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Author: Mrs. Chidinma Iroka Joy
National Space Research and Development Agency (NASRDA), Abuja Nigeria, Nigeria

SPACE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: THE FUTURE OF GIRLS/WOMEN IN AFRICA

Abstract

SPACE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: THE FUTURE OF GIRLS/WOMEN IN AFRICA IROKA CHIDINMA JOY National Space Research and Development Agency, NIGERIA sikechidinma@yahoo.com

Keywords: Gender, Women in Aerospace, Space Science, STEM Abstract IAF theme for 2019 “The power of the past, the promise of the future”. Nigeria, suddenly realizing that she has been left behind in enjoying the benefits of space, decided to pursue space missions tenaciously. We are supposed to be the giant of Africa and the most populous black nation in the world, yet countries like South Africa, Algeria have already launched their satellites. To ensure success, National Space Research and Development Agency embarked on special recruitment of intelligent and talented scientists and engineers who had first-class or second-class upper division. After the very difficult aptitude test and interview as well as the rigorous health checkup, fourteen people were chosen, sadly only two women made it. After a couple of months the team was moved to Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd, United Kingdom for the onerous task of designing, building, and testing of NigeriaSat-X and NigeriaSat-2. After about two years the satellite was built, and launched in Russia much later. The team returned to Nigeria amid drums and dances of well-wishers who were really shocked women could be part of such mission. Since Nigeria is a country where girls are not given equal opportunity to study Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics but are rather victims of under-age marriage who sometimes suffer VVF, the Director-General quickly constituted the Women In Aerospace Nigeria in order to motivate female youngsters to embrace education, particularly engineering and science so as to improve the under-representation of women in the engineering sector. Since we began this project across the six geo-political zones in Nigeria, we have not only recorded increase in the number of girls who take up STEM as their major, but we have brought succor to the hurting by ensuring teenage mothers return to school, VVF sufferers get cure and learn about information technology while upon completion gain employment in Ministry of Science and Technology. We are looking to see a Nigerian female astronaut in 2030 as Nigeria has promised to send a man to space. Not only that but the next satellite Nigeria will send into orbit will completely be handled by women. This is the future we envision, and are working assiduously to see come to fruition.