






## **COMMUNITY ACTION TO ELIMINATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (CATEVAW) 2018-2020**

Traditional attitudes by which women are regarded as subordinate to men or as having stereotyped roles tends to perpetuate cultural practices that promote violence against women and girls, such as family violence and abuse, forced marriage, widowhood practice and female genital mutilation(FGM). Such prejudices and practices justify gender-based violence as a form of protection or control of women. The effects of such violence on the physical and mental integrity of women is to deprive them of equal enjoyment, exercise and knowledge of human rights and fundamental freedom. This project of CWSI, is called **COMMUNITY ACTION TO ELIMINATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (CATEVAW)**, with funding support from African Women Development Fund (AWDF). The project was implemented in five Local Government Areas of Obudu, Obalinku, Ogoja, Ikom and Yakurr, which are all located in north and central senatorial districts of Cross-River State.

The project had five key objectives, which were to:

-  implement, inspire and strengthen community activism to prevent violence against women and girls;
-  eliminate violence against women and girls in the identified communities of project through community driven actions which empowers women to amplify their voices, articulate their interests, defend their rights and protect their bodily integrity;
-  conscientize local communities in the five Local Government Areas and instill knowledge of various aspects of violence against women, spur positive actions to take a stand against violence against women and draw up policies that respect and protect women's rights in the project communities;
-  provide protection for women especially safe keeping environment for survivors of violence and empowering them through training and animation of women groups and human rights clubs, and as well bequeath to them the skills to intervene, counsel, track and nip-at-bud every eruption of violence against women in project communities;
-  engage traditional leaders, law enforcement agents and community stakeholders towards cooperation in the operationalization of laws and policies that prohibits violence against women and girls.

## **GENERAL PROJECT STRATEGIES AND EFFECTIVENESS**

The **COMMUNITY ACTION TO ELIMINATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (CATEVAW)** project in five LGAs in Cross-River State was launched in December 2018, but the actual implementation of activities started in February 2019. The project anchored on five strategic strategies in its operationalization. These strategies include:

### **❖ ADVOCACY VISITS AND STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGEMENTS;**

Advocacy strategy was a key element in the success of CATEVAW project as its effectiveness helped the project actors to engage the stakeholders and the traditional custodians of the people's culture who tenaciously hold on to those obnoxious cultures that are repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience.

Advocacy strategy helped the CWSI in lobbying and conscientizing the religious and traditional institutions to accept the abandonment of those harmful cultural practices and appropriate the behavioural and attitudinal change that the liberation of women and girls has brought to their communities through this intervention.

### **❖ SENSIZATION AND AWARENESS CREATION;**

Avalanche of evidence has shown that ignorance of youth and children on their basic fundamental human rights and sexual and reproductive rights has helped to worsen their vulnerability to abuses of their rights. In the same vein there is high level of ignorance on the entire rural communities as to what constitute breaches of women and girls' rights.

This situational background made the awareness and sensitization strategy a cardinal point in the successes recorded within the spectrum of this CATEVAW intervention coverage. This strategy has helped the project actors and stakeholders to address the above gaps and created the enabling environment for the establishment of Human Rights clubs in Schools and executed several awareness and sensitization campaigns across the communities of project implementation.

### **❖ TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING;**

Training and capacity building strategy has remained the strongest tool for sustainability of the impacts of the CWSI initiatives in Nigerian communities. Through this strategy CWSI has built and sustained a critical mass within their communities of intervention, which has continued as catalytic agent in disseminating the behavioural and attitudinal change communications that spun

the archaically cultural and patriarchal stereotypes that inhibits women and girls unfettered access to freedom and development.

This strategy has helped to address critical gap of acute Legal Aid for women. It has helped to impart basic legal knowledge of rights to women and girls in the project areas, in addition to the core project actors – the CWEN and the Human Rights Activists/Advocates. The activities of these advocates in the communities has stimulated the elimination of violence against women as well as guaranteed institutionalized platform for the sustainability of the project outcomes.

#### **❖ INTER-GENERATIONAL DIALOGUE;**

Inter-generational dialogue is a mixed strategy that draws participants across the entire population strata of the communities. It brought the old and the younger generation together and worked to create a platform for deeper interaction that addressed issues that were hitherto wrapped in cultural mythology and shrouded in patriarchal taboos and no-go areas for traditional family discourse. For instance, in the old cultural setting it is a taboo for parents to discuss issues of sexuality, reproductive health rights and gender issues with their children especially the girls.

There is always that feeling of sacredness in keeping such discourse out of the reach of the young girls. In this wise, the adolescents are left to dabble into the storm and stress of growing up in stark ignorance with only their peers as their main source of information and misinformation. Some of the girls woke up to their menarche with utter embarrassment occasioned by utter ignorance of it.

The intergenerational dialogue encapsulated in this intervention has helped to open up the rapport building between the parents and children generation to brainstorm on issues affecting them, with the resultant effect of breaking the barriers erected by culture and patriarchy. It has helped especially in Ikom LGA where the obnoxious practice of FGM still pervades. A special attention was given to Ofutop community where the practice seems to remain unacceptably high. This strategy has helped to achieve holistic participation of the entire population strata of the communities towards ending FGM in Ikom LGA and other communities. It has also helped to mobilize individuals, families and communities to take a stand and collectively abandon the practice, both in the communities of high incidence like Ofutop and in the communities of low incidence like Nwang community in Ogoja LGA

#### **❖ MEDIA OUTREACH;**

The CWSI attitudinal and behaviour change communication (BCC) strategy has been adjudged as the most extensive and widespread strategy due to its media coverage and state wide audienceship enjoyed by the strategy. CWSI sustained communication with the media through outreach and publicity which greatly promoted behavioral change needed for the elimination of violence against women in the five Local Government Areas of the project implementation. The media approach was anchored in English and native language of the people for wide and deeper audienceship as the ultimate goal is behaviour and attitudinal change. The Organisation utilized this strategy to stimulate her listeners to take action, modify behavior, and undertake activities that bring about change and development in their communities.

#### MILSTONE ACHIEVED

- ✚ Signing of Declaration Statement of Abandonment of Harmful Cultural Practices;
- ✚ Speaking out to support elimination of these harmful practices and violence against women and girls
- ✚ Promulgating new policies in their jurisdiction to eliminate all forms of violence (domestic inclusive) and other harmful traditional and cultural practices
- ✚ Exercising their authority as traditional rulers to promulgate/create sanctions and deterrents in their communities for punishing offenders and defaulters who would obstinately want to continue these practices within the communities of their jurisdiction
- ✚ This attitudinal change from the traditional rulers also helped to crush the stigmatization syndrome that tends to support the perpetuation of these practices.
- ✚ establishment of functional Human rights clubs and Active Women Groups advocating and handling cases of violence against women and girls in each of the five Local Government Areas of the project; and
- ✚ selected members of the project communities, having acquired knowledge become advocates and defenders of women's rights through monitoring, tracking, reporting of incidences of violence against women
- ✚ enhanced behavior change towards elimination of female genital mutilation and circumcision (FGM/C) in the target communities;
- ✚ increased knowledge on Human rights among community leaders that has guaranteed stakeholders support for the sustainability of the project's positive outcomes;
- ✚ improved policy change that were expressed openly through increased declaration of abandonment of FGM/C by traditional leaders within the project communities;

- ✚ profound decrease in the practice of Violence Against Women as a result of change in community local laws by the traditional leaders;
- ✚ drastic reduction of VAW growing from the capacity of the women and girls to oppose violence against them and FGM/C through association of animated women groups and human rights activists;
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It should be noted that prior to these community leaders support and actions, the community people try to stigmatize those that refuse to practice these obnoxious cultures. For instance, when a young man wants to marry, his parents always tend to look for brides from families that believe ardently on these cultural practices. The communities had built a societal mythology around these practices whereby they claim that girls or ladies who were not circumcised are more promiscuous and adulterous in marriage than those that were circumcised. They claim that these uncircumcised ladies and girls don't stay with their legally married husbands because they have excess sexual libido. These communal mythologies lost their sustenance as the traditional rulers adopted the new wave of freedom and mounted up actions towards elimination of all these notorious societal practices against women.

### **SOME PICTORAL REPRESENTATION**



**SENSITIZATION OF STAKEHOLDERS TO END FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM) & OTHER HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICES**



HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING IN SCHOOLS IN CROSS-RIVERS STATE