLUME 1,

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Dear Readers,

Welcome to the first edition of the 2024 Mid-Year newsletter, themed "Celebrating 25 Years of Continued Impact"! This year marks a significant milestone, celebrating 25 years of CWSI's dedication to empowering women and girls. This edition includes updates on ongoing projects, recent events, and notable achievements. Looking ahead, CWSI remains committed to empowering women and girls and advocating for the protection of their rights and dignity

Thank you for your continued support.

Warm Regards,

Grace Eseohe Okosun Admin/Communication Officer, Centre for Women Studies and Intervention (CWSI)



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CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF CONTINUED IMPACT

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On May 19th, 2024, the Centre for Women Studies and Intervention (CWSI) marked a significant milestone: 25 years of unwavering commitment to empowering women, girls, and other vulnerable groups at the grassroots level in Nigeria. The journey began on May 19th, 1999, when CWSI was officially registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission as a Non-Governmental Organization. Over the years, CWSI has expanded its reach and impact, thanks to the steadfast support of its partners, donors, and supporters.

CWSI's journey has been driven by its vision that women and other vulnerable persons are empowered and freed from the social constraints of discrimination, oppression, injustice, inequality, and poverty, enabling them to participate as agents of change for the creation of a better world. The organization has significantly contributed to the development and empowerment of individuals and in denouncing and combating all that degrades the person. Inspired and supported by other organizations and individuals who work for equity, human rights, and the development of humanity, CWSI continues to make strides toward its mission.

To achieve the desired outcomes of its interventions, CWSI involves and engages duty bearers and collaborates with relevant stakeholders to provide solutions to the social problems it addresses. More importantly, as a women-led and women-focused organization, CWSI develops projects in partnership with the beneficiaries, particularly women and girls living in rural communities. The organization recognizes that women's active participation in communal and national life is crucial to building a more sustainable future where the rights of women, men, boys, and girls are respected. Over the years, CWSI has implemented evidence-based projects using a human rights approach in many states of Nigeria. The programming strategy encompasses capacity building, advocacy, multisectoral action, and inclusive participation. Significant successes have been recorded in the projects implemented, many of which are highlighted in this mid-year edition of the digital newsletter. CWSI is committed to building on these successes and furthering its efforts to improve the lives of women, girls, and other vulnerable groups in Nigeria.

> Barr. Paschal Idogbe (Research/Documentation Officer, CWSI.)

RECENT EVENTS



CWSI carries out a myriad of activities, including commemorative programs that align with its mission and thematic areas. These events include International Women's Day, International Day of the Girl Child, Commission on the Status of Women, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and the subsequent 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. The Executive Director also participates in events and programs, both nationally and internationally, addressing issues affecting women, girls, and other vulnerable groups, including multi-sectoral initiatives. Below is an overview of these events and programs from January 2024 to June 2024.

Staff Retreat

On January 16th-17th, 2024, the Centre for Women Studies and Intervention (CWSI) held a two-day staff retreat at the Catholic Resource Centre, Catholic Secretariat, Durumi Abuja. The retreat aimed to strengthen team bonds, review the activities and projects carried out in 2023, realign with the organization's mission, and foster organizational growth. This retreat provided a much-needed break from daily routines, creating an environment conducive to constructive dialogue and a comprehensive review of CWSI's activities in 2023. Through a series of interactive sessions, staff members had the opportunity to share insights, address challenges, and celebrate achievements.

A key highlight of the retreat was the setting of goals and strategies for 2024. Members of staff engaged in strategic planning and goal setting, focusing on enhancing the



A section of Staff members During Group Discussions

impact of CWSI's projects and initiatives for the year 2024. These activities not only strengthened interpersonal relationships but also reinforced a shared commitment to CWSI's goals.

By the end of the retreat, members of staff emerged rejuvenated with a clear, unified direction for the year 2024.



Staff Members gather for a group photo with the Executive Director, Sr. Ngozi Frances Uti, at the Catholic Secretariat, Durumi, Abuja. (January, 2024)

Core Group Consultative Meeting Phase I



Women Religious pose for a group photo with the Executive Director of CWSI, Sr. Ngozi Frances Uti at the Catholic Secretariat building, Durumi Abuja. (January 2024).

In the wake of the 1995 Beijing Conference, where women globally united under a common goal encapsulated in the Beijing Platform for Action, the vision was clear: violence and discrimination ending Despite ambitious against women. commitments made over twenty-five years ago, the scourge of domestic violence and discrimination against women not only persists but has shown troubling signs of increase. A significant barrier in combating these injustices remains the pervasive 'culture of silence' that envelops victims, shrouding their suffering in shadows and preventing them from seeking help.

Recognizing the urgency to break this silence and the need for concerted action, Centre for Women Studies and Intervention (CWSI) with support from Conrad N Hilton Foundation organized a Core Group Consultative meeting themed "Women Religious as Collaborators with the Catholic Women Organization (CWO) in Ending Violence and Discrimination against Women and Girls in Nigeria."

This meeting convened Fourteen women religious from diverse geopolitical zones of Nigeria, each bringing unique insights and experiences to the table. Together, they engaged in robust discussions on the violence and discrimination plaguing women and girls in our society. The focus of these deliberations was not merely on articulating challenges but, more importantly, on designing actionable strategies on how to collaborate with the Catholic Women Organization (CWO) to advocate for the elimination of practices that dehumanize and subjugate women and girls in Nigeria.

The outcome of this consultative meeting was the development of actionable strategies and action plans to end violence and discrimination against women and girls in Nigeria. Additionally, plans were formulated on how to liaise with the Catholic Women Organization of Nigeria, leveraging their strategic and influential position to effect change.



A round table view of participants at the meeting, during the plenary session on identifying different forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls and formulating strategic action plans for collaborative intervention.

Core Group Consultative Meeting Phase II

Following the success of Phase I, themed 'Women Religious as Collaborators with the Catholic Women Organization to End Violence and Discrimination against Women and Girls in Nigeria,' CWSI organized a Phase II of the core group consultative meeting.

This phase expanded collaboration to include executives from Women Religious, Catholic Women Organization (CWO), Zumutamata group, and Confraternity of Christian Mothers (CCM). The meeting aimed to address complexities of violence and discrimination within the church and Nigerian society. Key objectives included identifying challenges in eliminating gender-based violence and discrimination and formulating strategic action plans for collaborative intervention. Outcomes included tailored action plans and strategies for effective collaboration between Women Religious and CWO to combat violence and discrimination against women and girls in both church and broader Nigerian society.



International Women's Day 2024

CWSI, supported with funding from the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), organized an event on March 7, 2024, at Fraser Suites Abuja to commemorate International Women's Day. The Theme was 'Celebrating Women Making an Impact on Society. The event was attended by representatives from CSOs, INGOs, faith-based organizations, youthled organizations, representatives from the Ministry of Women Affairs, Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, and the National Commission on Human **Rights. Students from three Secondary** Schools in Abuja also attended the event.

The event featured a panel discussion on the topic, "The Challenges and the Way Forward in Improving Investment in Women and Girls in Nigeria," which aligns with the overall theme. Their was a display of a collage commemorating the achievements of 25 exemplary women who have profoundly impacted various sectors within Nigeria. These women, recognized for their contributions to the socio-economic development of Nigeria, were celebrated through a meticulously assembled collage that showcased their accomplishments and provided citations for each. This tribute was designed to honor the enduring legacy of both past and current female leaders, highlighting their indispensable role in the nation's developmental journey.

CWSI and CAFOD honored six Nigerian women for their exceptional contributions, which have inspired women and girls and reshaped Nigeria's socio-political and economic landscape.

The awardees were:

- 1. Grace Jerry, Executive Director, Inclusive Friends Association (IFA).
- 2. Cynthia Onyinye Mbamalu, Director of Programs, Yiaga Africa.

3. Sister Patricia Ebegbulem, Founder, Committee for the Support of the Dignity of Women (COSUDOW).

4. Dame Winifred Akpani, CEO, Northwest Petroleum & Gas Company Limited.

5. Chief Mrs. Felicia Sani, National Chairperson, Association of Commodity Market Women and Men of Nigeria.

6. Ene Obi, Former Country Director, ActionAid Nigeria.

A joint press release issued at the event called on the Nigerian Government to prioritize investment in women, girls, and women-led businesses and initiatives in Nigeria. The press release garnered media coverage from NTA, ASoTV, The Abuja Inquirer, Vanguard News, Enugu Reporters, and others. Read full <u>press release</u>.



CWSI members of staff gather for a group photo with the Executive Director, holding placards.



A section of Participants at the event at Fraizer Suite, Abuja, Nigeria.



Participants gather for a group photo after the joint press release by CWSI and CAFOD.



Students of Handmaids Secondary School, Kuje, Abuja pose with placards at the event.

CAFOD Lenten Reflections For International Women's Day 2024

Sr. Ngozi Frances Uti, Executive Director of CWSI, participated as a panelist in the Catholic Agency For Overseas Development (CAFOD) Lenten **Reflections for International Women's Day** 2024. The event, held on March 9, 2024, at St Mary's University, Twickenham, London, United Kingdom, aimed to celebrate women in the Catholic Church and strategize on enhancing recognition for their contributions. Sr. Ngozi Frances Uti contributed as a panelist on the topic "Women in the Life and Mission of the Catholic Church in the World on the Synodal Path."



Sr. Ngozi Frances Uti, As a Panelist at the CAFOD Lenten Reflections For International Women's Day 2024

Commission on the Status of Women 2024 (CSW'24)



CWSI's Youth Representatives gather for a group photo with the *Executive Director, Sr. Ngozi Frances Uti.*

CWSI's youth representatives organized a hybrid parallel side event to commemorate this year's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the United Nations in New York, United States of America. The parallel event, held on March 21, 2024, with the theme, "Empowering Women: Uniting Social Policies for Financial Equality and Sustainable Development in Pursuit of Agenda 2030". The event featured panel discussions and a Q&A session.

The hybrid parallel event included panel discussions on: Global Perspective on Women's Empowerment and Financial Equality, Policy Frameworks and Advocacy for Sustainable Development. The members of the panel were;

Mrs. Chioma Chigozie-Okwum (CWSI Youth Representative), Ms. Rolake Tomoye, (Former Youth Representative) and CWSI's Gender Desk Officer, Barr. Ewomatome Precious Uwubiti.

Key points from the sessions included: investing in women-led enterprises for economic growth, restructuring aid delivery to reach grassroots levels, and promoting financial literacy among young girls for economic resilience. The Executive Director, Sister Ngozi Frances Uti, was present for the event and delivered the closing remarks, thanking both online and in-person participants for their contributions and participation.



Group photo of some Participants at the+ parallel event, New York, United State of America. (March, 2024)

World Interfaith Harmony Week 2024

Sister Ngozi Frances Uti, Executive Director of CWSI, participated in the 2024 World Interfaith Harmony Week held at the Hilton in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Organized by AU-Citizens and Diaspora, AU Interfaith Dialogue Forum, and AU Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOC), the event aimed to promote peace, human dignity, and environmental preservation across Africa.

Over 200 participants, including religious leaders, policymakers, and scholars worldwide, attended the twoday conference from April 15th to 16th. Under the theme "Interfaith Collective

Action to Foster Peace, Human Dignity, Development, and Environment Preservation, and to Counter Hate Speech, Violence, and Xenophobia in Africa," sessions focused on global policy issues like climate change and women's empowerment, aligning with AU's Agenda 2063 and Sustainable Development Goals.

Sister Ngozi Frances Uti, moderated the session "Challenges and Opportunities of Empowering African Women," which emphasized women's roles in peacebuilding and community development. Discussions highlighted educational empowerment, entrepreneurial skills, and societal inclusivity. The panel advocated for structural changes to empower women beyond economic aid, stressing the need for inclusive education and men's involvement in gender equality. This session not only contributed to global dialogue but also aligned closely with CWSI's mission to empower women and vulnerable groups in Nigeria.



Sr. Ngozi Frances Uti poses with other panel members at the World Interfaith Harmony. (April, 2024)



Sr. Ngozi Frances Uti, pose with other participants at the event



A picture frame of Sr, Ngozi frances Uti, at the World Interfaith Harmony Week (April, 2024).

Catholic Sisters Initiative Convening 2024



Participants of the Catholic Sisters Initiative Africa Convening gather for a group photo on the lawn at the Taj Pamodzi Hotel, Lusaka, Zambia (May, 2024).

From May 29th to 31st, 2024, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, in collaboration with the Zambia Association of Sisterhoods (ZAS), hosted the Catholic Sisters Initiative Convening at the Taj Pamodzi Hotel in Lusaka, Zambia. The event, themed "Embracing a Shared Vision: Impact, Learning, and Collaboration in Service for the Common Good," gathered over 110 delegates globally.

CWSI was represented by the Executive Director, Sr. Ngozi Frances Uti, who participated as a panel member on the topic "Solidarity and Dignity: Strengthening



A section of panelists at the Catholic Sisters Initiative Convening.

Community Advocates." Her participation exemplifies CWSI's commitment to global solidarity and addressing social issues affecting women, girls, and other vulnerable groups.

The convening focused on integrating wellness, safeguarding, and support systems, aiming to build empowering communities and foster solutions. Key topics included combating human trafficking and gender-based violence, strategies for youth empowerment, and supporting elderly sisters. Delegates organizational reflected on visions future challenges, emphasizing and transformational collaboration, network building, and using technology to inform community programs. The convening concluded with renewed determination to create a more just and compassionate world, setting a precedent for ongoing collective efforts.

Core Group Meeting Phase III

On June 3, 2024, CWSI, with funding from Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, organized a one-day core group meeting at the Catholic Secretariat in Durumi, Abuja. The meeting aimed to address and develop actionable strategies to end violence and discrimination against women and girls.

The meeting had attendees from organizations such as the Catholic Women Organization (CWO), Zumuta Mata, Confraternity of Christian Mothers, and the Federation of Muslim Women's Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN), among others. The meeting followed up on previous workshops on ending violence and discrimination against women and girls organized by CWSI. Participants shared reports on incidents and efforts to combat violence and discrimination, analyzing effective measures and formulating strategies.

The meeting highlighted lesser-known forms of violence such as Reproductive Coercion and Forced Abortion. Strategies were developed to address these issues at the community level and across Nigerian society at large.



Participants gather for a group photo at the Catholic Secretariat building Durumi, Abuja. (JUne, 2024)



A cross section of participants during the opening prayer at the meeting



A section of participants seated, at the meeting.



A member of FOMWAN making her input.

PROJECT UPDATES

Community Action to End Child Early and Forced Marriages (CAECEFM)



CWSI, with funding support from the United States Agency for International under the Development, Nigeria Strengthening Civic Advocacy and Local (SCALE), Engagement implemented the project "Community Action to End Child, Early, and Forced Marriage (CEFM) and Other Harmful Practices" in 4 local government areas in Cross River State and 3 in Jigawa State. The project aimed to reduce CEFM and related violence through awareness campaigns, advocacy, community sensitization, socio-economic support for vulnerable families, and life skills training for young out-of-school girls, including survivors and those at risk. June 2024, CWSI From January to psychosocial organized support counselling sessions for survivors. In Jigawa, CWSI organized a skill exhibition vocational where training program skills, beneficiaries showcased their followed by financial literacy classes.

The project concluded in April 2024 with the following achievements:

 Group therapy and individual counseling sessions for 278 survivors of CEFM and SGBV in collaboration with counselors from the Sexual Assault Referral Centre and GPI Calabar.

• Training in human rights and child protection laws for 274 adolescents and children in Cross River.

• Formation of 9 human rights clubs from the sensitization classes.

• Sensitization of over 2,340 community members on human rights, the harmful effects of CEFM and SGBV, and the importance of girl-child education in Cross River (1,260) and Jigawa (1,080).

• Empowerment of 82 girls with vocational and financial literacy skills to become self-reliant and reduce their vulnerability to CEFM.

Inform Parents And Children Together On Sexual And Gender-Based Violence (INPACT-On-SGBV)



Group photograph with refugees after the sensitization program at Ikyogen Adikpo settlement Benue state, Nigeria.

To address the critical challenges of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), including intimate violence, partner sexual assault, rape, and early pregnancy within refugee settlements, CWSI with Funding Support from the African Women Development Fund (AWDF) is currently implementing a project titled "Inform Parents and Children Together on SGBV (INPACT-ON-SGBV)." .This three-year project (2023-2025) spans through five refugee settlements in Cross River and Benue States (Adagom I, Adagom 3, Ukende, Obanliku, and Adikpo), aiming to mitigate the pressing issues affecting women and girls in these communities.

From January to June 2024, key activities included:

 Launching a radio program on Cross-River Broadcasting Corporation to raise awareness about the INPACT-ON-SGBV project and facilitate community engagement and feedback.

 Conducted focus group discussions with traditional leaders in the project areas.

• Carried out sensitization programs on the impact of SGBV in the settlements.

Strategic Women's Advancement In Governance Project (SWAG) Phase II



Group Photograph Of Participants In The Townhall Meeting Organized In Kabba, Kogi State, Nigeria.

The SWAG Phase II Project, is a continued collaboration effort between CAFOD and CWSI. The project aimed at addressing the exclusion of women from politics, democratic governance, and decisionmaking processes in Kogi State. Building upon the successes achieved in SWAG Phase 1, this initiative has been dedicated to enhancing gender sensitivity and advocating for the equal participation of women in all levels of governance and decision-making within the region.

In February 2024, CWSI project team conducted town hall meetings for

30 members of the Kogi Women Empowerment Coalition (KWEC) in five Local Government Areas, to reposition KWEC and create action plans for inclusive governance. This was followed by election of new KWEC executives in Lokoja to drive the coalition's mandate.

The project concluded in February 2024, with the following achievements:

 Sixty-six women elected to Local Government Councils in Kogi State, with twenty-one holding executive positions as Vice Chairmen and twenty serving as Leaders of Local Government legislative councils.

 Natasha Akpoti Uduaghan elected as the first-ever female senator from Kogi State.

 Two women elected as representatives in the Kogi State House of Assembly.

• Three women appointed to highranking executive positions, including Head of Kogi State Civil Service, Secretary to the State Government, and Commissioner for Women's Affairs.

 Twenty-two women unprecedentedly held positions as "beaded" Chiefs and members of various traditional ruling councils.

 Kogi State domesticated the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2023, protecting women and girls from various forms of discrimination and violence Empowering Women and Youth Smallholder Farmers in Groundnut Market System Development in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.



A picture frame of project beneficiaries at the Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop on Sustainable Agronomic Practices in Paiko community, Gwagwalada Area council, FCT, Abuja

CWSI. with funding support from the Catholic Agency for **Overseas** (CAFOD), Development is implementing a pilot project titled "Empowering Women and Youth Smallholder Farmers in Groundnut Market System in the FCT." The project commenced in May 2024 and aims to improve the livelihoods and economic resilience of women and youth groundnut farmers in Bamishi Community of Kuje Area Council and Paiko Community in Gwagwalada Area Council.

The project's primary objectives are to empower the targeted groundnut farmers by providing essential agricultural input and implements, acquaint with sustainable them agricultural practices through comprehensive training programs, and to create market linkages to ensure the sustainability of their groundnut farming.

Recent Activities:

1. Project Inception Meeting: On May 8, 2024, inception meetings were successfully conducted in the two communities, Paiko and Bamishi, located in Gwagwalada and Kuje Area Councils respectively. These meetings served as a platform to introduce the project objectives and strategies for selecting the project beneficiaries.

2. Distribution of Agricultural inputs and implements: from May 28-29, 2024, agricultural including inputs seeds, herbicides, hoes, and knapsack sprayers were distributed to the project beneficiaries in Paiko and Bamishi communities. This distribution was aimed at providing the necessary tools and resources to their enhance farming practices.

Training of Trainers 3. (TOT) Programs: In June 2024, CWSI's project staff conducted Training of Trainers (TOT) workshops for the beneficiaries in both communities. These workshops were designed to educate the groundnut on sustainable farmers agronomic practices, with an emphasis on optimizing groundnut production. The TOT approach ensures that the knowledge is disseminated widely and within effectively the communities.



A picture frame of Mr Kevin Tekpat Abin (CWSI Project staff), Traditional Leader of Bamishi community with project beneficiaries in Kuje Area council, FCT Abuja.



Project beneficiaries pose with their agricultural inputs and implements in Bamishi Community, Kuje Area Council. FCT, Abuja.

UPCOMING INTERNATIONAL DAYS CELEBRATION

As part of CWSI's ongoing commitment to raising awareness and advocating for the rights and empowerment of women and girls, CWSI observes and celebrates international days that align with its mission and strategic focus areas. These days provide an opportunity to reflect on key issues, celebrate progress, and reinforce our advocacy efforts. Here are the international days we will be observing:

A. International Day of the Girl ChildOctober 11, 2024.

B. International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls is observed annually on November 25th.

November 25th, marks the beginning of the "16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence" campaign, which runs until December 10th, Human Rights Day.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN NOVEMBER 25

TESTIMONIALS FROM CWSI'S INTERVENTION

CAECEFM PROJECT- CROSS RIVER STATE

Chief David Dibang

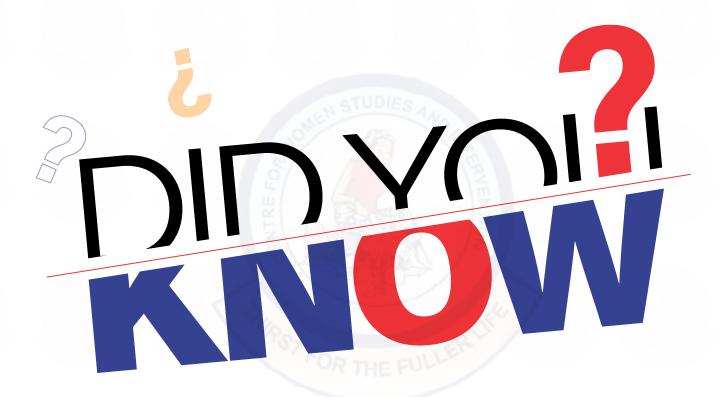
Chief David Dibang, the Village Head of Katabang community in Boki, expressed profound gratitude for CWSI's intervention. He highlighted the transformative impact of the sensitization outreaches provided by CWSI, emphasizing the importance of creating community laws aligned with international standards to prevent child and forced marriages.

Ntaji Christiana Ogenye

Ntaji Christiana Ogenye, before attending CWSI's vocational training supported by USAID/Palladium, struggled with managing her finances. After mastering hairdressing and gaining financial literacy skills, she opened her first bank account with First Bank. She shared, "Now, I can distinguish between needs and wants, and I feel empowered to control my financial future."

Eunice Mba

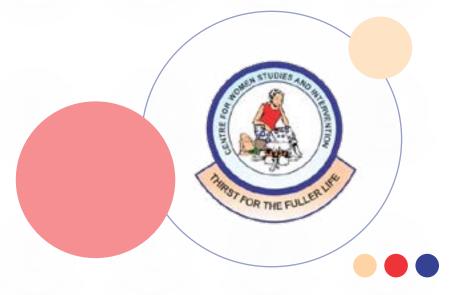
Eunice Mba, a survivor of Child, Early, and Forced Marriage (CEFM), transformed her life with CWSI's support. Through financial education and empowerment workshops, she started her bakery business and opened her first bank account. Eunice emphasized, "CWSI not only provided financial literacy but also raised awareness of women's rights, empowering us to make choices and take control of our lives."





Centre for Women Studies and Intervention (CWSI) is an initiative of the Religious Congregation of the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus (HHCJ).

CWSI was registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission on May 19th, 1999 (CAC NO: 12,045).



CWSI is headquartered in Abuja, Nigeria.

CWSI has consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and is affiliated with the Department of Global Communications at the United Nations.

CWSI has youth representatives at Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, USA. They attend UN conferences on behalf of WSI and play vital roles in disseminating information about CWSI's initiatives and the challenges faced by women and girls through campus activism.

CONTACT US

For Support and more information about the Centre, kindly contact Centre for Women Studies and Intervention (CWSI) :

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