

ENDING THE MENACE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ADAMAWA STATE (EMVWAS)



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DOBIYAN WOMEN AND YOUTHS EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE (DWYEI)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Dobiyan women and youth initiative expresses appreciation to the African women development fund (AWDF) for its work and support for the emancipation of women from all forms of violence in Adamawa State.

Our immense gratitude goes to the Honorable Speaker, and the Honorable Members in the House of Assembly for their support towards ensuring the rights, freedom and dignity of women are promoted and protected. Commendation is also due to the Honorable Commissioner, Adamawa state Ministry of Women affairs and Social Development, for her idealistic and sterling leadership towards ensuring women are safe, protected and empowered. Sincere appreciation also goes to the Permanent secretary of the Ministry, for her unflinching commitment during the project.

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We sincerely appreciate the overall guidance and support of the office of the Head of Service for the colossal inputs and continuous commitment towards ending violence against women in the state.

To all who participated and supported us, we appreciate and thank you for your robust commitment, generous inputs and active engagement.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the evolution of Boko Haram Group in 2009 which came with many daring challenges, women were exposed to varying degree of violence such as violent terrorism, forced marriage, kidnapping, force religious conversion, rape, used as suicide bombers and recruited into armed group, thus making them more vulnerable to stigmatization and rejection by family and communities. Other prominent problems before the insurgency were exclusion, exploitation, gender base violence, early child marriages, male preference, drug abuse, and child labor. Many women have been traumatized, battered and left to their fate because the laws/policies do not favor them.

Alongside the implications of conflict in border region especially as it relates to tracking women/children cannot be overstated. As at the time of writing this document, it is believed that appropriately 25 illegal routes into Nigeria have been identify in state and the possibility of unscrupulous elements and armed groups to take advantage is oblivious and the toll on women, children and the vulnerable is undoubtably high.

Just like many nations around the world, Nigeria have risen to this challenge by putting in place legislation to champion the fight against violence which includes policy formation, planning, awareness, justice for victims, and prosecution of persecutors with significant results achieved over the years. While the positive outcome of these policies has been laudable improvement, there are still loopholes that needs to be addressed in the fight because the laws are deficient in inclusiveness.

To help boost women demand for effective implementation and accountability of relevant laws /policies enacted to promote and protect their rights and dignity in the state and Nigeria at large, DWYEI designed a **six (6) months** project titled "**Ending the Menace of Violence on Women in Adamawa state**" with enhanced stakeholder engagement on implementation and accountability around three major laws/policies (**Childs Rights Act, VAPP Law, Gender and Equal Opportunity Bill**) "in mind", bringing the DWYEI strategic document and advocacy expertise to take the leads. DWYEI will promote and further deepen the conversation on the need for transparency of action, justice & fairness, insecurity, equity and open governance at the LGA and State level.

Hence, this outcome document rest on the fact that, addressing the relevance of enacting laws/policies is a matter of urgency and can only be achieve through effective tackling of the root causes of violence and dig deep: to patriarchal culture, discriminatory socio-cultural practice, religious beliefs, unequal distribution of social, cultural and economic power and the economic disempowerment of women.



**ADVOCACY ENGAGEMENT ON THE
NEED TO DOMESTICATE RELEVANT**

LAWS & POLICIES

ADVOCACY ENGAGEMENT ON THE NEED TO DOMESTICATE RELEVANT LAWS/POLICIES

Overview

DOBIYAN WOMEN AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE (DWYEI), an authoritative non-governmental organization carried out seven rounds of advocacy visit on the theme " Ending the Menace of Violence on violence in Adamawa state with the sole aim of engaging the relevant stakeholders on the need to legislate laws/polices that support, promote and protect women from all forms of violence which will bring about gender justice, fairness, equity, emancipation and empowerment of women in the state. The stakeholders engage in strategic discussions were: the state government representative (which comprises the office of the Head of Service and Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development), the Judiciary and the legislature (House of Assembly and House of Assembly Commission).

During the advocacy visits, stakeholders were engaged using the **strategic advocacy document** produce by DWYEI which captures five interrelated sessions on the "Challenges of Enacting and Implementing Laws/Policies" in Nigeria and Adamawa state. The first session gave an in-debt introduction on violence against women in Nigeria and why the research is timely; the second session gave insight on the synopsis of violence in Adamawa state and the challenges pose by the advent of terrorism in the state since 2009. The third session reiterated the necessity of creating strategies that will prevent, prepare, persecute and protect women from violence nationwide. The fourth session outlined the challenges of legislation while the fifth session outline key strategies that could be explore in eradicating violence against women and ensuring smooth implementation and accountability of all laws/policies adopted.

The stakeholder reassured the organization of their commitment to ensure smooth passage, implementation, administration of justice, accountability and sensitization of these laws/policies that will enhance and advance the rights, protection and welfare of women in the state. DWYEI reaffirmed the important role of women in sustaining development in the state and also stress the need for their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of their rights, emancipation and empowerment.

Key Highlight from the discourse

- Contextually, Adamawa is patriarchal in nature and greatly influence by cultures and religion as enshrine within the plural Nigeria legal system (condone violence against women)
- The customary law encourages the enduring cultures that tolerate violence against women
- Laws against violence on women are essential in the effort to protect women but despite alarming rate of violence on women, it does not fall within the exclusive legislation of the National Assembly under 1999 constitutions as amended but comes within the confines of the legislative competence of state
- Endorse quick passage of laws/policies that give women more rights and space in the state
- Push for the quick passage of the gender and equal opportunity bill to secure women rights and opportunities within the state`
- Adequate budget should be provided for the implementation of relevant activities/laws
- Specific town hall engagement should be organized for relevant public officials when new legislation is enacted, to ensure that they are aware of and competent to use their new duties
- Organize virtual workshops with relevant officials of criminal justice institutions at both state and local to discuss the impact of measures to address gender base violence on women and other related crimes during pandemic, emergency, and crisis to promote options to ensure effective criminal justice responses in the short and longer term
- The judicial ineffectiveness when dealing with individual cases of violence against women encourage an environment of impunity that facilitate and promotes the repetition of act of violence in general and sends message that VAWG is tolerated and accepted part of daily life.
- There is need for effective partnership (synergy) between the government ministries, departments, agencies and CSO's to bring an end to violence on women
- For legislative advocacy to be meaningful and successful, coalition building and capacity

building for NGO's are necessary. There is strength in number and no one organization can do it alone

- Continuous advocacy with relevant stakeholder is key to achieving total emancipation of women from violence in the state
- Monitor the passage of new bills/policies and ensure smooth implementation and accountability at all level
- Make available printed copies of Child Rights Act and VAPP Law in Hausa and Fufude to citizenry both at state and local level
- Enact strict policies on punishment for Sheila Boy (local gang group disrupting laws and order) to curtail their criminal excesses
- Propose amendments to legislation when necessary; and mandate adequate funding for the mechanism

CHALLENGES

- Inadequate funding to ensure smooth implementation of laws/policies
- Without proper dissemination of the content of the law and its implementation, the fact that it exists will not make a difference
- Failure to sensitize the community including women themselves and the "gate keepers" to understand the benefit of the law led to backlash
- Women in leadership position within the state are still treated as second class citizens despite their contributions and academic status attained.
- The equal opportunity bill is bulky, it needs to be reviewed and summarized
- Having a law will give legitimacy to the campaign to end violence against women and provide incentive for the involvement of the government and local authorities. They will feel the need initiate or support the effort to combat violence
- Delay in justice to perpetrators of violence on women/children, give more room for violence on women

Key Achievement

1. Domestication of Childs Protection Law
2. Domestication of Violence Against Person Prohibition (VAPP) Law

RECOMMENDATION

1. To encourage good leadership, it is our collective responsibility to bring sanity to the system by promoting meritocracy in leadership selection, this will encourage qualified and competent people to be interested in political offices irrespective of gender
2. We need mental revolution as citizens and advocates, both men and women should come together irrespective of culture and religion and dialogue on way forward, discourage violence and increasing gender inequality and intolerance
3. Cultural reorientation that encourages mutual respect and preservation of human rights of all ages and genders
4. Women's and girls' social empowerment is critical due to the long term orientation that violence against women is fundamental about gender inequality and women's subordination (disempowerment and dependence) makes them vulnerable to experience violence and unable to challenge it. This will help to address patriarchal nature of the society,5. Community awareness on the grave consequences of perpetrating violence act on women/girls and correction of misconception regarding religious teaching teachings and text used to justify violence, and also provide tools needed to apply these ideas through target group dialogues.

IMPLEMENTATION OF
**LAWS &
POLICIES**
PROTECTING AND PROMOTING WOMEN'S
RIGHT AND DIGNITY

 ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S CHAMBERS, MINISTRY OF JUSTICE



IMPLEMENTATION OF LAWS AND POLICIES PROTECTING AND PROMOTING WOMEN

Violence against women remain the most pervasive and yet under-recognized human rights violation which saps women energy's, compromise their physical and mental health, erode their self-esteem, causes injury and increases women's long-term risk of other health problems, including chronic pain, physical disability, drug and alcohol abuse, and depression. The elimination of such violence with the aid of compressive legislation is priority. DWYEI advocated for the passage and implementation of the following bills below.

- **CHILD'S RIGHT Act (CRA) 2003**

Child protection Act was adopted in 2022 by the Adamawa State legislature with the aim of safeguarding the rights of children by preventing and addressing the killing and maiming of children, child labor, abduction of children, sexual violence against children as well as recruitment and use of children by armed groups, among other grave violations of their rights. It prohibits discrimination against children below 18 years. Section 21-23 expressly prohibit and criminalizes child marriage and betrothal, while section 24-34 among others, the use of tattoos, tribal marks, exposure to use, production and trafficking of narcotic drugs, exploitative labor, buying and selling of child for the purpose of begging or prostitution and recruitment of children into armed forces. Section 21-24 of the CRA provides for the protection of children against harmful cultural practices

- **VIOLENCE AGAINST PERSONS PROHIBITION ACT (VAPP) 2015**

This Act is the major general law that prohibits the infliction of violence on Nigeria citizens generally. The VAPP was signed into law on the 25th of May, 2015 after over 10 years in the legislative process. Section 1-26 prohibits and criminalizes violent acts including rape, infliction of physical injury, spousal battery, political violence, harmful traditional practices. Section 1(1), rape can now be committed by both gender and the penalty is life imprisonment except where the offender is less than 14 years (charge for 14 years without option of fine) the court shall award compensation to the survivor as it deems fit. The Adamawa State legislative domesticated the VAPP Law in 2022. Section 28 provides that a complainant may be granted a protection order upon application to high court and may obtain protection order under the VAPP Act.

GENDER AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY BILL 2016 (GOE BILL) (SB:301)

The GEO Bill provides inter alia for the prohibition of discrimination against any person on the ground of gender, sex or disability by any person, agency or government, and seek to nullify any law, regulation, custom, or practice which constitutes discrimination against any person, promotion of equality, full development, and advancement of all person. The Bill was first introduced in 2006 and it was rejected, it also failed reintroduction in 2010 and was also negative in 2015. Argument for its rejection were that the bill conflict with the Christian belief and the Sharia law which the constitution recognizes. On 15th June 2016, the bill was re-introduced and it reflected some of the concerns raised previously. We are calling on the government of Adamawa state to domesticate this Act so as to aid implementation of the International law ratified for the elimination of violence against women in Adamawa state.

CHALLENGES

Below are challenges encountered in the course of advocacy for the passage of the bill and implementation of existing laws:

- Patriarchal mindset not only of the general populace but also the legislators, government structures and even some civil society.
- lack of resources on the part of the victims to access the provision of the laws for the enforcement of their rights to freedom from violence
- lack of political will from government to allocate adequate resources to support the implementation of the laws for example, Child's Right Act and VAPP law have not been provided in the budget.

- Issues relating to political situation in the country and state, took legislators attention away from legislative duties.
- Lack of awareness of the existence of the laws, even among the women that the laws seek to protect is one of the reason the law is ineffective

Recommendation

- Frame sensitive issues in a culturally appropriate context
- Activist working on legislation on violence against women must ensure that the problem of violence is widely recognized and understood at the local level, as this will make it easier to secure support for the proposed legislations
- Government should make adequate budgetary allocation towards eliminating violence and discriminatory practices against women in the state.



“Laws alone or Judicial activism cannot bring enduring changes in an ancient societal fabric.”

CONCLUSION

This outcome document has been able to galvanize the opinion of citizenry on the issues of violence on women and there is general consensus from the majority that violence against women is undermining sustainable peace and development, due to patriarchal, religious and cultural nature of the society which condone violence on women and girls. More so, legislation has not been able to address violence against women in Nigeria due to social, cultural, religious and economic factors that has resulted into male dominance, gender inequality, superiority of males to females, females being seen as the weaker sex and female economic dependence on male. Violence has negative impacts on women and now it is the right time for everyone to take action: a life free of violence is a basic human rights, one that every woman, man and child deserves. It is strongly believe that that the domestication of CRA, VAPP and GEO and others International human rights instrument ratified, a review and harmonization of cultural, religious and statutory laws in line with International standard which Nigeria has adopted, coupled with the effective implementation and accountability of these laws will adequately address the issues of violence on women.

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About us:

Dobiyan Women and Youth Initiative, also known as (DWYEI) is a fully registered authoritative non-governmental organization (NGO) committed to creating awareness, advocacy, counseling and undertaking strategic research in the areas of Gender Based Violence, Good Governance, Conflict Resolution, Sexual and Reproductive Right of women and children in Nigeria and Africa at large. The DWYEI was founded on September, 1998 but began full operations on 22nd November, 2010. It was established on the underlying principles that gender equality, sustainable peace and development are inextricably linked. Since its establishment, it has been leading strategic discussions on gender/ disability inclusion, women empowerment, good governance, for sustainable development in order to guarantee gender equity, women rights through advocacy and knowledge sharing. It is committed to improving gender responsive framework structures and budget through advocacy and the provision of context-specific solution to critical stakeholders, policy makers and non-state actors in Nigeria and Africa.

