



REPORT OF MEETING LINKING WOMEN GROUPS WITH THE GENDER UNIT OF THE NIGERIA POLICE FORCE AND THE POLICE DUTY SOLICITORS SCHEME OF LEGAL AID COUNCIL ON GBV & SRHR IN NIGERIA

Date: 5th of November, 2020
Time: 10.00 am – 1:20pm
Location: Force Gender (FCIID), Area 10, Garki, Abuja, Nigeria.
Host: Force Gender (FCIID)

- **Overview/Meeting Objectives**

The meeting had the following objectives;

1. To Introduce the GU&PDSS to women groups.
2. For women groups to understand the roles of the GU&PDSS in addressing issues of SRHR and GBV.
3. To create a link between women groups, GU&PDSS.
4. Modules for working together and services delivery.

- **Agenda Item #1: Arrival and Registration of participants**

All participants present at the meeting were duly registered. Representatives from the Police Duty Solicitor Scheme of the Legal Aid Council in the FCT, the Gender Unit of the Nigeria Police Force in the FCT, Women Rights Organizations and Staff of Lawyers Alert were in attendance.



Fig1: Registration of participants.

- **Agenda Item #2 & #3: Opening Prayer / Introduction and Expectations**

The meeting began with an opening prayer by a volunteer. The Director Programs of Lawyers Alert welcomed all participants, gave a brief overview of why we are here and what the meeting seeks to achieve. All Participants present introduced themselves and gave their expectations.



Fig 2: Opening prayer by participant.

- **Agenda Item #4: Welcome Address and Setting the Agenda**

The Assistant Commissioner of Police in charge of the GU on behalf of the Deputy Inspector General of the Police Intelligent Unit and the Police Gender Coordinator gave the welcome remark. He thanked all participants for their availability. While setting the agenda, he explained to all participants the reason for the meeting and why we were gathered. The need to introduce the GU&PDSS to the women groups, create a link between women groups, GU&PDSS and also to collaborate and work together which cannot be overemphasized. He further explained that the meeting was principally to understand our areas of work, in terms of creating synergy between the GU, PDSS and women groups; discuss challenges we encounter and how best to provide services to survivors of violence especially women and girls. He urged all participants to actively participate in the meeting and wish us a fruitful deliberation towards a robust relationship with the Women groups, PDSS and LA.



Fig 3: ACP Gender giving the welcome address and setting the agenda.

- **Agenda Item #5 : Goodwill Message**

This session was taken by the representative of Police Duty Solicitor Scheme (PDSS) of Legal Aid Council who spoke on behalf of the Director of the PDSS and

the Director General of the Council. A brief background of the the PDSS was given and explained the importance of a partnership with the GU towards providing services to survivors of violence. She concluded by saying that the PDSS is desirous of a better working relationship with the GU, Women groups and Lawyers Alert towards providing the necessary support to women suffering GBV. She welcomed everyone once again, appreciated the GU, Women groups and LA for this initiative and and encouraged all to make contributions towards achieving the meetings objectives.



Fig 4: Representative of Legal Aid Council giving the goodwill message.

- **Agenda Item #6 : Keynote Remarks/ Objectives**

This session was handled by the Director Programs of Lawyers Alert. All participants once again were appreciated for their availability at the meeting. A brief overview was given about the project, what we have done so far and where we are. The goal and objectives were explained and the need for providing services to survivors of violence was discussed. A brief about Lawyers Alert, its mandate, area of work and target group was discussed. The speaker explained that the President of LA, though unavoidably absent supports the initiative and would love to have a lasting relationship with the GU, PDSS and Women groups. The Police Gender Coordinator was appreciated for the support received from the inception of the project till date and the Director, PDSS for his continuous support to the project. The speaker explained in clear terms that the meeting was to introduce the GU&PDSS to the women groups and create a link between them on addressing issues of SRHR &GBV towards promoting and protecting the rights of women and survivors of violence. The speaker concluded by highlighting the meeting objectives, emphasized the need for working together and wished all a fruitful meeting.



Fig 5: Director Programs giving the keynote remark.

- **Agenda Item #7 : Tea Break**

All participants had a break for tea.



Fig 6: Cross-section of participants during tea.

- **Agenda Item #8 :Introducing the GU&PDSS to women groups:A background of the GU&PDSS and area of work.**

This Session was handled by the GU and PDSS. A brief history of how the GU came into existence was discussed. It was created from the Nigeria Police Force on the 24th November 2012 with the aim of addressing issues of GBV in the society, sanction perpetrators/culprits of such acts and secure justice for the survivors. Also, issues of children are also handled. The GU has been able to work with various organisation which includes Ford Foundation, CLEEN Foundation and many others on issues of GBV for women and girls.

The PDSS of the Legal Aid Council of Nigeria was established in the year 2004 to help reduce the excessive use of partial detention by providing free legal advice to suspects at the police station. This is at the point when the decision to detain or release pending trial. Services of young Lawyers completing their compulsory national services are being deployed as Duty Solicitors to various police stations in 8 states. Legal Aid Council exist across the 36 states of the federation.



Fig 7: Representative of the GU and PDSS introducing the GU&PDSS to women groups

- **Agenda Item #9 : Challenges experienced by women groups on issues of GBV**

During this session, women groups took turns to identify challenges they face in delivering their mandates and providing services for survivors of violence. Below are some of the challenges stated:

1. Lack of Awareness/sensitization on issues of SGBV by officers and the public.
2. Lack of professionalism of the Police and other security agencies.
3. Discrimination and stigmatization of survivors of SGBV.
4. Transfer of skilled officers from the GU.
5. Inadequate funding for the GU
6. Lack of Synergy between Police,PDSS and Women Groups
7. Lack of shelter for survivors making reporting of violence difficult
8. Lack of communication by the Police. E.g. when suspect is released from detention.
9. Delay in responding to concerns especially from the legal department of the police.
10. Mode of reporting SGBV issues by the Media.

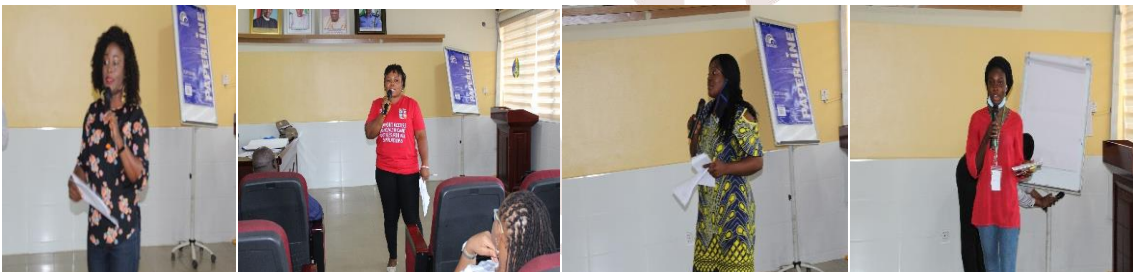


Fig 8: Representative of women groups discussing challenges.

- **Agenda Item #10: Bridging the Gap**

In bridging the identified gaps, participants suggested possible ways to mitigate the challenges identified above.

Below are some of the suggestions made towards reversing the challenges;

1. **Awareness creation/Sensitization on (SGBV):** Enlightenment of officers on SGBV. This should form part of their trainings. Sensitizations on SGBV and its dynamics for the public via Radio Jingles, phone-in programs, Television programs, Billboards, Social media, IEC in the three major languages in Nigeria(Hausa,Yoruba,Igbo), etc.
2. **Professionalism/Non-Discrimination/Non-Stigmatization (Police & other Security Agencies):** The following is required;
 - I. Capacity building :Training and Re-training of police officers. Especially for officers transfers to the GU.
 - II. Enlightenment of the police officers to avoid blaming/shaming survivors of violence.
3. **Synergy between Police,PDSS and other Women groups:** This can be done through the following
 - I. Constitute Active Stakeholders with the fight against Sexual Gender Base Violence(SGBV).
 - II. Create chats/directories for participants.
 - III. Referrals/Networking.
4. **Inadequate Funding:** This can be done through the following;
 - I. Advocacy visits to relevant Institutions/National Assembly for the Gender Budget.
 - II. CSO's/NGO Advocacy visits to INGOs and donor bodies for Funding
 - III. Creation of Budget Line for Gender unit of the Police
5. **Media:** .
 - I. Train/Sensitize Journalist and the media on Sexual Gender Base Violence(SGBV).
6. **Lack of shelters for survivors of SGBV:** This can be remedied by the following;
 - I. Advocacy visits to relevant INGO's for providing shelters.
 - II. Networking with relevant CS groups or NGOs who provide such services..

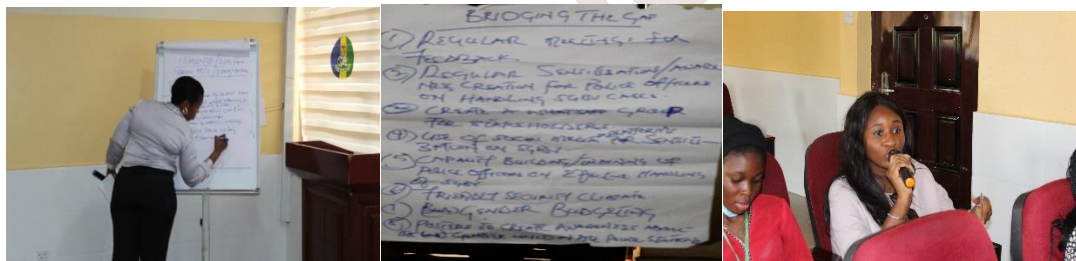


Fig 9: Participants making suggestions towards bridging the gaps identified.

- **Agenda Item #11 : Next steps and way forward**

The GU, PDSS and women groups appreciated LA for this timely intervention and looked forward constant meetings and cordial relationship among them for a lasting working relationship. It was suggested that the GU, PDSS and Women groups work closely at the national level and explore the possibility of a WhatsApp platform for swift communication. Another next step is the use of social media platform for sensitization. It was also suggested a toll free line should be given for easy access. posters should be made to create awareness of Gender unit in all police stations. Participants emphasized the need for trainings and re-trainings on GBV for the GU and PDSS.

- **Agenda Item #12: Vote of thanks.**

The Director Programs of Lawyers Alert gave the vote of thanks. All participants present were appreciated for active participation and fruitful deliberations. The speaker stated that given this link created today between women groups, GU and PDSS, it is hoped that most of the challenges experienced by women groups would be reduced. The Police Gender Coordinator and the Director PDSS were appreciated for their support from the inception of this project. The speaker thanked everyone once again for coming and hope more interactions will be held on these issues towards advancing the rights of survivors of violence.

- **Agenda Item #13: Lunch/Close**

A group photograph was taken and participants proceeded to have lunch.



Fig 10: Group Photograph.