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Sr. Theodora Oti, Nkiru Odoh and Joseph Egem
(Research Team members)

Preface

A research on the Effects of Harmful Traditional Practices on Women was carried out by the Center for Women Studies and Intervention (CWSI), Abuja. The research was carried out in Obanliku local government area of Cross River State. The first phase was the collection, collation and analysis of data. The second phase is Advocacy visits to critical stakeholders in the local government and the state.

For clarity and purpose the outcome of this research has been presented in a logical sequence of chapters. Chapter One is a general introduction which prepares the background for the understanding of the entire process.

Chapter two centres on the location and population of the area of the study. Obanliku is located in the Northern part of Cross River State. Based on the findings of this research, there was need to visit the lawmakers in the state capitals since they stand a good ground to effect change. Other critical stakeholders were reached and they provided information on the issue under study.

The third chapter is an explanation of the method and procedure used to analyse information gathered. This was predicted on the premise that issues should be evidence based. Some school of thought were cited which were used to buttress the justification of the methodology employed to analyse the data.

The fourth chapter is the data reflection of the respondents. It is an interesting section in this work, especially on the opinion of sex preferences in leadership position.

Chapters four to eight are expository in that it is in these chapters that the findings are presented and discussed.

Advocacy visits in the two states forms the main topic in chapter nine. The rest of the chapters are the summary, observation and conclusion.

Sr. Rosemary Ukata
Executive Director (CWSI), October 2010.

Chapter One

Introduction

Harmful traditional practices have long been a societal problem in the African setting. These practices have devastating effects on their victims, especially women. They expose these women to all manner of dangers including from health hazards, psychological break down arising from mental anguish and stress, physical deformity and even moral stagnation.

Practice such as 'money woman' which is the focus of this research, constitute obstacles to the achievement of gender equality and women development, thereby nullifying the enjoyment of women's rights and freedom. The above issues are some of the factors militating against women's effective participation in politics among other encumbrances which women face. It is clear that the barriers to women participation in politics are more socio-cultural than legal, with implications of a psychological nature (CIRDDOC Public Education Series, No. 5 2001).

The violation of women's rights through the application of some obnoxious practices, is a clear manifestation of the unequal power relations between men and women in our society today. This has led to over domination, discrimination, harassment, torture and degradation against women by their male counterparts and even the society at large, resulting in forcing women into subordinate positions. Therefore, the full advancement of women and their self actualisation has become an illusion. These harmful practices are rooted in a set of beliefs, cultural and social behavioral patterns that govern the lives of people in the society.

The research exercise in Obanliku local government area of Cross River State is to study the nature of this harmful traditional practice and to bring to limelight, the root causes of these harmful traditional practices. It is also to provide possible means to address and eradicate such obnoxious acts in our modern world today.

Chapter Two

Demography of Research Areas

Cross River State lies in the south-south axis of Nigeria with a population of about two million eight hundred people. The state is part of the Niger Delta region with Calabar as the state capital. It has eighteen Local Government Areas –Obanlik and Calabar inclusive.

Obanliku local government area is situated in the northern part of the state with a population of about one hundred and ten thousand three hundred and twenty four (110, 324) people. The Local Government headquarters is situated in Sankwala. It shares common boundaries with the Republic of Cameroon, Obudu and Benue state. The dominant occupations in this area are farming and the civil service.

Calabar which is the state's capital is to be found in the southern part of the state. It is divided into two parts known as Calabar south and the municipal. Calabar South has a population of about 169,392. Calabar municipal has a population of about 191,630 people. Put together, the state capital has a population of three hundred and seventy one thousand and twenty-two. It shares common boundaries with Odukpani, Akpabuyo Local Government Areas and Akwa Ibom State. Outside its civil service status, the main occupation of its indigenes are fishing and farming.

Chapter Three

3. 1 Research Methodology and Method of Analysis

The social learning theory is adopted as the conceptual framework. According to Albert Bandura, gender role development is acquired in two ways. First, children are rewarded and therefore encouraged to behave in a gender appropriate way and punished for deviant behaviours. Second, children observe and imitate attitudes and behaviours of same sex models. Children observe role models (such as parents, siblings, teachers and celebrities) behaviours and consequences thereof which leads to children learning societal norms and expectations including gender appropriate behaviour. Between 5 and 7 years, children realise that their gender is a permanent part of their personalty and become more attentive to role models especially models who are the same sex like them. Peers also play an important role in portraying what is gender appropriate. The main criticism is that children are described as passive pawns (Harris & Butterworth, 2002; Shaffer, 2002).

The research exercises in Obalinku local government of Cross River state was conducted with the use of structured (questionnaires) and in-depth interview methods. This made the gathering of data from the respondents more authentic.

A total of 80 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents in the study area. Only (57) fifty seven questionnaires out of the total number distributed were returned. Those respondents who could read and write provided answers to the questions, while those who cannot read and write, responded to the questions as they were asked by the researchers who also wrote out the answers as they were supplied. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section A sought to get information of the personal data of respondents in a close ended manner. Section B was to get issue based evidence on issue under study. This was structured in both closed and open ended manner. Section C looked at the power relations between male and female members in the areas where the research was conducted.

The in-depth interview method which was a one on one and also an interactive one was carried out with the use of tape recorders.

At the end of the research, advocacy visits was embarked upon to critical stakeholders to inform them of the findings of the research and equally seek support for the abolition of “Money Woman” through the enactment of laws and policies that could address the issue.

3.2 An Overview of the Research Activities in the Study Area

3.2.1 Obanliku LGA

Their first point of contact in Obanliku Local Government area was the local government headquarters situated in Sankwala. In the local government headquarters, the researchers were introduced to the area council boss Hon. Benedicta and Mrs. Joy Osijale Kevin-Jo, the Director, Women Affairs Department. After the researchers briefed these authorities on their mission which was to find out the nature and root causes of the harmful traditional practice known as “money woman” in the local government area, the above mentioned personalities accorded the researchers the permission to carry out the exercise without fear of intimidation since according to them, the practice is inhuman and dangerous to womanhood.

Questionnaires were then distributed among some of the council staff with the help and efforts of the Head of Women Affairs’ department. The research team also had a one-on-one recorded interviews with some of the council officials and staff.

As it was gathered, the “Money Woman” practice is common among the people of Utanga and Becheve clans. After gathering information from the area council headquarters, the team proceeded to Utanga clan. In Utanga, the team made efforts to see the village head and the women leader but it was to no avail because they were unavoidably available. Although it still carried out the research exercise there.

During the interview with the community members of Utanga, it was noticed that the “Money Woman” practice was not very common. Then, the secretary of the council of chiefs in Utanga advised that for detailed information on the practice, the researchers should go to Amana and Ugbakuku in Becheve community

The following day, the research team went to Amana community for the research work. During interviews in the area, it was discovered that the “Money Woman” practice was fully in practice and existence. Among the people interviewed were one Mrs. Margaret Ikpeh and also some of the victims of this practice who lamented their predicament. Efforts made by the research team to record the interviews with the victims were to no avail because they were afraid of being penalized (ostracism) by the perpetrators since every form of their (victims’) activities were being monitored from the day they became ‘Money Women’. Then, it was observed by the researchers that some traditional leaders in this community did not accept the fact that this practice exists, hence could not provide researchers with adequate information. The

researchers latter gathered that these traditionalist did not want to divulge information since it might lead to its abolition.

Chapter Four

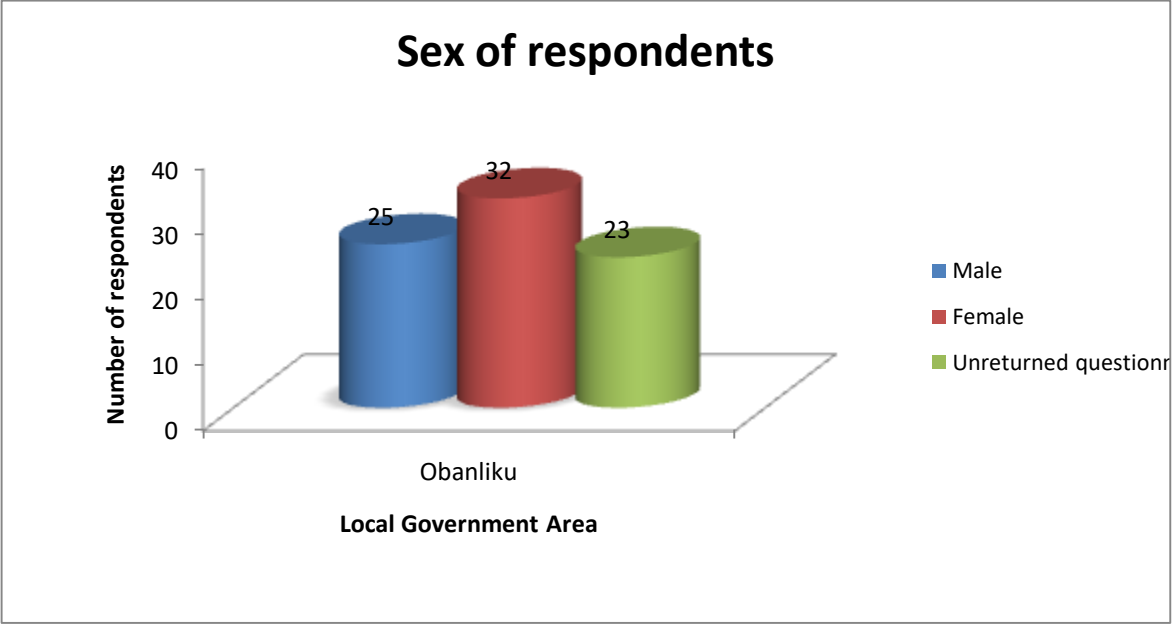
Personal Data Analysis

In analysing the questionnaire, we used quantitative statistical procedures that will yield tabular outputs and used numbers to denote outcomes. These outputs will be presented graphically in bar charts.

1. Categorisation by sex

A school of thought which has been propounded by the radical feminists is the material approach. This school of thought believes that the root of inequality started when the means of production became private property [capitalism]. This created a class with property and those without property in the society. In administering questionnaires, the responses of the different sexes are important factors in getting to the root of the subject of discourse. This is particularly so because the female sex are the primary target as this harmful traditional practice. Their responses were considered of having immense benefits in enriching the research.

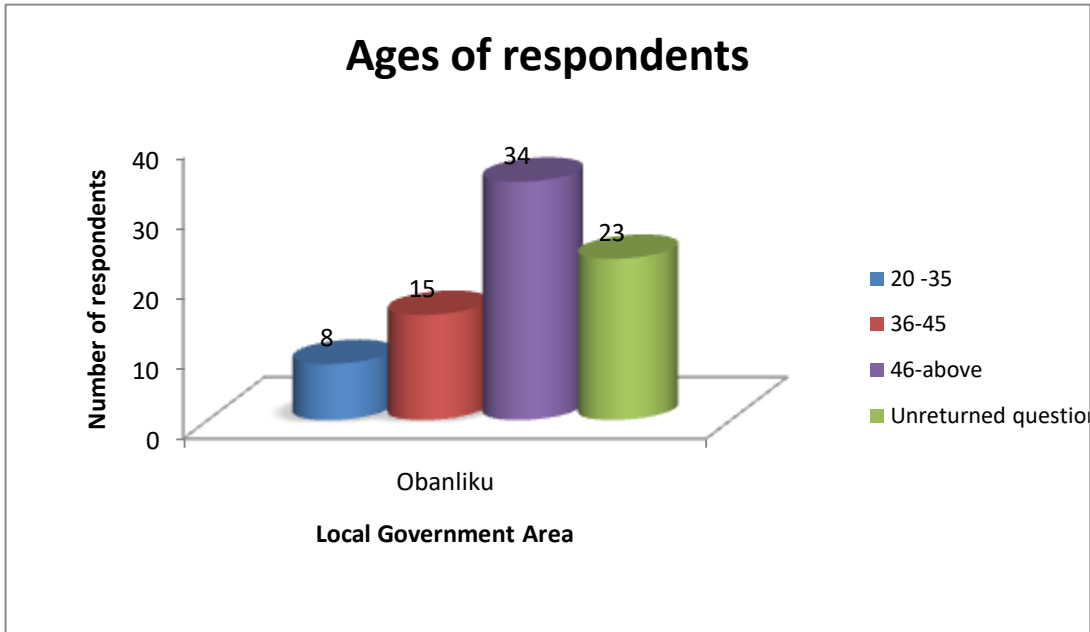
S/n	Sex	Frequency
1	Male	25
2	Female	32
3	Unreturned questionnaires	23
	Total	80



2. Categorisation by Age

The focus of the research was to administer questionnaires to persons up to the age of 20 years and above. Three different age categories were chosen, namely, ages 20 and 35; ages 35 and 45; and ages 46 – above. The emphasis was to get the response of the different age strata. Thirty four of the respondents were above 46 years. Responses were got from fifteen persons between 36 and 45 years, eight people between 20 and 35 years responded.

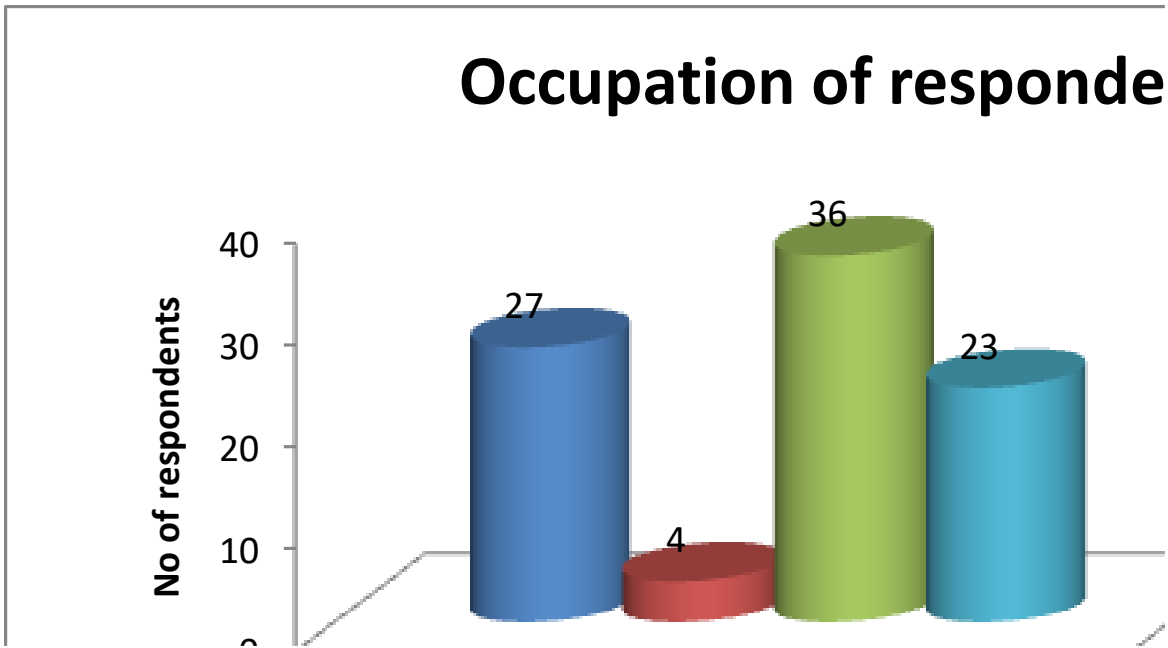
S/n	Age	Frequency
1	20 -35	8
2	36 – 45	15
3	46 – above	34
	Unreturned questionnaires	23
	Total	80



3. Categorisation by Occupation

Generally, in the area where research was conducted, few of the respondents were government employees. Those involved in farming activities were the next while other self-employed persons took up the rear.

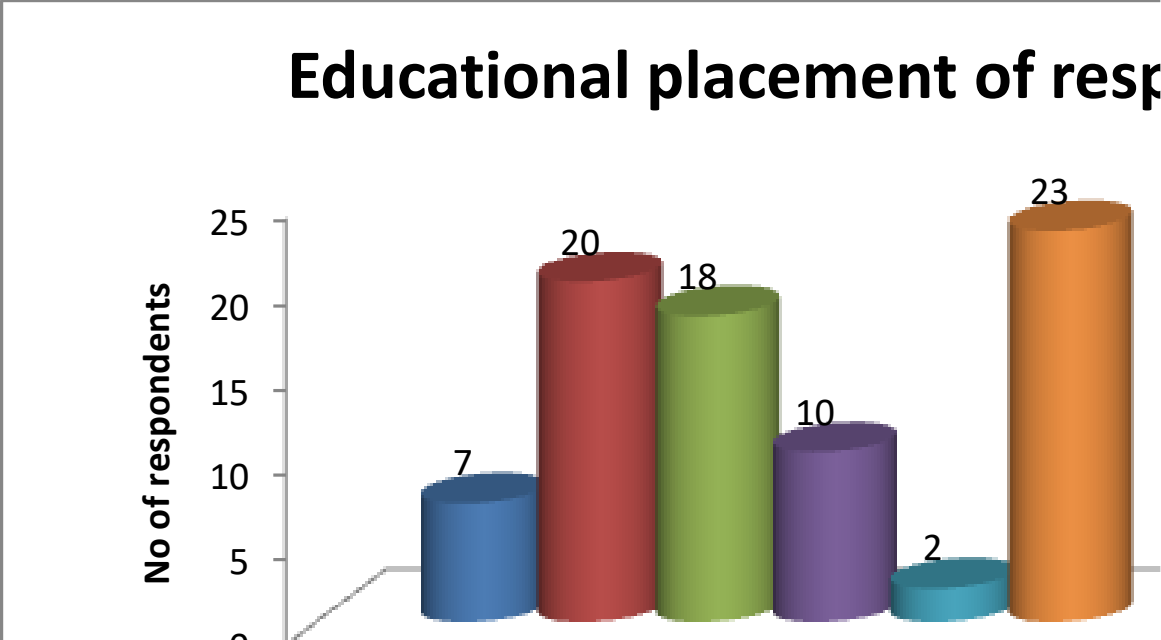
S/n	Occupation	Frequency
1	Farmer	27
2	Self-employed	4
3	Govt. worker	26
5	Unreturned questionnaires	23
	Total	80



4. Categorisation by educational placement

Majority of those who were administered questionnaire demonstrated some level of literacy. More than half the respondents indicated that they have attained at least a secondary school certificate.

S/n	Educational placement	Frequency
1	Primary	7
2	WAEC	20
3	High School	18
4	Degree	10
5	Doctorate	2
6	Unreturned questionnaires	23
	Total	80

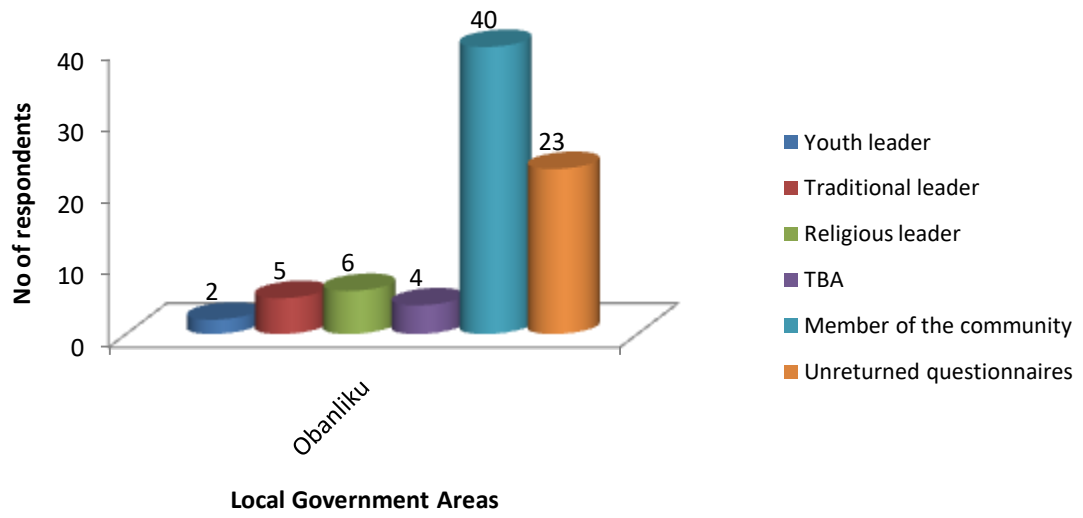


5. Categorisation by leadership positions of respondents

A number of traditional leaders who are the custodians of the culture and traditions of the people were administered questionnaires too. Also a significant number of some religious leaders, who many times champion the abrogation of harmful traditional practices, were also administered questionnaires.

S/n	Leadership Positions of Respondents	Frequency
1	Youth leader	2
2	Traditional leader	5
3	Religious leader	6
4	Traditional birth attendant	4
5	Member of community	40
6	Unreturned questionnaires	23
	Total	80

Leadership positions of respondents



Chapter Five

In-depth Analysis

This section will look deeply at the “Money Woman” which this research set out to study.

“Money Woman” as it is called, is a traditional practice whereby a family in financial distress or in an attempt to appreciate another family for an assistance rendered to them, sells or gives out their female daughter/daughters as the case may be, to an elderly man as his wife, even though she may not be ripe enough or even prepared for marital life.

This is the most dominant and outstanding cultural practice among the people of Becheve clan. It is known as “*ukeh ingol*” in this clan. Data on this issue was gathered from fifty-seven (57) respondents. According to the respondents, ‘money woman’ is a practice where a girl-child born or unborn, is forcefully, prematurely and unwillingly given out to an aged man as wife. They also reported that the girl children betrothed to the man in the womb or as infants begin to live with their “husbands” as soon as they are weaned, while those betrothed at an older age are taken away immediately the money is paid. According to Mrs. Felicia Kuje - a staff of the Obalinku Local Government Area, when the child is in the womb, the perpetrators use every means possible to know the sex of the child. If the child is a girl, any man who is interested in marrying the child will begin to pay money and other items as may be deemed necessary to the child’s parents as bride price. When the child is born, she will be allowed to stay with her parents until she reaches a certain age, usually not above the age of ten, after which her husband will take her to his home. For a man who is already married to another woman or married to many women as the case may be, he hands over his “money woman” to one of his wives who will nurture and take care of the baby girl until the husband is ready for her.

NOTE

1. *It is not the girl who determines when she is ready; it is the husband who will decide when she is mature.*
2. *The bride price paid on the ‘money woman’ is not the usual bride price because some money or favours had already being received by her parents. There is a record mentioned earlier on known as ‘abanda’. This is a situation where all the favours bestowed on the parents of the ‘money woman’ is recorded and tied up. in situations where the girl’s parents do not show sufficient appreciation for the favours they have been receiving, they will have to pay dearly based on what is found in the ‘abanda’*

The money woman phenomenon reportedly started over 200 years ago and has passed from generation to generation. Majority of respondents reported that they have only witnessed this practice carried out on their sisters, nieces and other female children in

the community. Three (3) respondents admitted being direct victims of this practice. According to the respondents, the main actors involved in this practice are family members who sell out their daughter(s) as 'money woman,' the man and his family who offer money in exchange for the girl-child as 'money woman' and the community members who support this act.

This practice goes with certain rituals. A respondent, who admitted witnessing this practice, stated that in the case of a pregnant woman, money is paid continuously to the girl's family until she is given birth to. This money in question is a token that is barely enough for a day's problem. On the day of the final payment which is usually below the community's normal bride price, the girl in question (money woman) will be escorted to her 'husband's' house, where she will be given a ring and a bangle by her husband as an indication that she is properly engaged. A pig is slaughtered for the celebration, part of which is taken to the girl's family as an indication and official announcement of the 'money woman' marriage to the members of the girl's family and the entire community. Apart from the money paid, other items presented to the girl's family include a fowl, goat and pig. These gifts depend on the capacity of the man marrying the girl. It is good to note here that proper records are kept of these items that are given by knotting a rope or making a mark on a wood against each of these items. Every item has a different mark from the other which distinguishes them.

One will not be wrong to say that this is aptly a form of enslavement. That someone who claims to be a life partner is keeping records of what he spends in the maintenance of his spouse.

There are many reasons adduced for the practice of "money woman".

These reasons include:

- poverty level of the girl's family
- indebtedness by relations especially mother's brother
- gratitude to a friend or loved one
- benevolent act to a vulnerable family.

Honorable. Ijwa Thaddeus-, Councilor representing Utanga ward and the Chief Whip of the Obanliku local government area legislative arm, stated that the "Money Woman" practice also exists in Utanga. But since it is repugnant to natural justice and equity, it was abolished from Utanga clan, although it still exists in Becheve community. He also reported that the root cause of this practice is poverty, explaining that when a man is difficulty and needs money, he goes to someone who is wealthy, asks for money and promises to give in return, his girl-child as a pay back for the money. The prospective husband begins to give things such as goats, pigs, and fowls to the girl's parents (*traditional or accordnig to some religious beliefs, these creatures are considered stupid, dirty or sturborn. It explains how the money woman is rated*).

Immediately the girl child is born, she is handed over to the man as his wife. Others who supported this poverty level claim included Mrs. Comfort Otu and Mr. Joseph Akpo Ade, an indigene of Becheve clan.

Mrs. Joy Osijale –Director, Women Affairs Department, Obalinku Local Government Area, noted that the “Money Woman” practice still exists in Obanliku Local Government Area precisely among the Becheve indigenes. Mrs. Lucy Livinus-a staff of the council and an indigene of Becheve clan, stated that if a woman had a girl-child and her brother (uncle to the girl child) has financial problems, he demands for the girl-child to be sold to a wealthy person in order that his problems will be solved. In order not to have family quarrels with her brother, the girl’s mother releases her daughter to her brother to sell out as a wife while he uses the money to solve his problems. Master Joseph, an indigene of Ugbakuku in Becheve, stated that when one is in a financial difficulty, one can sell his daughters as slaves or wives to men who have money. He continued by stating that this practice cannot be stopped because of the poverty stricken nature of the area. Mr. Raymond Ejimega, an indigene of Ugbakuku in Becheve, also states, “When you have a problem and you don’t have anyone to run to for assistance, you go to your sister who has female children, sell any of them as a wife to a man who is wealthy and use the money to solve your problem”. Mrs. Lucy Livinus, an indigene of Ugbakuku in Becheve, noted that if a woman gives birth to a female child and it happens that her brother encounters any financial problems, his brother is free to go to his sister and demand a female child to be sold as wife to a wealthy man in order that he (the woman’s brother) could use the money to solve his problems. It is good to note here that the man whose daughter has been sold will undoubtedly, sell another man’s daughter i.e. his own sister’s daughter, either as a means of revenge or other reasons. According to this respondent, the acceptance or non-acceptance of this kind of request depends solely on the disposition of the woman in question. In a situation where the mother of the girl-child turns down the request, it would lead to a family quarrel between the woman and her brother. Secondly, if at any time she comes to her family with any complaints of maltreatment of any sort, her brothers will not come to her aid. This would force her to release the girl-child to her brother because she would want to be at peace with her brother.

According to Hon. Benedicta – Chairperson, Obanliku local government council, this practice is performed in an attempt to pay back for good gestures rendered to some one.

On the death of the husband of the ‘money woman’, she is not allowed to re-marry by the deceased family. She becomes a family commodity. If she tries to escape or succeeds in leaving the community, she is banned for life from the community and will not have anything to do with her biological children.

HARMFULNESS OF THE ‘MONEY WOMAN’

Respondents mentioned various reasons why they considered the ‘money woman’ phenomenon harmful. Some of these reasons are that;

- i. It encourages girl-child marriage. According to the respondents, a girl is supposed to be nurtured and nursed by her parents before being given out for

marriage to a man of her choice on maturity. Otherwise, a girl-child given out in marriage would be behaving juvenily due to her low mental and physical development and her psychological and social status. Moreover, this older man being her husband will not see her as a baby but as a wife and will want her to behave as one. Moreover, sexual experience at a very early age is almost always traumatic and leads to fixations. She carries these fixations all her life, especially as such marriages are not contracted out of love and affection. At the time of marriage, the young girl is still trying to come to terms with changes in her body functions and emotional strains characteristic of puberty. It is unfair to make them grapple with the trauma of pregnancy (Obiageli Nwankwo, "Child Marriages as Child Abuse", 2001)

- ii. It prevents the child from living out her childhood, forcing them to become mature prematurely
- iii. It encourages intra-family marriage: The respondents reported that in the event of the death of the money woman's husband, his relatives can marry the money woman since she is seen as the family's property which should not be allowed to be taken away by outsiders.
- iv. It violates the women rights of choice. According to the respondents, when a girl is forcefully and ignorantly married to an old man, she is denied her choice of marrying the man of her dreams, when she deems it necessary to marry, how she wants it or if she wants it at all.
- v. It projects women as animals. They also reported that when a girl child is given out in marriage without her consent, it reduces her personality to that of a mere and irrational animal which can be manipulated at any point in time.
- vi. It encourages divorce in marriage. According to the respondents, if a girl is allowed to grow up to a marriageable age, she decides who and how to marry. But if forcefully given out in marriage, such a marriage could end in divorce which may be caused by either lack of love by the woman or lack of interest for the man due to the age gap and his inability to satisfy the woman sexually.
- vii. It promotes illiteracy and reduces social advancement. According to respondents, when a girl-child is married as a money woman, automatically she will be denied access to education. The reason for such actions is to maintain the monopoly of the girl in question. It is assumed that if allowed to be educated, the money woman will be more exposed and rational than the husband. With this, she will become grounded with marriage related issues and would want to back out of the marriage whenever the need arises. The social interaction of the money woman is jealously guarded by her husband for fear of being exposed to greater knowledge and advanced social interaction.
- viii. It deprives the first wife of her marital entitlements. According to the respondents; the men involved in this practice are mostly polygamists. When once the money woman enters his house, he automatically shifts his attention from the other wife/wives as the case may be to the 'money woman'. The others (wife/wives) are then denied the privileges they enjoyed before the coming into the matrimony of the 'money woman'.

The respondents strongly argued that this practice is obnoxious, repugnant to natural justice and good conscience and so should not be administered on any person.

TRADITIONAL BELIEFS OF THE CONSEQUENCE OF MONEY WOMAN PRACTICE ON VICTIMS

According to the respondents, this practice has its own negative effects on the wellbeing of the girl child.

There are some repercussions which is believed will befall victims if they renege on marrying their husbands. It is believed that if after receiving payment and the money woman refuses to go to her husband's house, a spell will be cast on her and she will remain barren or die prematurely. This marriage is also not divorceable by any standard. Any attempt by the money woman to run away, the wood used in marking or registering the number of items given to her family as bride prize will be kept on top of a substance known as "ABANDA". When this is done, the woman, wherever she may be, will become sick until she will finally die. According to the respondents, the money woman's parents would not be able to question such actions taken on their daughter because she has already been sold.

In an event of the death of the 'money woman's' husband:

- The man's brother automatically marries the 'money woman' without paying anything again to the woman's family.
- The 'money woman' is not allowed to visit her family members, since she is regarded as a property in her husband's house and also seen as very precious to her husband
- She is not free to attend public functions and cannot associate freely.
- If the money woman's husband dies, she will equally be deprived of acquiring her late husband's property.

In some instances, the practice forbids the woman to marry another man after the death of her husband even the husband's brothers. According to some of the respondents, in their community, it is believed that when the 'money woman's' husband dies, she will still be feeding the dead man by cooking and placing food on his grave. Therefore if the money woman re-marries, the spirit of her dead husband will die of hunger.

THE EFFECTS OF THIS PRACTICE ON THE HEALTH OF THE RECIPIENTS

This practice poses negative effects on the health of the victims. According to the respondents, a woman can be infected with various diseases like HIV/AIDS. The possibility of infecting the victims with such disease is certain because when an innocent and premature girl is forcefully married to an old man whose health status

cannot be guaranteed due to his involvement with other women, the man would want to fulfill his conjugal obligations thereby putting the girl at risk.

Apart from being infected with HIV/AIDS, she can also be infected with gonorrhoea and syphilis and other venereal diseases.

When the husband's property, including his farm lands are confiscated by the family members after his death, the woman will be left with nothing including food. She will be exposed to malnutrition resulting from unbalanced diet and could die of starvation or suffer diseases arising from malnutrition. The practice does not give the girl child the maximum happiness and peace she desires. This can traumatize the woman's emotional and psychological status leading her into a psycho neurotic situation.

Since this practice encourages pre-mature pregnancy, some of the victims have been known to die during child bearing. Their inability to satisfy their husbands causes them to suffer all manner of abuses because they were not groomed as women let alone as mothers.

THE EFFECTS OF THIS PRACTICE ON THE EDUCATION OF VICTIMS

From the respondents, it was also gathered that the moment the girl is indentified or married as a money woman; she will be denied access to education by the husband. Why she is completely denied education is for her not to be too exposed and learned. This will help her husband manipulate and have her at his disposal. It encourages timidity which is an instrument for manipulation.

THE EFFECTS OF THE PRACTICE ON THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE RECIPIENTS

Economically, this practice, according to the respondents, introduces suffering into the lives of the victims. Since the 'money woman' is not allowed to attain education which is a pathfinder to success, she ends up as a peasant farmer whose produce will not be able to cater for her needs. Automatically, she becomes dependent on her husband. In the event of the death of her husband she is left to suffer alone.

Apart from affecting the 'money woman' directly, this practice can also bring suffering to the entire family. The money used in this practice would have been used to cater for a family. To some extent, most men go borrowing in order to be numbered as someone who has a 'money woman' to the detriment of their family's well being.

BENEFITS FOR THE ABOLISHION OF THE MONEY WOMAN

Forty (40) respondents advocated the abolition of the "money woman" practice. According to these respondents, they see the practice as not generally good, barbaric and evil. They noted that it does not allow girl-children to attain maturity so as to

make their choice regarding their marital life and that it denies women of their freedom and also violates their fundamental human rights. In addition, it robs the first wife of the 'money woman's' husband of her entitlements. It is primitive. This means that the practice does not fit into the modern and civilized world. It dehumanizes woman. This practice as it is, reduces woman to mere objects.

OBSERVATIONS

Its abolition however, will help in the following ways:

- The girl-child's education will be encouraged.
- Women will be free from molestation and relegation by their male counterparts in this society.
- Here, equity will become the guiding principle towards a sustainable development.
- Girls will be free to marry men of their choice. This means that forced and premature marriages will be curbed and with this, there will be mutual love among families which will discourage divorce thereby bringing peace and harmony among the people.
- Girl children will grow to maturity there and then, and will be able to think and choose for themselves the careers they want to pursue instead of being narrowed down to a particular vocation (peasant farming).
- The rights of the women will be restored. Therefore; they will not be treated as lesser beings.

MESASURES TO BE TAKEN TO ENHANCE ERADICATION

The respondents suggested that if the following strategies are put into consideration, this practice would be eradicated from their community:

- Legal procedures in the form of a law should be enacted to checkmate the practice.
- Provision of basic amenities by the government which will aide alleviate poverty in the affected area.
- Sensitization and awareness campaigns that will inform people of the harmful nature of this practice.
- Organize workshops to educate and enlighten the people on the rights of women which are their fundamental human rights; this means that people should be informed that women as well as their male counterparts, have equal rights and freedom. They should also be seen and treated as human beings.
- Compulsory education for girl children- According to the respondents, if a girl child is properly educated, she will know her right. That is to say, she will be able to ask and fight for justice.
- Women in the community should be empowered through skills acquisition.
- The fundamental human rights should be enforced.

- The community should encourage profitable developmental associations such as women empowerment programs, cooperative farmers association and small scale business association.
- Advocacy visits to traditional and community leaders to intimate them on the harmful effects of the practice.

Chapter Eight

DECISION MAKING AND POWER RELATIONS IN THE STUDIED AREA

Obalinku Local government area where this study was carried out is basically a patriarchal society.

According to the respondents, those in leadership positions in the community are predominantly male except where it has to do with an all women affair. Decision making thus flows from the males to the females. For instance, at the family level, the father dominates when it comes to decision making in the family. The reasons adduced for this scenario are numerous.

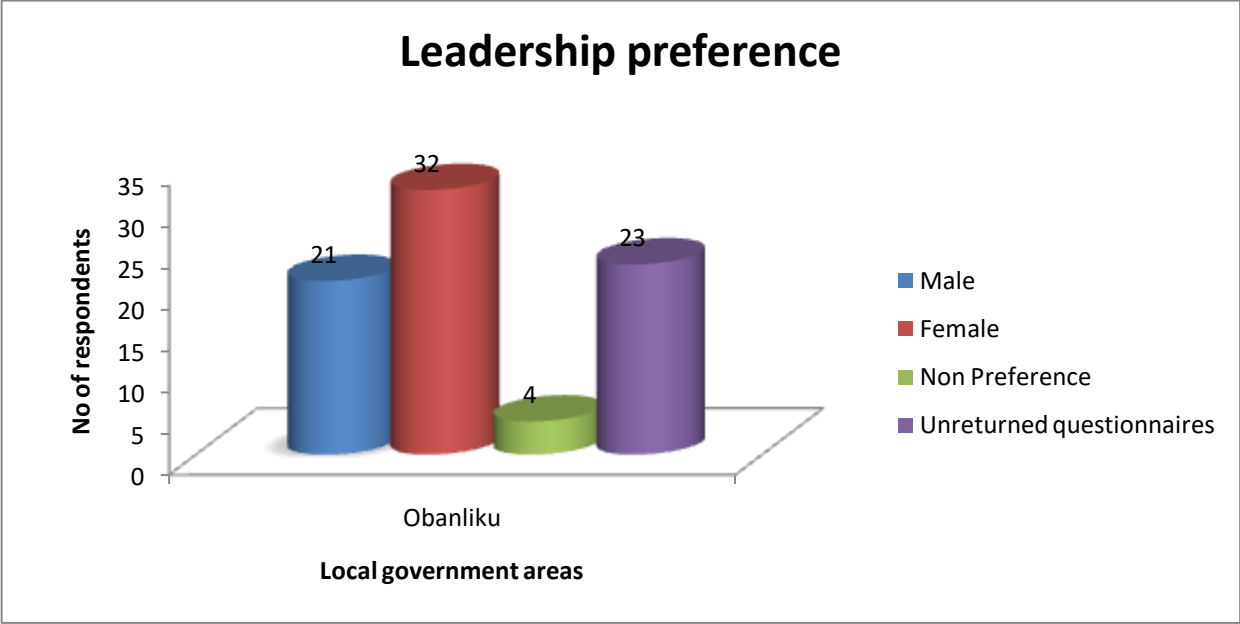
The father is seen as the umbrella of the family; literally, the umbrella is a covering (usually of cloth) that serves as a roof to shelter an area from the weather. To this effect, if the father is seen as the umbrella of the family, he is therefore perceived as the only person who can provide shelter (i.e. protection) for the family against danger.

The father is also seen as the most experienced person in the family; this means that the father has firsthand knowledge of situations therefore, can easily provide effective solutions and remedies to issues. With this, the woman is viewed as inexperienced and so has little or nothing to offer to the family.

In Obanliku, thirty-eight respondents cited a total number of seventy-eight men in the various community cabinets while a total of only fifteen women were identified.

NB It is important to note that in matters that are purely cultural, no woman is admitted as a member of such cabinet no matter how well placed or the height of attainment.

S/n	Leadership Preference	Frequency
1	Male	21
2	Female	32
3	Non-preference either sex	4
4	Unreturned questionnaires	23
	Total	80



Although men take precedence generally over community decision making in this area, respondents will want a shift to women being in positions of leadership. A good number of respondents show preference for female leadership, though some would prefer men but others did not seem to have any interest in this aspect of research. According to some of the respondents, the preference are that women are very responsible, considerate and not over ambitious as their male counterparts; and that women are upright in their decisions and less corrupt.

Chapter Nine

ADVOCACY VISITS TO IMO AND CROSS RIVER STATES

The need for advocacy visits to obalinku state capital came up as a result of the research carried out by the CWSI on this issue. With this visit, the Centre for Women Studies initiated strategic interventions to stimulate and re-energize the traditional, religious and other opinion leaders in their work to ameliorate the plight of women. The need for relentless commitment to ensure that harmful traditional practices against women are stopped was stressed. Women whose dignities are respected live enhanced quality life. The need for public-spirited and wealthy individuals to assist women who are victims of these harmful practices was noted. It was also noted that these women suffer battering from their husbands. This has negative impact on their offspring's and spill over to the society. They were also urged to lend voice to the government to fund education at all levels especially education for the girl-child and prioritise policies that address gender based violence.

The advocacy team highlighted the effect of this practice on its victims and prays that it should be abolished.

VISIT TO OBALINKY LOCAL GOVERNMENT PRINCIPALS OFFICIALS

In this community, the advocates met a woman, an indigene of this local government area who narrated her experience about "money woman". It is a situation where a little girl is given out in marriage to an old man. When a woman is pregnant, those who perpetuate this act will use whatever means known to them to determine the sex of the child. The old man in question will begin to send gifts to the pregnant woman and her husband as part of the bride price of the child in the womb. When the baby is delivered and has been weaned, she is taken to the old man's house to stay with the other wives of the old man until the man begins to relate with her as husband. This girl cannot refuse this old man's marriage which has been sealed by her parents. If she decides to back out, the husband will use any diabolical means to track her down. If she gets married to another man, she will not have children, that is, if ever she survives what she will meet. Her greatest challenge is the denial of freedom. Her movements are within the places the husband allows. The practice is not a good one. She is of the opinion that NGOs should embark on sensitization program to create awareness on this issue.

Another woman frowned at this practice in Becheve clan. She said that a girl is betrothed to an old man who will start spending money on her. When the girl reaches the age of ten years, she is given out in marriage no matter how old the man is. You

see a situation where a man of about eighty years and above, living with a child of nine years as a wife. For the fact that the man has spent money on her, no matter how much, there is no way her parent will allow her to quit the marriage. If she decides to quit the marriage, she will die. If the old man dies, the girl is betrothed to the relations of the deceased without her consent. These set of girls are not allowed to associate with the non money woman in the village. The community places a high regard on “money woman”. However, this practice is too bad. Well meaning Nigerians should help stop this practice.

An old man in Becheve clan who works with the Obanliku Local Government Area and who was interested in our mission, narrated the practice of this culture. According to him, money marriage is called “**Oke Ngoro**” in their local dialect. This is usually occasioned as a result of poverty. Sometimes, a man who is in dire need of money goes to another man to plead with him to give him money in exchange of his girl-child. It is usually done in tides. The condition attached to this is that if the child grows and refuses to marry the man, she dies. This practice has made the girls of Becheve clan to go into prostitution with the intention of getting the money to pay back. The practice is so bad that even when the old man dies, the girl-child is adopted by the relations of the old man. The girl is not allowed to go to school.

Culturally, other women are not revered like the money woman. Sometimes, her movement is restricted. The old man continues to say that since he used his hard earnings to get her, she must remain under his custody. Sometime, this girl is asked to cook food and drop at the grave yard. In the olden days, it was regarded as a good thing, but in this day and age, people no longer like it. This practice is not a good one and needs to be abolished, though it will take some time. He expressed happiness to see an organisation committed to advocate a change in this regard. He asked that the advocacy team come back for awareness campaign against this culture.

Our informant continued that other harmful traditional practices in Becheve (Belgete ward) are that of widowhood. A widow is compelled to mourn her husband for a period of one year without taking her bath throughout the mourning period. She is confined to a particular place. She is not allowed to pass through the main door of her building. Instead, the community breaks the inner walls of the room where she is confined to and made to pass through the walls only to ease herself. Men, who go after her, have easy access to her in the night despite the fact that such a woman will be stinking. The other members of the family cook for her throughout the mourning period. At the end of one year, the widow is asked to cook for the relations of her late husband before she is allowed to barb her hair. This is a terrible culture that needs to be abolished. *The question the CWSI is asking is; who provides what she will cook bearing in mind that she has been confined for so long. Secondly, how will those who eat this food guarantee that it will not be infected with disease from a woman who has been prevented from taking her bath for one full year?*

VISIT TO THE CHAIRMAN OF OBANLIKU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

There was a formal introduction of all those present. The team reminded them of the research carried out by the centre that necessitated the advocacy visit. This visit is necessary because the Local Government Area is one influential group that will help to stop some of the obnoxious cultural practices against women. After narrating the report of our research on the issue of “money woman” and widowhood practice, the Hon. Chairman who is a woman, added her voice by narrating the mourning system in Becheve clan as follows:

- A widow is stripped naked in the public.
- A basin is kept and she is asked to bath in the public naked.
- She cries every morning naked for six months.
- She is confined to a room.
- Plantain ropes are used to make cloth for her to cover her private part.
- She wears black cloth for a period of one year.
- At the end of the year, she must shave her hair.
- If the widow was harsh to her husband before his death, the deceased relations will give her a bunch of plantain to roast with little firewood.
- If it is discovered that the widow slept with another man during the mourning period, the deceased’s relations will kill either a goat or cow and force her to pay for it.

Again CWSI asked about of the man who may have slept with her, what will be his punishment?

One of the councilors explained that the Utanga people have two types of marriage: the traditional and betrothed/customary marriage. It is under the betrothed marriage that “money woman” is practiced. It is another type of poverty which makes a man to collect money for the unborn child, but if it happens to be a baby boy, the man will wait until the woman gives birth to a baby girl.

Another councilor told the team that his father was guilty of this act but that his father is late and the woman is living in the family but without anyone disturbing her. He is of the opinion that this culture should stop because it is a form of slavery irrespective of the name the villagers call it, Money Woman. Such women are under bondage. It is a total mockery to the name given to the practice. In the real sense of it, the woman is bought.

Another councilor complained that he saw a young girl of about fifteen years who was given to a man of sixty years old. He said there is no way such a girl can make love with such a man. The girl cannot experience love from the man and she cannot befriend her mates of opposite sex. She is not allowed to go to school. She is not happy. These victims are in total bondage. She lamented that the community has lost so many of their young girls because they go out to sleep with other men and in the process lose their lives. They go into prostitution and die of AIDS. She also narrated with pain, the case of her brother who lives in America. Each time he comes home, he will buy as many girls as his money can carry however he never cared to sleep with any

of these girls. He later dumped all of them and went back to America with a white woman.

Another Councillor narrated his experience from Busi community. He said that most of the families that practice “Money Woman” are lazy families who do not struggle like others. He pointed to another bad culture. This is a situation the father of the family will join a secret cult. One of the demands is that members should make a befitting offering. The offering has to be a girl-child who will be either killed or used as a money woman. The advocacy team informed them that the CWSI will enter their area again with programmes that will aim to address these cultural practices. However, the CWSI visited Becheve clan to discuss with the chiefs who were already waiting for the team.

Before CWSI left the local government area, we gave special recognition to the council chairperson not because she is occupying such a position, but for her efforts to curb these practices are commendable.

While the Chairperson pleaded to collaborate with the CWSI to fight these crimes. Way forward was mapped out. They include;

- Solicit help from the House of Assembly.
- To enact laws that will be passed to the chiefs.
- The church should preach against it.
- Workshop should be organised for the elders and girls who are possible victims. This will help use the forum to expose the disadvantages of this practice.
- We should also use the indigenes who are educated to further educate others.
- The CWSI should train people who will carry out this work in communities and act as watch dogs to check offenders.

VISIT TO UTEVE CLAN

The clan was represented by eight chiefs. Chief Abega Ozenda prayed that the mission for which the team had embarked upon be a fruitful one. While discussing with them on the issue of money woman, Chief Abega Ozenda said that they engaged in this practice due to poverty ravaging the entire community. That the haves used the opportunity to help the have nots. The advocacy team explained in clear terms the effects of this practice on the girl-child. One of the chiefs stated that they are eager to stop it because nowadays girl married by such means grow up to run away from the old man who married her. The only problem is that some people in the community are very poor. If we stop this practice, people who do not have money, but have a girl to betroth to another man may lose the chances of making money with their daughters. One of the chiefs said that the practice has been an age long one and may

not be as easy as it seems to stop it. Even people who are educated, but have no job would like to sell their girl-children to make money. Joseph Otel asked that the advocacy team should help them do something about it because it is too bad. He also said that one of his uncles sold his girl-child for a token sum of N10, 000. He lamented that the practice is a disgrace to the entire community who would like to sell their girl-children for any meager amount. They suggested that CWSI should map out ways forward and ensure that it is stopped. In addition to what the CWSI would suggest, they said that the following should be considered.

- Education of the community members.
- Change of mind set on the female gender
- Security.
- Employment opportunity.

VISIT TO HIS LORDSHIP, BISHOP JOHN EBEBE AYI, BISHOP OF OGOJA DIOCESE

In like manner, the team paid a courtesy visit to the Catholic Bishop of Ogoja Diocese. After formal introductions, the team explained their mission to His Lordship and discussed a few of their findings with him. The team wanted him to suggest strategies for the eradication of these harmful traditional practices against women in the diocese. The team narrated some of these practices which include money woman, widowhood and female genital mutilation.

His Lordship, rather than suggest strategies, pledged his support to do all he can within the ambiente of the church. He said he will give his blessing and support to government and non governmental bodies working towards the abolition of these harmful practices. He attributed most of these practices to poverty and lack of education. He added that women should be given all the necessary support to get the best from them. He thanked the team for discovering these harmful practices and for working towards their abolition. He said the Church will not relent in preaching against these ills. He thanked the Centre for Women Studies and Intervention for the good work they are doing.

Concurring with him on the issue of poverty, the team explained to His Lordship how a boy narrated during the advocacy tour that his father recently sold his junior sister for the sum of N10, 000 in the name of poverty.

His Lordship also asked that government should be aware of this problem so that while we condemn this practice and stamp it out of our community; we know we have a responsibility to address. The solution should come from different sources to help the members of the community.

OBSERVATION

- The advocacy visit embarked upon by the Centre for Women Studies and Intervention is a worthwhile timely venture.
- The legislative arm of the Obanliku local government council is ready to work with the Centre for Women Studies and Intervention to stop it.
- The Chairman said that she will work hand in hand with the House of Assembly of Cross River State to stop this practice.
- The cause of this practice is as a result of abject poverty. There is no infrastructure and poor means of transportation in the area. Farming in this area is also not encouraging since it is a rocky area.
- The perpetrators are willing to continue with the practice so long as the recipients are ready to cooperate with them. This gives them an edge over the recipients.
- Those who wanted to open up were intimidated by the elders.

Chapter Ten

Findings, Summary and Conclusion

8.1 Findings

From this study, the following findings were made:

- There is a clear practice of the phenomenon of “money woman” in some communities of Obanliku local government area of Cross River state.
- Implementation of laws relating to the abrogation of harmful traditional practices are not judiciously enforced
- Although the area of study is predominantly patriarchal, there is a preference for women in leadership and in decision making.
- Advocacy visits carried out helped to identify other harmful traditional practices and efforts being put in place by government, traditional leaders and religious bodies to tackle these problems.

8.2 Summary

This research set out from the onset to study the existence of some harmful traditional practices which affect women in three local government areas of Cross River .

In carrying out the research, questionnaires were administered and interviews conducted to get at the root of the issues under study. The study revealed the enormous damage by this practice on the lives of women. Specifically, the money woman phenomenon which has not been widely studied shows the height of human treatment for unborn children.

The advocacy carried out gave more insight into the issues and what the relevant and critical stakeholders are doing to abolish these practices in their areas. Of particular importance is the support which the advocacy team got from all the persons visited.

It is interesting to find out that although men are at the top of leadership and decision making positions in the area, there is a yearning by the respondents for women to also be in the leadership and decision making positions in these areas. There is thus hope for improvement and attainment for more women to be in both elective and appointive positions in all tiers of government. An opportunity exists for women advocates to take advantage of this research to design strategies for a more inclusive women representation at the top echelon of leadership in traditional and government institutions.

8.3 Conclusion

There is no doubt that this harmful practice constitutes dire impediments to the full attainment of the well being of the victims and negates fundamental human rights. The practice does not make room for unleashing of the full potentials of the female citizens to contribute their quota towards the development of their communities. They are not only primitive but they expose women to serious health hazards, affect their socio-economic well being and deprive many of the victims from realising any educational attainment.

Efforts to address the problem must take into account, the roles of all stakeholders, government (executive, legislature and judiciary), traditional institutions, religious institutions, law enforcement agencies, the media and civil society organisations among others. Each of these bodies has specific roles they must play to help address these problems.

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