



Human Rights Violation and Gender Justice: The Roles of Faith and Traditional Leaders During and After COVID -19 Pandemic.

Implemented by:
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Report submitted by:
Vincent Dania

Reviewed by:
Mr. Monday Osasah

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List of Acronyms

SGBV: Sexual and Gender Based Violence

GBV: Gender Based Violence

SBS: Side by Side Movement for Gender Justice – Nigeria Chapter

CA: Christian Aid

FGM: Female Genital Mutilation

Centre LSD: African Centre for Leadership, Strategy & Development.

CAID: Christian Aid

IWD: International Women’s Day

FOMWAN: Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria

CAN: Christian Association of Nigeria

SGBV: Sexual and Gender Based Violence

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

FBO: Faith Based Organization

CBO: Community Based Organization

AP: Activity Profile

MoV: Means of Verification

1.1 Executive summary (1 page)

The “Human Rights Violation and Gender Justice: The Role of Faith and Traditional Leaders During and After COVID -19 Pandemic” project was conceptualized in response to the ravaging impact of the covid-19 pandemic and the unprecedented cases of violence against women and girls and human rights abuses occasioned by the various measures instituted by the government to curtail the spread of the virus. As people that have enormous followers and wield strong influence, it was imperative traditional and religious leaders are made to actively participate in efforts to entrench gender justice in the way government and other actors respond to the covid-19 outbreak. The religious and traditional leaders were engaged using the platform of the Nigeria chapter of Side-by-Side Faith Movement for Gender Justice.

The first step in making the traditional and religious leaders’ proponents of gender justice was to build their capacity on theological perspectives to gender justice using a research report produced in the first phase of the project. 37 and 33 Faith and traditional leaders were trained in the Northeast and South east regions of Nigeria, respectively.

The trained leaders were mobilized to form a regional network of the Side-by-Side movement in the south-east and north-east. Majority of the leaders trained stepped down the training to their followers.

A recurring form of human rights violation that was mentioned during the training of religious and traditional leaders was the issue of female genital mutilation. The harmful traditional practice which has subjected many women to a lifetime of misery and health complications is still a cultural practice in many parts of Nigeria. In advocating against this harmful practice, the Centre produced a movie titled, “Royal decree – standing together to end FGM”. The film will be used to create awareness on the negative effects of FGM and advocate for the eradication of the practice.

In commemorating the 2021 international women’s day, the national secretariat of the Side-by-Side Movement for gender justice conveyed a meeting of the steering committee members and regional representatives of the movement. The meeting was strategically planned to coincide with the event, so members can be part of activities to mark the day including the premier of a short film on eliminating Female Genital Mutilation, discussion on the role of faith and traditional leaders to ending FGM, and photo shoot for social media campaign. The meeting provided opportunity for the leaders to discuss issues pertaining to the movement, advise on the ongoing project and discuss emerging issues. 10 outstanding religious, civil society and traditional leaders, who were members of the steering committee were in attendance.

1.2 Impact & Achievements

The key impacts and achievements of the six months project, whose goal was to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and related Gender and Human Rights Violations through Faith and Traditional leaders, include the following as categorized under the core objectives of the project:

Objective 1: To raise awareness on COVID-19 preventive measures and the criminal nature of SGBV and Human Right Violations during COVID-19 outbreak.

- Embarked on awareness and sensitization on the need to address/prevent SGBV during the COVID-19 pandemic through the leaders of the Side-by-Side Movement for Gender Justice.
- Teachings on gender justice were integrated into the leadership training centre curriculum by one of the Side-by-Side members in the southwest

Objective 2: To advocate to relevant stakeholders on the dangers of SGBV and Human Right Violation during the COVID 19 outbreak.

- Embarked on advocacies (through the Side-by-Side Faith Movement for gender justice - Nigeria) to key traditional and religious leaders to join the fight against SGBV and Human Rights violations
- Our advocacies contributed to the amendment of the minimum age of marriage for female children in Kano state.
- A new policy direction on girl child education to reduce incidences of early marriage in was adopted in kano state. The Co-chair of the side-by-side movement, Prof.
- Established zonal networks of Side-by-Side movement in the northeast and south-east geopolitical zones of Nigeria.
- Produced a film titled, “Royal Decree: Standing Together to End Female Genital Mutilation”. The film will be used to create awareness on the dangers of FGM and advocate for the elimination of harmful traditional practice in cultures where it is still being practiced.

Objective 3: To effectively equip faith and traditional leader with skills to monitor, document report and ensure perpetrators are brought to account despite the pressure placed on policing capacity during COVID-19 outbreak.

- Empowered 37 faith and traditional leaders (22 male, 15 females) drawn from the 7 states in North-eastern Nigeria with knowledge on how to interpret religious text and cultural laws through a gender balanced lens.
- 33 faith and traditional leaders (26 males, 7 females) drawn from the 5 states in South-eastern Nigeria were empowered with knowledge on how to interpret religious text and cultural laws through a gender balanced lens.
- Trained 49 (31 males, 18 females) Religious & Traditional leaders from the Northwest and 33 (18 males, 15 females) Religious and Traditional leaders from the South west on interpreting religious text through a gender balanced lens. The religious and traditional leaders trained were selected from the 7 states in the Northwest and 6 states in the southwest respectively.
- Training of faith and traditional leaders on using their platforms to discourage SGBV and human rights abuses especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Increased number of women participations in traditional leadership in Enugu state
- More Pastors, imams and Ulamas in Kano and Kaduna state now highlight issues of gender justice in their sermons.
- Increased in the number of pastors and imams voluntarily signing up to promote gender justice.

The trained faith and traditional leaders from the North-east and south-east geopolitical zones are putting the knowledge to good use. This is evident in the steps some of them have taken to promote gender justice in their sphere of influence and advance the mission of the Side-by-Side movement in their regions.

South East Zone.

- The paramount ruler of Obige Obikpa community in Nsukka LGA of Enugu state, HRH Barr. Igwe Raphael, was influenced by the Side-by-Side Movement to co-opt two women into his traditional council of chiefs. According to the Eze, the involvement of women as members of the highest decision-making body in the community has been beneficial to community. This was evident in the organization and celebration of the just concluded new yam festival which brought enormous goodwill to his community.
- Members have embarked on several advocacies, sensitization, and step-down training for Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) officials in the south-east.
- The Imo state coordinator of the Side-by-Side movement meets with Islamic and Christian leaders every Thursday to discuss strategies for advancing the campaign of gender justice in the south-east using the power of the pulpit.

North East Zone

- SBS North East Zone organized an Advocacy meeting for Traditional Leaders, Religious Leaders and Women groups to address issues of gender justice, with emphasis on the challenge of denying women participation in family decision making processes and intimate partner violence. A fallout of the meeting was the establishment of an advisory committee to provide support and mentoring to women across the zone.
- Recognizing the place of women empowerment, the SBS North East Zone, under the leadership of Mrs Leah Solomon, a member of the Steering Committee, has been collaborating with the Taraba State government to empower women in the state with vocational skills.
- Exorbitant dowry/bride price has been identified as one of the key drivers of intimate partner violence in the north-east. In addressing it, members of the Side-by-side movement in the Zone launched a campaign to discourage parents from demanding outrageous amounts as dowries on their female children. The movement is working with other religious and traditional leaders to harmonize dowries across the region.

1.3 Lessons learnt.

Some of the lessons learnt while implementing this project include:

- Working with faith and traditional leaders in promoting gender justice, is a game changer in programming for women empowerment and gender equality. This is because, traditional rulers

are custodians of the culture and traditions that pre-disposes women to violence and harmful practices. On the other hand, religious leaders are generally seen as the mouthpiece of God, and how they interpret religious text shapes the views and opinions of their followers. Using these critical stakeholders as champions for the promotion of gender justice and the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls has been very effective.

- On the outside, there are two major religion in Nigeria – Islam and Christianity. But in engaging leaders of both religions, we realized that various sects exist within them whose beliefs and ideologies differ even more than what exist between the two major religions. Providing a religious perspective to gender justice that makes sense to members of the different sects in Christianity and Islam was more challenging than we envisaged at the onset of the project.

1.4 Other issues

1. Project management

The project officer who is the key personnel responsible for the day-day-day operation of the project exited the Centre without prior notice. The management of Centre LSD was able to manage the abrupt exit to ensure that project activities were not significantly impacted.

2. M&E activities

M&E activities in the project were mainly done through follow-up calls and virtual interviews.

3. GESI

The primary beneficiaries of the project were traditional rulers, Christian religious leaders, and Islamic religious leaders. The patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society has made it such that majority of the occupiers of those positions are men. In applying GESI, the project team made deliberate effort to involve women traditional and religious leaders where available.

1.5 Challenges:

- Long term planning for project activities was challenging as project implementation did not follow workplan and proposal. This is partly due to the monthly AP based project implementation approach of CA. It is recommended that APs for key activities be submitted together with proposals and budget before commencement of project implementation.
- Provision was not made for an M&E officer on the project and funds were not budgeted for outcome harvesting. This made it difficult to capture all the success stories with their means of verification. It is recommended that funds be allocated for outcome harvesting and provision should be made for a dedicated M&E officer in subsequent interventions.
- Travel restrictions imposed by the federal government because of the COVID-19 pandemic limited our physical engagement with project beneficiaries.

1.6 Anything else



Steering Committee Members of Side-by-Side Movement for Gender Justice Brainstorming on Strategies to make the Movement more Impactful.

Link to download more pictures and MoVs: <https://1drv.ms/u/s!AoZwFHdd-xuNti61xC3SUVy83al2?e=nQW9Ho>