

REPORT OF 2 DAY CAPACITY BUILDING OF YOUTH ON COMMUNITY ABANDONMENT OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION FROM TUES. 5TH – WED. 6TH SEPTEMBER, 2017 AT IKOM LGA, CROSS RIVER STATE.

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Female Genital Mutilation is one of the age long traditional practices that have proven to be very harmful and has no positive effect on the lives of women and girls. It is practiced by various cultures for diverse reasons ranging from curbing promiscuity,

initiation into womanhood, marriage rites, traditional cleansing etc.



Mrs Margareth Onah, Exec. Dir. of SafeHaven Dev. Initiative (SDI)

Despite the various laws forbidding the harmful practice, FGM has remained a tradition that is proven so difficult to abandon across the society. This is because the culture is embedded on cultural practice which is usually held sacred by community members more than any other thing.

Safe Haven Development Initiative with support from Amplify Change organized a 2 day capacity building of 20 youth on the abandonment of female genital mutilation using the social media.

Facilitators: Raymond Okpani - FGM Technical Consultant

Mrs Margaret Onah – Executive Director, SafeHaven Dev. Initiative

Opening Prayer: The opening prayer was said by a volunteer participant in the native dialect.

Introduction of Participants: The participants had some time to introduce themselves and their communities. Some of the participating communities included;

Expectation

The participants were given opportunities to share their expectations during the event. While some of them looked forward to understanding the negative effects of the practice, one of the key expectations from participants was to know the best strategies that can be used to engage with other community members in the campaign to abandon female genital mutilation.

Opening Remark

The Executive Director of SDI, Mrs Magareth Onah thanked all the participants for making out time to participate in the training. She stressed that it will be a platform to interact and learn from some of the issues taking place around the communities. Mrs Onah gave a brief

overview of the activities of SafeHaven Development Initiative which is basically to work on reproductive health and human rights issues.

Summary of Sessions

The first session started with an experience sharing on the various reasons female genital mutilation is practiced in the various communities.

One of the participants talked about *monikin* which is an important traditional right where only circumcised women are eligible to be part of it. During this celebration, there is usually a strong cultural incentive to carry out female genital mutilation.



Raymond Okpani facilitating a session of Basic FGM Facts

During the first session of the training programme, the facilitator, Raymond Okpani took time to explore the basic understanding of FGM, types and effects on the society. The session was very interactive as participants were made to ask questions and share some of the experiences they may have encountered in the communities.



Mrs Onah facilitating a session

The second session was facilitated by Mrs Magareth Onah on “Understand Child Rights and Laws prohibiting FGM”. The session was engaging as participants were always invited to discuss any issue raised during the session. This was to promote robust learning among all the participants.

Group Work

There were various group work sessions for the participants to brainstorm and point out some traditions and culture in their communities which can still be practiced without involving female genital cutting.

The various groups who were divided according to the participating communities were given opportunities to make presentations and reactions made from others.



A cross session of the various community groups in Ikom LGA during the group work exercise.



An exercise illustrating the importance of participation in the FGM campaign.

TRAINING DAY 2

The second day of the training comprised the following;

Media Engagement



Some participants at the Ikom Radio house

The second day of the training started with a live radio discussion session at the Cross River State Broadcasting Corporation, CRBC, Ikom. One of the highlights of the discussion is the opportunity of one of the participants who had not undergone female genital cutting to share her life experience and also to counter most of the mythical beliefs about the harmful traditional practice of FGM.

There were 2 discussions on radio with the former focusing on experience sharing from survivors who were participants at the training. The program also had a lady participant who was not cut. It was an interesting session as she confirmed that most of the beliefs surrounding FGM are not true. These include growth of the clitoris, excessive itching of the clitoris etc.

The second radio session had single and married men to share their experiences and what they intend to do after the FGM training.

FGM Ambassadors

A session was jointly facilitated on the functions of the FGM Ambassadors. Highlights of these functions include;



Facilitating a session on Functions of FGM Ambassadors

- Community sensitization of other community members on the negative effect of FGM and need to abandon the practice.
- Report anybody who is still found to be engaging in the practice of female genital mutilation.
- Using the social media platforms to promote FGMC activities at the community level.

All the ambassadors from different communities that had been previously trained by SafeHaven Development Initiative were invited to share experiences of what they have been doing since they got trained. The idea was to get the initially trained group to mentor and guide the new ones on the expectations on them. This proved to be a huge success as it was very easy for them to share and interact in their local dialect.

Group Work & Workplan Development

Afterwards, the participants were grouped according to their various communities to design action plans which will guide in their engagement and sensitization at the community level.

Lessons Learnt

- Most community members didn't know of the negative effect of female genital mutilation.
- With adequate sensitization, community members are beginning to gradually adjust on some of the harmful traditional practices including female genital mutilation.
- The men are willing to join in the campaign against female genital mutilation.

Challenges

1. There are still some cutters who claim they have stopped but always engage in the practice when there is no attention on them.
2. Most of the trained ambassadors do not have internet friend mobile devices.
3. Poor access to internet because of the remote location of the communities.
4. Inconsistency engagement will make it difficult to convince community members.

Vote of Thanks

Shortly before the end of the event, Mrs Onah thanked the participants for agreeing to join their voices in the effort to campaign against female genital mutilation in Nigeria especially in rural communities of Cross River State. She assured them that SafeHaven Development Initiative will always be available to support their community efforts in any way possible.

Finally, she thanked the stakeholders and officials of the Ikom LGA for the opportunity to build the capacity of her youth, saying that she looks for more engaging partnership with the local government council. On that note, she officially handed over the trained ambassadors to council and asked they be given necessary support to help them achieve the objectives of the training.



Cross session of some participants asking question, making comments and sharing their experiences at the community level.

Appendix Pictures



Cross session of some participants making presentations of their group work.



Participants showing willingness to share their local experiences.



The Executive Director of SafeHaven Development Initiative SDI, Mrs Marqaret Onah in a group photo with the newly trained FGM Ambassadors.



Mrs Margaret with some of the previously trained FGM Ambassadors