



COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF 2nd REVIEW & VALIDATION WORKSHOP ON THE AMENDED CHILDREN'S & YOUNG PERSONS BILL, HELD FROM 8TH SEPTEMBER – 9TH SEPTEMBER 2016, AT DUTSE ROYAL HOTEL ORGANIZED BY VOICES FOR JUSTICE

Preamble:

The Voices for Justice is a civil society coalition coordinated by Baba Azimi Foundation which promotes and advocates for children's rights. In the past few months, V4J has been engaging with policy makers and leaders on reviewing the current children law in the state. The review by the platform led to the development of the draft amended children and young person law which has been broadened to provide for and ensure greater protection of children right to health, education, and protection from several forms of violence. Children are exposed to different forms of violence, dehumanization, exploitation and abuse through various practices e.g Street Hawking, Almajiranci, street Begging, neglect of children by parents and care givers. Most children are not getting qualitative access to education and health care services. The proposed draft bill primarily assessed gaps within the existing framework in relation to ensuring greater protection for children and their rights. Recommendations from the 1st stakeholder review meeting, advocacies and press briefing held in June and July this year greatly emphasize on targeted advocacy specifically to the main MDAs i.e. Education, Health, Information and Women Affairs; gatekeepers i.e. Religious and Traditional rulers as well as working with members of the media primarily to-

- Raise the profile of the bill and increase support for its passage,
- Increase awareness on its significance to the development of children in the state and
- Strengthen the support in promoting its acceptance to the wider public.

The Voices for Justice with the support of Save the Children organized the second stakeholder review and validation workshop which was held for 2 days in Dutse.

Meeting Objectives

The main objectives of the workshop were to mobilize and strengthen primary stakeholders buy-in and support for the new proposals in the bill and ultimately for the passage and implementation of the law in the near future.

There was wide representation at this 2nd review exercise with participants from the following institutions-

- Traditional rulers from the Dutse Emirate Council
- Religious leaders from the State's Council of Ulama
- Representatives from these MDAs:
 - Ministry of Education
 - Ministry of Health & State Primary Healthcare Development Agency
 - Ministry of Information
 - Ministry of Women Affairs & Social Development
- Members of the Press which included Print and Electronic media



- Other Civil Society Organizations especially faith-based organizations not within V4J who are seen as critical in expanding the sensitization and mobilization effort across the state especially as well as increasing support for the bill.

Observations:

The following key observations were made at the workshop

- In view of the increasing cases of teenage pregnancies it is significant to create and give such girls the opportunity to complete their education for their future development and wellbeing.
- It was also suggested that members of the public, most especially parents should be intensively enlightened about the proposed bill since a large part of it is about fulfilling their responsibilities as primary caregivers.
- Another issue of great concern was interference by some high profile personalities in cases of sexual violence where the processes of investigation or prosecution are interfered with leading to perpetrators of violence being allowed to go free. This is seen to be a major contributing factor which hinders effective and efficient judicial process and there is need for such personalities to be subjected to the law.
- On the issue of punishments of offences, observations were made that, the relevant provisions in the bill should be revised to reflect principles of Islamic law.
- There were strong calls for the involvement of traditional rulers in increasing awareness and strengthening support for the actualisation of children's rights in the state.
- In view of the economic recession in the country, it is necessary to strategize and call for government to develop social welfare and protection programmes which will alleviate poverty of parents and caregivers which ultimately will assist government implementation of the law.
- On the issue of improving the general health and care for children particularly in terms of immunisation and better nutrition; there is need for wide sensitization and awareness activities which will encourage families in rural areas to improve their health as well as their access to health services.
- Another key observation was the need for calls to be made in marriage ceremonies for requiring health clearance certificates of eligible partners in relation to HIV/AIDs, sickle cell and hepatitis. There is also need for public awareness and sensitization on partners to insist on this test clearance even for eligible partners from outside the state.
- There was recognition of the key role of stakeholders in carrying forward many of the critical actions in pushing forward the bill but lack of coordination is posing as a major challenge in this area.

Resolutions-

1. That there is need to establish a coordinating committee which will promote the bill to all key stakeholders and the general public as well as take up actions in furtherance of awareness raising and advocacies to mobilize support and strengthen the commitment for its passage.
2. Equally V4J needs to strengthen the work that the coordinating committee will undertake in pushing the bill by mobilizing additional support from partners for its activities.



3. Advocacy, engagements and dialogue with stakeholders and the public need to be sustained by V4J and the State Steering Committee to build and strengthen support for the bill.
4. A public private dialogue (PPD) with government and the private sector is essential in order to sensitize them on the significance of the bill. The PPD should be conducted in order to ensure wider acceptance for the bill.
5. In ensuring that the PPD is effective, it is important to use evidence based advocacy utilizing fact sheets and position papers.
6. All stakeholders need to be held to their commitments drawn at this meeting which will kick off the wide sensitization and support mobilization for the bill.
7. The coordinating committee should ensure timely passage and implementation of the bill.

Adopted this 9th September 2015

Signed:

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