

Communique Issued at the end of the Media Roundtable to Mark 16 Days of Activism on Ending Violence against Women and Girls and Harmful Practice (VAWG/HG), Held at Girl's Power Initiative Conference Hall, Calabar, on Wednesday 25th November 2020.

Preamble

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence (GBV), which runs from 25th November-10th December, is an annual international campaign that draws attention to the occurrence of GBV against women and the need to emphasize violence against women as a human rights issue and to rally concerted efforts for the elimination of all forms of GBV wherever it occurs. The theme for this year's commemoration is "Orange the World: Fund, Respond, Prevent, Collect!", which is advocating for increasing funding for gender programs, fast tracking response and care for survivors of GBV, rolling out GBV prevention strategies as well as improving data collection to aid decision making.

This media roundtable was held to kick start activities for this year's event and provide a platform for engagement and discussions with critical stakeholders towards eliminating gender based violence.

In attendance was the Commissioner, Cross River State Ministry of Women Affairs; the Head of Office, United Nations Population Fund, Cross River State Sub-office; Director, Public Prosecution, Cross River State Ministry of Justice; representatives from Nigeria Bar Association, Nigeria Union of Journalists, Non-Governmental Organizations and media houses.

Presentations were made on the following:

1. Spotlight Initiative Project Activities on Ending Violence against Women and Girls.
2. Sexual and Gender Based Violence Litigation in Cross River State, Challenges and Way forward.
3. Role of Cross River State Government in Ending Violence against Women and Girls.

Observations

1. There is a signed commitment by the Obong of Calabar to champion the fight for the promotion of gender equitable norms and prevention of Violence against Women and Girls as well as Harmful Practices in Cross River State.
2. Incidences of GBV were on the increase during the COVID 19 lockdown era.
3. Advocacy has been paid to the Cross River State House of Assembly for the domestication of the Violence against Persons Prohibition Act in Cross River State.
4. Different initiatives are being deployed to prevent occurrence of GBV and providing support for survivors of GBV.
5. The new criminal justice law has provisions to provide financial support to survivors of GBV yet there is no political will to implement.
6. Survivors of GBV often face challenges in financing litigation against culprits.
7. Family members and survivors often withdraw cases after reporting to law enforcement agencies.

8. Requirement for clinical evidence of GBV before prosecution which is a burden on the survivor.
9. The accusatorial system of prosecution in Nigeria which requires the gathering of concrete evidence poses a challenge in prosecuting cases of SGBV.

Recommendation/Resolutions

1. CSOs, media, and other stakeholders should develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for response to GBV incidences.
2. Establishment of one stop centres where survivors can access post GBV care such as psychosocial counselling to be championed by the Government and Implementing Partners.
3. Need for synergy between the Department of Public Prosecution and other partners towards litigation of GBV incidences and provision of psychosocial support to address issues of withdrawal of cases.
4. Issuance of non-payment medical certificates to survivors of GBV to aid prosecution by hospitals.
5. Funding for GBV programs and response should be prioritized and made deliberate by the Government.
6. The media should increase reportage of GBV cases and follow up on such cases including those that have been convicted to serve as deterrent
7. The media needs to create awareness on GBV and availability of post GBV care services.

Conclusion

The media should synergize with all stakeholders involved in gender based activities to ensure proper reportage of GBV incidences and convictions to ensure deterrence.

Communique Drafting Committee

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