

# **BROAD MINDS: BREAKING BARRIERS**

## **TEAM UNILAG: MANARA PROJECT SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This is a dynamic initiative undertaken by University of Lagos (Unilag) Team for the Manara Youth Coexistence Programme, Fall 2023. This is in response to a challenge for students to create counternarrative arguments for intolerance as well as developing strategic plans for reinforcing the values of coexistence and acceptance within communities. The project aimed to create localized videos and supporting materials that are tailored to the University community and using an appealing approach to deliver key messages.

The Manara Unilag Team embarked on a journey by brainstorming with several topics to choose from. Through multiple brainstorming sessions and engagements, the team explored issues ranging from ethnic and tribal prejudice, forced early marriages, maternal mortality to body shaming and much more. However, to ensure that our context resonate with local and global context resulted in the choice of a profound issue of gender equality.

Initiating a series of meetings, the team focused on exploring gender equality in the field of engineering sector with the Department of Engineering, University of Lagos as focal point. However, confronted with a lack of substantial data, the Unilag team changed the direction a little while sticking to the overarching issue. The project ultimately settled for “Broad Minds: Breaking Barriers” as a topic which seeks to explore the issue of gender equality by expanding the scope beyond the confines of a disciplinary field or sector.

In this supplemental guide, the Unilag team discusses the target audience, unfolds its comprehensive methodology, articulates its goals, and unveils the profound journey of the Manara Project of building bridges to spread the values of coexistence and mutual understanding using everyday experiences of our society. It concludes some reflections on lessons learnt by team members.

### **2.0 Methodology**

The Unilag team meticulously adopted a multi-pronged methodology, incorporating mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative researches to delve into the intricate facets of gender equality within the framework of the Manara Project. The methodology encompassed the following strategies:

#### **i. Academic Researches:**

The Unilag Manara project team embarked on a desk review of academic publications, explored technical reports of the United Nations Women and examined the statistics of the World Bank for facts and figures on the issue of gender equality. The process exercise only enriched the team’s understanding but also provided an practical evidence infused into our compelling presentations and videos.

## **ii. Historical Context:**

Recognizing the pivotal role of time and place in shaping mindsets and cultural norms, we delved into the historical context of gender equality. This exploration unveiled the deep-seated contexts which underpin the experiences of discrimination by both male and female gender, contributing invaluable insights into our project.

## **iii. Surveys:**

The project team also deployed surveys using google docs, key informant interviews and engagements with individuals who have experienced or witnessed gender discrimination to gather primary data. The data not only resonated with our chosen topic but also enriched the contents with local knowledge and lived experiences. It also embellished our narration of compelling stories in our videos and presentations which will be appealing to both local and global audiences.

## **iv. Participant Observation:**

Active participation in discussions and debates among campus youths – our target population - opened our eyes to the intricate nature, diverse perspectives and existing opinions about the subject matter which allowed us to navigate the whole cycle of ignorance, denial and the reality of gender discrimination and the process of building gender equality among diverse stakeholders. This approach ensured a practical assessment and mapping of societal disposition towards gender equality based on the representative perspectives of our target population which underscores the broader goals of the Manara project and our specific societal needs for coexistence amid growing intolerance in different sectors.

## **v. Cultural Mapping**

The Unilag project team recognises the different cultural perspectives on the subject matter by profiling the different tribes in Nigeria as represented by our campus community – the target population. This was why the project topic was approached through the lens of gender, religion, and culture which are important defining aspects of our larger society. The approach also ensures diversity and inclusiveness aimed not only to acknowledge the intersectionality of gender, culture and religion but to build bridges of coexistence which ultimately reinforces gender equality.

## **vi. Key Informant Interviews**

Interviewing key informants such as the first female president of a student association on the campus, who shared personal experiences of gender biases helped us to gain invaluable insights into their encounters and coping mechanisms. This first-hand information resonated strongly with those who have faced gender discrimination, fostering a deeper connection to our project. This story is also similar to that of the current First Female Vice Chancellor of the University of Lagos.

## **vii. Content and Comparative Analyses:**

The project adopted content and comparative analyses by examining our societal views on the subject matter from diverse backgrounds, ancient and modern. The cross-cultural perspectives

facilitated a nuanced understanding of our content, allowing us to draw unique insights from varied cultural contexts and historical trajectories. Engagements with different sections of the campus community was insightful for our content and comparative analyses.

This approach underpins the robustness of the narrations to ensure comprehensive exploration of gender equality through our Manara project topic: Broad Minds: Breaking Barriers.

### **3.0 Data Analysis/Interpretation**

The project encapsulates simple statistical data and visualization techniques using tables, charts and infographics for easy comprehension by readers and viewers. Our data analysis delved into various dimensions of gender equality, drawing from political scenarios, social media trends, individual interviews, and live campaigns. Here are key insights derived from our analytical process:

#### **i. Political Gender Equality**

The project examined political landscapes by identifying instances where gender transcends politics. Some notable examples include the underrepresentation of women in political leadership roles, unequal distribution of resources, and policy gaps affecting marginalized gender groups.

#### **ii. Social Media Trends on Equality**

The team analysed social media trends to gauge the pulse of public discourse on gender discrimination. Examples include viral campaigns addressing discriminatory practices and hashtags amplifying voices against gender bias, contributing to a digital movement for equality.

#### **iii. Interviews**

Our interviews provided a wealth of personal perspectives on gender equality. This was achieved by incorporating diverse viewpoints to enrich our understanding which shed light on the ways individuals experienced and perceived gender discrimination.

#### **iv. Campaigns**

The campaigns of our team generated significant engagement from a broad spectrum of people which transcended gender boundaries. The inclusive participation reflected a collective interest in understanding, supporting, and actively contributing to the creation of a more equitable society.

#### **v. Comparative Analysis in Educational Institutions**

Comparative analysis within educational institutions, involving lecturers, students, and non-teaching staff revealed disparities in staff and student gender ratios. For instance, the situation at the Faculty of Engineering, University of Lagos shows underrepresented female staff and fewer female students which gives insights into the systemic factors contributing to gender imbalances.

The above analyses have shown different patterns and trends emerge which forms the basis for our detailed understanding of the complexities of gender equality. These findings informed discussion, recommendations, and visual storytelling of our **Broad Minds: Breaking Barriers** video presentation for the Manara Project.

## **5.0 Conclusion:**

In traversing the intricate terrain of gender discrimination through the lens of the Manara Project, our journey has evolved not only as an exploration but as a symphony of human experiences, aspirations, and the relentless pursuit of a more equitable world. It starts from diverse perspectives which forms the technical framework of the subject matter to the poignant narratives shared by individuals. The project report transcends mere statistics to lived experiences. It is a testament to the collective heartbeat yearning for change, an anthem of resilience against ingrained biases, and a call for a society that champions the rights and aspirations of all.

The dissected political landscapes, trended hashtags on social media, and engaged in campaigns, our findings resonate not just as data points but as a chorus of voices demanding transformation. The project has delved into the heart of gender stereotypes, unveiled the stark realities of violence against women, and advocated for equal access to justice – not just as issues to address but as shared realities that connect everyone.