



Empowering Women to Lead

Hafsata Abiola-Costello, Kudirat Initiative for Democracy (KIND), Nigeria

☀ Call to Action

Support female leadership and empowerment; support Women in Africa: wia-initiative.com/en/
Follow Hafsata on Twitter: @Hafsata-KIND.

☀ Values

- Altruistic
- Brave
- Dedicated
- Community Oriented
- Feminist

☀ Lessons Learned

From both of her parents, Hafsata learned the value of giving back to one's community.

Even when a heroic person who has stood up for the rights of his or her people is killed, the message does not die; in fact, it often becomes stronger.

When bad things happen to people, they can surmount the pain and turn tragedy into positive action.

Growing up in Nigeria, Hafsata Abiola spent her days playing hide and seek, climbing trees, and playing spy games.

But it wasn't all play: from an early age, Hafsata's mother and father had taught her how to live. Her father, Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola, was a political activist and philanthropist who was imprisoned by the Nigerian junta after his presidential bid. His imprisonment triggered a wave of demonstrations led by Hafsata's mother, Kudirat: in 1996, she was assassinated. After her mother's death, Hafsata vowed to continue the work that she had sacrificed her life for. Two years later, her father died in prison. Hafsata channeled her immense loss into activism. Her mother had taught her to take care of others and fight for equal rights. Her father had shown her how economic equality can transform individuals' lives and generate systematic change. Today, she continues carrying out the legacy of her parents by working to bring women into local, national, and global economic systems. She is the president of Women in Africa, an organization that supports female entrepreneurs in all 54 African nations.

☀ Language Arts

Write an argumentative essay answering this question:

How can the US apply some of the ideas from KIND to help low-income families who have little or no access to prenatal care? Are there any organizations or government programs based in the U.S. with a similar mission? If there are, identify them and explain their role in their communities.

Create a presentation on the importance of giving women affordable access to prenatal care. Focus on KIND's mission, and how it is helping Nigerian women.

Write an essay about the place women occupy in Nigerian

society, specifically in the country's economy. Describe how their role in Nigerian society impacts their ability to sustain themselves and their families, and explain how Hafsat's work is helping to improve their situation.

STEM Activities

Hafsat represents a cultural shift that is bringing more females into positions of importance in the world today.

Learn about five different influential jobs within the American economy that are primarily held by males. Calculate the discrepancy in the percentage of these jobs that are held by men and by women, and explain why it is imperative that more females are hired to fill these positions.

Identify three famous historical STEM figures who were women, and explain why they stand as models for change in the history of the world. Explain how their accomplishments have made the world, or the United States, a better place.

- **Male students:** If you were selected to work with a partner on a project, choose one female classmate or female member of your family, and explain how some of her strengths could help you in areas that you aren't as strong in.
- **Female students:** Imagine being paired with a male student (teacher's choice) in your class on a science project. Explain how you and your partner would benefit from this partnership, and the unique skills that you can bring to it.

Sustainability Innovations

In addition to Hafsat's work with KIND, there are many women in Africa who are striving to improve life for other African women. Lola Omolola is one such woman who took it upon herself to connect like-minded individuals via a Facebook group. She has used social media to her advantage by creating a private group where 1.7 million females explain their lives, and share their experiences: [Female in Nigeria Facebook Group](#)¹.

[UN Women](#)² is one of the largest female-focused groups in the world; it highlights the positions and work that women do as a part of the United Nations.

In addition to their international presence, U.S. based organizations such as [Vote Run Lead](#)³ are focused on training women to run for office—and win! Helping female leaders gain a greater presence in politics worldwide is essential in order to create a better world for our future.

Sustainability Career Pathways

Election Worker. Free and fair elections are at the heart of all democracies. Ensuring that they are free and fair requires many people: from poll workers, to voter outreach coordinators, to translators to help get out the vote in diverse communities, to election technology specialists. If you want to support free and fair elections, check out this short article that describes [five election jobs to consider](#)⁴.

Midwife or Doula. Many women around the world face a lack of access to hospitals when giving birth. Even where hospitals are affordable, many doctors regard surgical birth as more efficient, and the [percentage of these births \(called caesareans\) is skyrocketing](#)⁵ (in the US it is now 1 out of 3 births). Midwives help mothers deliver their babies naturally; this is both more affordable and generally healthier for mothers, children, and the planet; and it is an increasingly available option for mothers to choose, both in and out of hospitals. Doulas also play an important role in supporting women during the delivery of their babies (and the training doesn't require intensive schooling). Both of these are important career paths. You can learn about midwifery [here](#)⁶ and [here](#)⁷, and [doulas here](#)⁸.

Public Health Worker. Prevention, above all else, is the best way to ensure that a population is healthy. Public health workers play an important role in prevention--from educating people about healthy living, to organizing vaccination programs, to helping to create policies that improve health outcomes (such as policies regarding seatbelt use, or smoking). Public health workers can work directly with individuals, organize community programs, or work in government. [To learn more, visit here⁹](#).

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- 1 <https://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2018/06/04/613460142/one-womans-facebook-success-story-a-support-group-for-1-7-million>
 - 2 <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures>
 - 3 <https://www.voterunlead.org/>
 - 4 <https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/election-jobs>
 - 5 <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2018/10/12/656198429/rate-of-c-sections-is-rising-at-an-alarming-rate>
 - 6 <https://fairgodboss.com/career-topics/how-to-become-a-midwife>
 - 7 <https://mana.org/resources/become-a-midwife>
 - 8 <https://www.dona.org/become-a-doula/>
 - 9 <https://www.goodwin.edu/enews/what-do-public-health-workers-do/>

