

PRESS STATEMENT

Grace Agbonlahor Foundation, ImpactHouse Forge Partnership to Promote Girls' Voices Through "Voices at the Table" Citizens' Assembly

Benin City, Nigeria: May 29, 2025

In a bold move to strengthen adolescent girls' civic participation and push back against entrenched gender inequalities, the Grace Agbonlahor Foundation (GAF) and ImpactHouse Centre for Development Communication have announced a strategic partnership to scale the *Voices at the Table (VATT)* initiative – Nigeria's first girl-led citizens' assembly.

The initiative aims to provide a national platform for adolescent girls and young women to share lived experiences, reflect on issues affecting their lives, and shape solutions through storytelling, civic dialogue, and participatory reporting.

Nigeria remains one of the most challenging environments in sub-Saharan Africa for girls to grow and thrive. Millions of girls continue to face child marriage, gender-based violence, poor access to quality education, and harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation. These realities silence the voices of girls and often exclude them from conversations and decisions that directly impact their future.

"For too long, decisions about girls have been made without hearing directly from them. Voices at the Table is our way of changing that, by creating a safe, structured space where girls don't just speak, but are genuinely listened to, and where their lived experiences shape real change."

— Charles Omofomwan, Founder, Grace Agbonlahor Foundation

The VATT is an empathy-driven and inclusive model for civic engagement, offering girls a platform to reflect on social issues that affect their lives and propose solutions that can influence policy, advocacy, and community action. The platform allows girls from all backgrounds to submit responses via voice notes, written reflections, short videos, or in-person dialogues hosted in safe spaces like schools, churches, markets, and community centres.

Each quarter, a selected group of girls gathers at GAF's civic hub in Benin City, Edo State, for a physical assembly, ensuring both digital and offline participation. These contributions are consolidated into a quarterly *Voices at the Table Report*, which is presented to policymakers, development partners, media platforms, and advocacy coalitions. Topics are introduced through an easy-to-understand "Topic Pack", developed to build civic literacy and spark dialogue in communities.

As part of the partnership, ImpactHouse will lead storytelling design, messaging strategy, and media amplification, ensuring that girls' voices reach not just decision-makers but also the broader Nigerian public.

"At ImpactHouse, we believe that quality civic conversations, especially among everyday citizens, can drive social change. This partnership with GAF strengthens our commitment to enabling inclusive dialogue and gender-responsive governance", Programmes Manager at ImpactHouse, Chinomso Momoh, said. "For us, VATT is more than a project. It is a movement to democratise civic participation, deepen the quality of civic conversations, and centre the voices of those most excluded".

To ensure that no girl is left behind, GAF is also distributing printed VATT response forms in underserved communities, ensuring representation from rural and low-connectivity areas. The initiative works through a growing coalition of civil society actors, educators, youth groups, and networks like the End Child Marriage Coalition and the Nigeria Network of NGOs (NNNGO).

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About the Partners

The **Grace Agbonlahor Foundation (GAF)** is a girls and women focused organisation working to promote gender equity, education, and participation for girls and women across Nigeria. Learn more at www.gaf.org.ng

ImpactHouse Centre for Development Communication is a think-and-do tank working to improve the quality of civic conversations among everyday citizens in Africa to drive responsive and accountable governance. Their work spans critical areas such as civic participation and good governance, gender equity and justice, education and human rights, and media and civil society development. Learn more at www.impacthouse.org.ng

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