# Lesley Gene Agams Esq.

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**Nigeria & West Africa Country Expert | Expert Witness | Nigerian Lawyer**

Founder / Country Conditions Expert, Naija by Nature Ltd | Principal, Demeter's Solicitors & Advocates

## PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

Nigerian lawyer and independent country-conditions expert with more than three decades of experience across legal practice, women's rights, international development, safeguarding, public policy, institutional design, community-based research and expert evidence. Current expert-witness work focuses on asylum, immigration and protection matters concerning Nigeria, and where appropriate Sierra Leone and Ghana. Core analytical strength is assessing how formal law, policy and institutions operate in practice, particularly where gender, culture, power, informal authority and access barriers affect outcomes.

Current methodology emphasises claimant-specific analysis and the distinction between **formal availability and accessibility**, before considering the practical effectiveness of protection or other remedies. The work addresses what can reasonably be concluded from country material, what remains uncertain, and how individual circumstances alter the analysis.

## AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- State protection, police response and access to justice
- Domestic violence, sexual violence and VAWG
- Trafficking and re-trafficking risk
- Customary institutions, informal authority and social legitimacy
- Gendered social and economic vulnerability
- Country conditions, socio-legal context and institutional implementation gaps
- Internal relocation and practical relocation feasibility
- FGM and harmful traditional practices
- Family, kinship and community networks
- Cults, confraternities and informal power networks
- Mental-health systems, stigma and access to services

## CURRENT EXPERT-WITNESS PRACTICE

**Founder / Country Conditions Expert — Naija by Nature Ltd | 2020–present | Nigeria**

- Prepares independent country-condition and expert reports for asylum, immigration and protection proceedings.

- Research and analysis focus on risk on return, state protection, internal relocation, police response, domestic and sexual violence, FGM, trafficking, family/community networks, harmful practices and cultural context.
- Developing a structured source/resource bank, reusable methodology and knowledge infrastructure to improve consistency, transparency and efficiency in expert work.
- Current professional strategy prioritises selective privately funded expert instructions, research consolidation and higher-value country-intelligence work.

**Principal — Demeter's Solicitors & Advocates | 2011–present | Nigeria**

- Legal practice and professional platform supporting family-law, advisory and expert work.

**SELECTED PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

**Country Director, Nigeria — Oxfam GB | 2009–2010**

- Led a national programme with 15 staff and an annual programme budget exceeding £3.8 million; portfolio included women's leadership, economic justice, food security, disaster-risk reduction and Raising Her Voice. Served as West Africa Diversity/Gender Lead and led participatory monitoring across 10 states.

**Regional Director / West Africa Representative — Ashoka Innovators for the Public | 2006–2009**

- Led strategic development and management of Ashoka's West Africa programme across Nigeria, Ghana and Cameroon, supporting more than 70 Fellows; managed regional strategy, partnerships, fundraising and team development.

**Founder / Executive Director — Women's Crisis Centre | 2000–2006; continuing founder role**

- Built a community-based response to violence against women combining legal support, advocacy, paralegal development, economic analysis and institutional engagement. Provided pro bono legal support and worked with state institutions on women, justice and social-sector issues.

**Coordinator — FIDA Family Law Centre, Abuja | 1998–1999**

- Coordinated a CIDA-supported centre providing pro bono legal support to indigent women in the FCT and managed a network of 35 volunteer lawyers.

**UK PARLIAMENTARY & SAFEGUARDING CONTRIBUTIONS**

- 2018 — House of Commons International Development Committee report HC 840 cited reporting about her Oxfam experience in its discussion of abuse of aid workers.
- 2019 & 2020 — Member of the DFID Independent Reference Group providing independent challenge and guidance on sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in the aid sector.
- 6 October 2020 — Gave formal oral evidence to the House of Commons International Development Committee inquiry, Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector: next steps, on institutional accountability, survivor voice, local feminist organisations and power.

- 2021 — The Committee's subsequent report cited her evidence and attributed to her the recommendation that humanitarian aid distribution be delegated to women and women's organisations.

**SELECTED RESEARCH, POLICY & INSTITUTIONAL WORK**

- **2026–present —** Founder / accountability lead — Safe Schools Accountability & Verification Initiative / Safe Schools Watch
- **2024–2026 —** Policy drafting consultant / researcher — Nigerian university sexual-harassment policy, Alliances for Africa
- **2021 —** Lead writer / innovation designer — Bloomberg Global Mayors Challenge, Umuaka; application selected among 50 Champion Cities worldwide
- **2020 —** Author / designer — A Community Approach to Pandemic Response, gender-responsive community model approved by OSIWA
- **2019 —** Supervisory Research Consultant — Documentation as an Important Mechanism to Ensuring Accountability of Mass Atrocities in South Eastern Nigeria, Alliances for Africa / OSIWA

**EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

- LL.B. (Honours), Imo State University, Uturu — 1982–1987
- B.L., Nigerian Law School, Victoria Island, Lagos — 1988–1989; called to the Nigerian Bar in 1989
- Post Graduate Diploma, Nigerian Institute of Journalism, Owerri — 2004–2006

**PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

- Nigerian Bar Association (NBA)
- International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA Nigeria)
- Nigerian Feminist Forum (NFF)

**SELECTED REGIONAL EXPERIENCE**

- **Nigeria:** Primary professional jurisdiction and country expertise; extensive work across Abuja/FCT, Abia, Imo, Ebonyi, Enugu, Anambra, Lagos, Kaduna, Ibadan and other states.
- **Sierra Leone:** Women's organisations advocacy/programme-planning facilitation in Freetown; later country-condition and expert work.
- **Ghana & Cameroon:** Regional leadership and programme work through Ashoka; country-condition work on Ghana where instructed.
- **United Kingdom / International:** UK parliamentary evidence, DFID safeguarding reform, LSE presentation, donor and multilateral engagement, and current UK expert-report market.

**LANGUAGES**

English — fluent/professional | Igbo — fluent/professional