

REPORT OF COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY FORUM FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF A TRAUMA RESPONSE MECHANISM IN THREE LGAs OF BENUE STATE BY EQUAL ACCESS INTERNATIONAL

BACKGROUND:

Equal Access Int'l, in conjunction with her Local Resource Organization (LRO) Lawyers Alert, held three community consultative forums in three communities- Agatu, Guma and Gwer-West districts of Benue State between 17th and 19th October, 2022.

The activities were part of the implementation of the Securing the Nigerian Communities (SNC) Project whose objective is to increase civilian security in high-risk areas of Benue state by empowering Youths and Women-led Action in Peace and Security in targeted areas, by strengthening Civilian Security Platforms within communities affected by crime and violence, and the establishment of a Trauma Response mechanism within the affected local communities.

To further these objectives, a needs assessment was carried out in all the three communities, to determine the prevalence of trauma and the availability of trauma response mechanisms in the affected districts. The conduct of the needs assessment was gender sensitive; the needs of women were assessed separately from that of the male. Some of the areas of assessment include:

- Perception of trauma
- Identification of traumatic events
- Availability of shelter for trauma victims
- Individual coping methods with trauma
- Availability of support systems
- Availability of counsellors
- Prevalence of stigma for victims
- Can the general situation in the state cause trauma
- Availability of facility audit.

In attendance were traditional rulers, religious leaders, local government chairmen, divisional police officers, the elderly, women, men, and youths.

In all communities engaged, the identified recurrent security issue causing trauma was killing of community members by killer herdsmen, who kill and destroy properties. A resident of Guma LGA has been left traumatized after being forced to watch the beheading of his 5 children in cold blood. Another resident

of Agatu LGA is mentally deranged following the massacre of her husband and 3 sons on the farm.

These and many more incidences were documented to guide the establishment of trauma response mechanisms in the local communities, commencing in the first quarter of 2023.

LAWYERS ALERT