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# THE MOMENT *for* WOMEN MAGAZINE

A Gender Lens Magazine



*Plus  
more!*



Issue 026  
June 2023

*Interview with Dr.  
Abosede Adedayo Adepoju*

# THE MOMENT *for* WOMEN MAGAZINE



*A gender lens magazine – published monthly by Moment for Women Alliance to tell the stories of women and girls around the world. The Magazine focuses on Women’s human rights, health, economic and inclusive governance among others.*

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# Welcome!

To our June edition of  
The Moment for Women Magazine!

## *Inside this month's issue:*

We have fascinating pieces this month for you and we start with a campaign that AGE Network recently launched about ending the stigma associated with periods. #EndStigmaPERIOD.

Sticking with health we have an article about malnutrition in women with some shocking stats. We also have a piece about ending child marriage in Sub-Saharan Africa with some stats and information on how to approach this.

And, we continue our Women in STEM series with an interview with Dr. Abosede Adedayo Adepoju on her career in STEM, the challenges she faced, her work-life balance and some encouraging advice for girls who are interested in the field of STEM.

Happy reading!

## **The Editorial Team:**

Donna Crowley, Chisom Akumefule

## **Contributors:**

Richa Sharma, Solomon Asuquo, Garima Rathor.



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# AGE Network launches #EndStigmaPERIOD campaign

**O**gun, Nigeria- Ahead of the World's Menstrual Hygiene Day May 28 2023, the African Girls Empowerment Network, a young feminine front-line civil society organization has launched #EndStigmaPERIOD, a campaign to end period poverty and stigma in Nigeria and break barriers to girls' education.

The Group Administrator, Matina Ebri while addressing the girls during the #EndStigmaPERIOD community sensitization session in Champion College and Elite Foundation Comprehensive College on Wednesday 24th May 2023 disclosed that the #EndStigmaPERIOD campaign is part of the group's ongoing gender transformative effort to make schools and communities #SafeforGirls

*"We are committed to promoting menstrual hygiene and eradicating the stigma associated with periods to reduce their vulnerability to child marriage, teenage pregnancy, HIV and school dropout. Thanks to the support of our partner @ECMNigeria @GirlsNotBrides, @MPT, we are targeting girls in the hard-to-reach communities and schools, we want to reach a significant number of girls, creating safe space and*

*providing them with valuable knowledge and empowering them to manage their menstrual health confidently."* Ebri said.



During the sessions, the team engaged the girls in insightful discussions, addressing common misconceptions and breaking down the stigma surrounding menstruation. They emphasized the importance of adopting hygienic practices, including regular changing of sanitary pads and maintaining cleanliness during menstruation. Furthermore, the girls were educated about the significance of proper disposal methods to ensure both personal hygiene and environmental sustainability.

In another development, the group also [released a short video](#) on the stigma and misconception surrounding Menstruation;

*"Menstruation is a healthy and natural process that is integral to the reproductive cycle of women. However, in Nigeria, many women and*

girls continue to face the challenges of period stigma and poverty. This issue is exacerbated in certain communities where access to safe and hygienic menstrual products is limited, and where women and girls are regarded as impure or unholy during menstruation. This stigma leads to exclusionary practices, such as restrictions on entering certain places or touching certain objects within their own homes, and girls often miss out on their education due to menstruation.



In this Menstrual Hygiene Month 2023, we are dedicated to reaching out to young women and adolescent girls, especially those in vulnerable and displaced settings, as well as those with disabilities. Our aim is to provide them with sanitary pads and comprehensive education about menstruation. Furthermore, we recognize the importance of engaging men, boys, and community leaders in order to eradicate period stigma and alleviate the associated poverty.



We invite you to take action and support our “#EndStigmaPERIOD” campaign in Nigeria. Your donation will contribute to making period stigma a thing of the past. By providing sanitary pads and education, we can empower women and girls, enabling them to manage their menstrual health with dignity and without hindrance. Together, we can create a society where menstruation is not a barrier to education, opportunity, or equality. Donate today and help us make a positive change in the lives of women and girls in Nigeria.”

For more information about the #EndStigmaPERIOD Campaign or to arrange for interviews, please contact Victoria Olarenwaju & Media Team, African Girls Empowerment Network:

[info@agenetwork.org](mailto:info@agenetwork.org)

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# Malnutrition in Women

By Richa Sharma

**M**alnutrition is a complex issue that affects millions of women globally, with adverse effects on their physical, mental, and social well-being. According to the [United Nations](#), approximately 3.9 million children under the age of five die every year due to malnutrition, and women in developing countries are among the most affected.

In sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, the prevalence of malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women is 26%, with anemia affecting over 60% of women. Similarly, over 20% of women of reproductive age are undernourished in South Asia, leading to poor maternal and child health outcomes.

Besides the health implications, malnutrition also has significant economic implications. The World Bank estimates that malnutrition costs the global economy \$3.5 trillion per year in lost productivity, increased healthcare costs, and reduced economic growth. Women who experience malnutrition are also more likely to experience poverty and lack access to education and job opportunities.

Several programs and policies have been implemented globally to address malnutrition in women. The Scaling Up Nutrition Movement is a global movement that aims to improve maternal and child nutrition by bringing together governments, civil society organizations, and businesses to prioritize nutrition interventions.

[The World Health Organization](#) recommends several strategies to improve the nutritional status of women, including the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding, iron, and folic acid supplementation, and the provision of nutrient-rich foods.

To address malnutrition in women, a multi-faceted approach is necessary, including improving access to nutritious food, education, and healthcare. Governments, international organizations, and civil society must work together to create policies and programs that prioritize the nutritional needs of women and children. By addressing malnutrition in women, we can improve not only their health but also the economic and social well-being of entire communities.

# Join our

# STEM

# GIRLS talkshow, a virtual space for girls!

As part of the efforts to advance gender equality in girls' education and encourage girls to develop an interest and be at the forefront of STEM fields, AGE Network has launched its new bi-weekly online "STEM Girls Talk Show", a virtual space for women and girls to discuss STEM and much more.

In each episode, one or two women working in the field of STEM are invited as guest speakers and interviewed by the girls. Through their personal experience, these amazing women discuss the challenges and rewards encountered in the long path that led them to their current position as surgeons, for example, or engineers, university lecturers in STEM fields, and software developers. The talk show also tackles sensitive issues that unfortunately are part of the reality that girls face every day.

The questions we are asking these exceptional women are carefully selected by our team together with young Nigerian schoolgirls who want – and NEED – to find role models and female figures to look up to.

**Are you a girl who aspires to a career in STEM?  
Are you a woman working in STEM fields? We  
are looking forward to hearing your voice!**



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**Whatsapp: +2348033150904**



# Multi-Sectoral Approaches:

## A Sure Way to End Child Marriage in Sub-Saharan Africa

By Solomon Asuquo

Child marriage remains a pressing issue in sub-Saharan Africa, leading to adverse consequences such as girls' school dropouts, child sexual exploitation and abuse and teenage pregnancies. Despite global efforts, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) recently projected that it would take approximately 300 years to eradicate child marriage worldwide at the current pace.

This calls for a drastic increase in the intensity of our actions, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where child marriage rates are alarmingly high. One effective strategy to combat this harmful practice is the implementation of multi-sectoral approaches, which involve collaboration and coordination among various stakeholders. This article will shed light on the significance of multi-sectoral approaches and their potential to bring an end to child marriage in sub-Saharan Africa, with a specific focus on Nigeria.

### Understanding the Scale of the Problem:

Is no longer news that Sub-Saharan Africa is currently home to the second-largest number of child brides in the world, accounting for 20 percent of global child marriages as per the [UNICEF report](#) in May 2023. This statistic highlights the urgent need for concerted efforts to tackle this issue effectively. Child marriage perpetuates a cycle of poverty, denies girls their rights to education, health, and a fulfilling future, and poses risks to their physical and mental well-being. Therefore, it is imperative that we address child marriage through a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach.

### The Power of Multi-Sectoral Approaches:

Multi-sectoral approaches involve collaboration between various sectors, including government bodies, civil society organizations, communities, educational institutions, healthcare providers, and religious leaders, to address the complex

factors that contribute to child marriage. By bringing together diverse perspectives and expertise, multi-sectoral approaches can create a comprehensive strategy to combat child marriage effectively.

### Education:

Improving access to quality education for girls is a crucial component of ending child marriage. Multi-sectoral approaches can promote policies and initiatives that prioritize girls' education, including scholarships, school infrastructure improvements, and awareness campaigns targeting parents and communities to emphasize the importance of education in girls' lives.

### Legal Reforms:

Effective legislation plays a vital role in ending child marriage. Multi-sectoral approaches facilitate collaboration between legal authorities, policymakers, and human rights organizations to develop and enforce laws that raise the minimum age of marriage and provide legal protection for girls. Furthermore, efforts to eliminate legal loopholes and ensure the enforcement of existing laws are essential.

### Health and Well-being:

Access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services is critical in preventing child marriage. Multi-sectoral approaches can work towards increasing healthcare infrastructure, raising awareness about sexual and reproductive rights, and providing support systems for girls at risk. Engaging healthcare providers, community health workers, and youth

organizations can contribute significantly to these efforts.

### Economic Empowerment:

Promoting economic opportunities for girls and their families is essential in reducing the prevalence of child marriage. Multi-sectoral approaches can focus on skills training, entrepreneurship programs, and initiatives that provide economic support for families. This collaboration can involve government agencies, financial institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working collectively to alleviate poverty and create sustainable livelihoods.

### Social Norms and Community Engagement:

Challenging harmful gender norms and addressing cultural practices that perpetuate child marriage requires community involvement. Multi-sectoral approaches can foster dialogue and engagement with community leaders, religious institutions, and traditional authorities to promote gender equality, debunk misconceptions, and emphasize the importance of girls' rights and well-being.

### The Way Forward:

To end child marriage in sub-Saharan Africa and specifically in Nigeria, multi-sectoral approaches must be embraced and implemented with urgency. Governments, civil society organizations, religious leaders, educational institutions, healthcare providers, and communities must come together and collaborate effectively to

address the root causes of child marriage comprehensively. By prioritizing education, legal reforms, health and well-being, economic empowerment, and community engagement, we can transform gender and social norms to create a sustainable and inclusive society where every girl has the opportunity to fulfill her potential.

In conclusion, ending child marriage in sub-Saharan Africa requires a united front through multi-sectoral approaches. By harnessing the collective efforts, expertise, and resources of various stakeholders, we can bring about positive change and create a future where every girl's rights are protected, her voice is heard, and her potential is unleashed. Together, we can put an end to child marriage and pave the way for a brighter and more equitable future for all.

### **About the writer**

Solomon Asuquo is a creative writer, author, poet, and gender and development advocate with years of experience in strategic partnership and stakeholders' engagement, child protection, disability inclusion, monitoring and evaluation, budget advocacy, and monitoring. He has a solid history of achieving award-winning results in the gender and development sectors. You can find him on Twitter [@obongsolomon](https://twitter.com/obongsolomon)

# Highlighting women in STEM

## Interview with Dr. Abosede Adedayo Adepoju

By Garima Rathor

Each month we hope to bring you an interview with a woman in STEM. They will share what they enjoy in their work and why they wanted a career in STEM, along with any challenges they faced.

We'll also talk about how they strike a work-life balance and offer advice for those who would like to pursue a career in STEM.

This month, our interview in this series is with Dr. Dr. Abosede Adedayo Adepoju.



Dr. Abosede Adedayo Adepoju is a professor in the Department of Statistics at the University of Ibadan. A statistician by profession, she also dabbles in econometric theory and mathematical analysis, and enjoys mentoring students interested in the mathematical field.

We spotlight on Dr. Adepoju and get her thoughts on being a woman in STEM.

### What is your name?

Abosede Adedayo ADEPOJU.

### Did you go to school? If so, which school did you go to and what is the highest form of education you have completed?

Yes! I went to The Polytechnic in Ibadan, the Oyo State and got a National Diploma (ND) in statistics, followed by a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) in Statistics from the University of Ilorin in the Kwara State. Following that, I obtained both a Masters of Science (M.Sc.) and a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Statistics from the University of Ibadan in Ibadan, Oyo State.

### What do you do? How long have you been working in the field?

I am a **lecturer**, a Professor of Statistics. I have been teaching statistics courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels since October 1997, precisely 25 years ago.

### How was it like when you first started out at your job? Did you feel as an equal in the workspace?

At first, it was generally interesting and I enjoyed every bit of it because I was single. I have always been on top of my class at all levels; the Polytechnic (ND), first (B.Sc.) and second (M.Sc.) degrees respectively. However, things changed a few months after I got married and started my job. Balancing work with motherhood became a very big challenge. I was also in my Ph.D. programme at that time and suffered a few setbacks. I stayed longer in the programme

than my male counterparts. Major aspects of my job as a lecturer, such as conducting researches and publishing articles, were also slowed down due to childbearing and parenting. When I got employed, I felt as equal at my workspace but still faced the challenges I mentioned above.

### What encouraged you to pursue a career in STEM?

I have always been a lover of science subjects except for Mathematics which appeared difficult because of the unfriendly and very strict teacher who had. I later met a group of young graduates who assisted me and made mathematics interesting and easy to learn. Now, I have been teaching statistics at the university for more than two decades and also supervised many Ph.D. theses.

I guess what gave me encouragement was the fact that I made statistics a part of me and I thought there was nothing else I could replace it with. I developed a passion for it.

I have great passion for teaching and mentoring students, so the opportunity to assist students and other researchers in various disciplines, in their research projects are what motivate me to continue in this line of work.

### As a STEM woman in Africa, what challenges do you think girls and women are facing in STEM courses and field respectively?

- Cultural or social orientation: Girls are generally believed to do well in some

areas such as secretarial administration, education courses (early childhood education, adult education, guidance & counselling, special education etc.), the arts (linguistics, philosophy, religious studies, communication & language arts etc.), Agriculture, the social sciences and so on. The choice to go into any of these fields makes the girls end up in jobs that are likely to be replaced by technology, lower paying, or less economically impactful.

- Girls are made to do the household chores because parents believe they are preparing them for marriage and motherhood while the boys are made to attend extramural classes.
  - There exists disparity between boys and girls even in the classroom, teachers sub-consciously encourage boys ahead of girls. Boys are often called to attempt questions in class.
  - Minimal mentorship and sponsorship for provided for girls/women; Parents usually will not want to “waste” resources on a girlchild who will soon start her own family.
  - Even as toddlers, girls are made to play with dolls and other delicate toys while boys are given more sophisticated toys.
  - Again, when a woman is about to gain experience as an active scientist, this overlaps with childbirth and child care.
  - Most women drop out from science fields in different countries when they are about to gain experience as active scientists due to the burden of housework or duties, childbearing, and rearing, the most impeding factors for women to take part in science subjects.
- Follow-up to question: How can girls or women in STEM overcome these challenges aforementioned?**
- Girls should be well informed that if they could do well in non-science subjects, with little additional efforts, they will do well in science related subjects too.
  - Parents should not treat girls and boys differently. If the girls have to do chores, boys should also participate in chores and both genders should be enrolled for extramural classes.
  - The attitude of students is more or less a reflection of teachers’ attitude to mathematics and science subjects. In view of this, teachers should employ participatory teaching and learning methods that are more appealing to the girl learner. Namely, role play, demonstration, discovery, discussion, and experimentation.
  - Professional women in STEM should have programs that are targeted toward mentoring and assisting girls who are deficient in these subjects.
  - Develop deliberate policy options that financially support women.
  - Develop personal level strategies to balance work and family- e.g. flexible schedules and supportive leadership.

**Geena Davis (an American actor and producer) once said “If women and girls don’t see themselves on screen as STEM professionals, they’re less likely to pursue those career paths.” What is your take on this in the African Context and in your eyes, what does it take to be a STEM professional?**

An infant is no less a human being just because he’s an infant, he’s not yet a man. He will soon be one with time, experience, knowledge acquisition, and so on. The same goes for girls and women in STEM. You may not be a professional yet, but the seed is already planted in you and will develop with time, dedication, consistency, skill acquisition, capacity building, more learning/practice/training, mentoring etc. A STEM professional is one who has the ability to define/identify a problem in the field of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, solve it, and also interpret the results effectively.

**In your own words define STEM.**

STEM is studying or pursuing a career in any field related to science, technology, engineering or mathematics.

**How do you strike a work-life balance?**

Using myself as an example, since I have been in this profession for years, from my experience, the school calendar is published at the beginning of every session. Hence, I try to schedule my personal engagements with the calendar in mind. I try as much as possible to stay on top of my schedule. I also got accommodation on the campus which

eased the trouble of having to travel to work; it is a lot easier to manage my professional and personal life now. In addition, my children are all grown now.

**What advice do you have for girls looking to pursue a career in STEM?**

- I think girls should believe in themselves and seek for help whenever they need it.
- They should not allow anyone or anything to stop them.
- Build a network of peers and mentors in their field of interest.
- Participate in national and international competitions in STEM, this will make them develop interest in the field.
- Keep your mind open, learn new things everyday.
- Empower yourself, build your skill by going to trainings/workshops.
- Collaborate with people in your field.

**Thank you to Dr. Abosede Adedayo Adepoju for taking the time to answer our questions and sharing your career experience in the field of STEM with us.**

**Stay tuned for next month’s interview with another woman in STEM!**

# I'm a STEMGirl

SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY ENGINEERING MATHEMATICS

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