

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN- A STORY OF  
COMMUNITY PREVENTION STRATEGIES FROM TWO STATES  
IN NIGERIA : ENUGU AND ONDO

PAPER BY:

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NIGERIA

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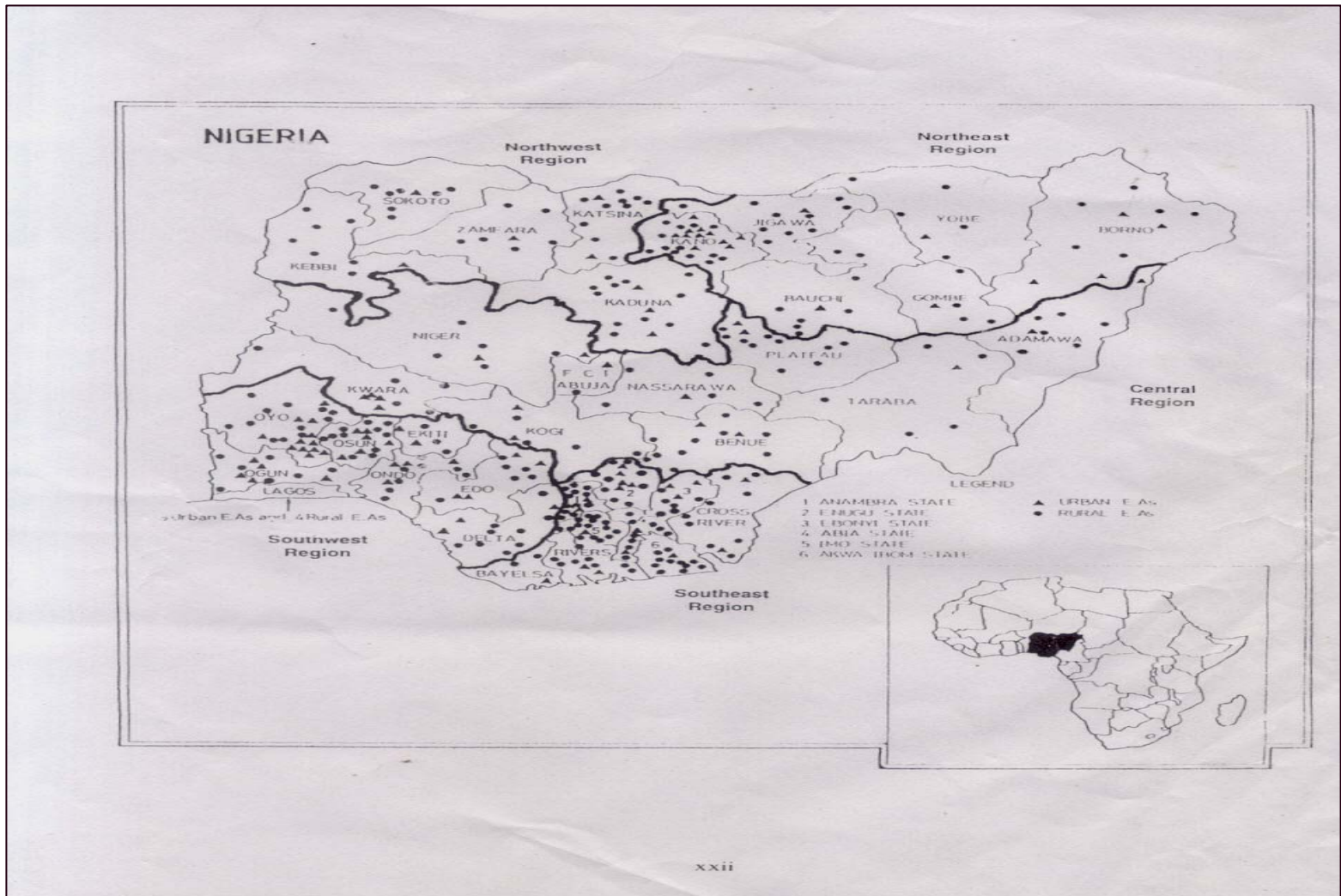
WORLD CONFERENCE ON PREVENTION OF FAMILY  
VIOLENCE

DATE: OCTOBER 23<sup>RD</sup> – 26<sup>TH</sup> 2005

## INTRODUCTION

- THIS PAPER WILL FOCUS ON DEFINITION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN NIGERIA AND IT'S VARIOUS FORMS, TAKE A LOOK AT THE LEGAL PROTECTION EFFORTS AND REVIEW PROMISING INTERVENTIONS BEING ADOPTED AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL IN ENUGU AND ONDO STATES FOR CHANGING ATTITUDES ABOUT VIOLENCE AND VIOLENT ACTS AGAINST WOMEN

# MAP OF NIGERIA



## COUNTRY PROFILE

- NIGERIA IS THE MOST POPULOUS COUNTRY IN AFRICA
- IT IS THE TENTH LARGEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD
- ESTIMATED POPULATION OF THE COUNTRY IN 2003 STOOD AT 126.2 MILLION (NATIONAL POPULATION COMMISSION)
- NUMBER OF FEMALES IN 2005 IS 64.6 MILLION (2005 WOMEN OF OUR WORLD POPULATION REFERENCE BUREAU)
- NIGERIAN CENSUS 1991 GAVE TOTAL FEMALE POPULATION AT 44,462,612
- NIGERIA IS A DEMOCRATIC FEDERAL REPUBLIC CONSISTING OF 36 STATES AND THE FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY
- THE STATES HAVE BEEN GROUPED INTO SIX GEO-POLITICAL ZONES –NORTH EAST, NORTH WEST, NORTH CENTRAL, SOUTH WEST, SOUTH EAST AND SOUTH SOUTH

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

- VIOLENCE IS THE APPLICATION OF FORCE, WHICH CAN KILL, INJURE OR HURT PEOPLE
- DIFFERENT TYPES OF VIOLENCE INCLUDE: PHYSICAL, VERBAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC
- VIOLENCE ACCORDING TO GELLES AND STRAUT IS ANY ACT CARRIED OUT WITH THE INTENTION OR PERCEIVED INTENTION OF HURTING ANOTHER
- IN 1993, WITH THE DECLARATION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN,(VAW), THE UN FURTHER EXPANDED THE MEANING OF VIOLENCE TO INCLUDE PHYSICAL, SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN IN THE HOUSEHOLD, DOWRY RELATED VIOLENCE, MARITAL RAPE, FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION, NON-SPOUSAL VIOLENCE, RAPE,

## DEFINITIONS CONTINUE.....

INTIMIDATION AT WORK AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND ELSEWHERE, TRADITIONAL PRACTICES, TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN, EXPLOITATION AND FORCED PROSTITUTION.

- ACCODING TO ARTICLE 2(A) OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS “PHYSICAL, SEXUAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE OCCURING IN THE FAMILY, INCLUDING BATTERING, DOWRY-RELATED VIOLENCE, MARITAL RAPE AND OTHER TRADITIONAL PRACTICES HARMFUL TO WOMEN”

## FORMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- VERBAL VIOLENCE: NAME CALLING, INTIMIDATION
- EMOTIONAL
- FINANCIAL
- PHYSICAL
- SEXUAL
- SYSTEM

## SOME REPORTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN NIGERIAN MEDIA

- THE MEDIA IN NIGERIA ARE HIGHLIGHTING REPORTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN. INFACIT RADIO NIGERIA IS CARRYING OUT A CAMPAIGN TO CHECK RAPE. IT IS SEEN AS THE MEDIA'S INTERVENTION TO PUBLIC DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ISSUES IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN. HERE ARE SOME OF THE REPORTS
- MAN BEATS NINE-MONTH PREGNANT WIFE TO DEATH- PUBLISHED IN PUNCH NEWSPAPER OF MARCH 24<sup>TH</sup> 2005
- BISHOP SETS WIFE AND HOME ON FIRE PUBLISHED IN CIT PEOPLE MAGAZINE OF APRIL 13 2005
- SATURDAY SUN JULY 16<sup>TH</sup> 2004-A MAN ASHIRU SEXUALLY ASSAULTS FOUR YEAR OLD GIRL
- DAILY SUN 14<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2005 –SIX ARMED ROBBERS RAPE STUDENT
- DAILY SUN JULY 28<sup>TH</sup> 2005 –SIXTY YEAR OLD MAN IMPREGNATES 14 YEAR OLD TENANTS SISTER

## STATISTICS

- ACCORDING TO THE CHAIRMAN NATIONAL POPULATION COMMISSION, CHIEF SUMAILA MAKAMA ONE IN EVERY THREE WOMEN IN NIGERIA HAS BEEN BEATEN, COERCED INTO SEX, OR ABUSED IN SOME WAY
- 70,000 TEENAGE GIRLS ARE MARRIED EVERYDAY AND NEARLY 40,000 GIVE BIRTH DAILY
- ONE THIRD OF WOMEN IN NIGERIA HAVE EXPERIENCED PHYSICAL, SEXUAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE IN THE FAMILY (AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL 2005 ANNUAL REPORT ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN NIGERIA)
- 50% OF MEN AND WOMEN JUSTIFIED THE BEATING OF WOMEN
- 64.5% OF WOMEN AND 61.3% OF MEN AGREE THAT A HUSBAND HAS THE RIGHT IN HITTING OR BEATING HIS WIFE

## LEGAL PROTECTION EFFORTS

- SINCE THE RETURN OF THE COUNTRY TO DEMOCRATIC RULE IN 1999, VARIOUS GROUPS HAVE ENGAGED IN ADVOCACY CAMPAIGNS FOR LEGISLATIONS TO CHECK VARIOUS FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN EVEN THOUGH THERE ARE PROVISIONS IN EXISTING LAWS IN NIGERIA TO PUNISH PERPETRATORS OF ASSAULT AND RAPE AMONG OTHERS
- THERE ARE NOW ADVOCACY EFFORTS FOR THE DOMESTICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF IMPORTANT HUMAN RIGHTS TREATIES AND INSTRUMENTS WHICH OFFER PROTECTION TO WOMEN SUCH AS CEDAW AND ITS OPTIONAL PROTOCOL BOTH OF WHICH NIGERIA HAS RATIFIED

## LEGAL PROTECTION EFFORTS CONTINUE

- LAWS NOW IN EXISTENCE
- ENUGU STATE –THE FEMALE VIOLATION AND DISCRIMINATION LAW 2005 (WHICH PROHIBITS FEMALE GENITAL CUTTING) THE PROHIBITION OF INFRINGEMENT OF A WIDOW’S AND A WIDOWER’S FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS LAW 2001; THERE ARE SIMILAR LAWS IN RIVERS, EBONYI, ANAMBRA AND CROSS RIVER STATES IN NIGERIA
- PENDING BILL IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY- BILL ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (PREVENTION, PROTECTION AND PROHIBITION) ACT 2002 BEING SPONSORED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY COALITION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

## LEGAL PROTECTION EFFORTS CONTINUES

- THE NIGERIAL PENAL AND CRIMINAL CODES PENALIZE RAPE, ASSAULT, BATTERY AND INDECENT ASSAULT EVEN THOUGH THE STANDARD OF PROOF PREVENTS THE PUNISHMENT OF MANY PERPETRATORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WHICH IS REGARDED BY THE POLICE AND THE SOCIETY AS A PRIVATE AND FAMILY ISSUE TO BE ADDRESSED DOMESTICALLY BY MEN WHO ARE HEAD OF FAMILIES
- INTERNATIONAL LAWS RATIFIED BY NIGERIA INCLUDE AFRICAN CHARTER ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES RIGHTS AND THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (DOMESTICATED AS CHILD RIGHTS ACT IN NIGERIA)

## LEGAL PROTECTION EFFORTS CONTINUE

- BILL PENDING IN ANAMBRA STATE – A BILL FOR A LAW TO PROHIBIT VIOLENCE OR ALL FORMS OF HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICES AGAINST WOMEN AND FOR THE ENFORCEMENT OF A LAW AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

## COMMUNITY PREVENTION STRATEGIES IN ENUGU AND ONDO STATES

- INCREASING AWARENESS ON ISSUES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN NIGERIA HAS LED COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONS TO TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT IT
- IN SOME AREAS THE PEOPLE ARE IN THE VANGUARD OF CHECKING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, WHILE IN OTHERS TRADITIONAL RULERS ARE INVOLVED IN CHECKING FAMILY VIOLENCE AND ARE TAKING STEPS TO PREVENT IT.

## ENUGU STATE SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

- IN UGWOGO-NIKE COMMUNITY, ENUGU EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, A WOMEN'S GROUP "UDOKA WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION" DEALS WITH REPORTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REPORTED TO THE GROUP BY THE VICTIM
- IT WAS SET UP IN 1998 BY THE ELDERS FOLLOWING FREQUENT COMPLAINTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST THEM BY MEN
- IN OGUI-NIKE COMMUNITY (ENUGU URBAN) WOMEN ARE ENCOURAGED TO REPORT ACTS OF VIOLENCE ON THEM TO THE TRADITIONAL RULER
- THE TRADITIONAL RULER IS TRAINED ON ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

## ONDO STATE SOUTH WEST

- IN IDOANI LAND A COMMUNITY INHABITED BY SEVERAL COMMUNITIES OF PEOPLE INCLUDING EBIRSA, IGBOMINAS, IGBOS AND OKAS IN OSE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ONDO STATE ACTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
- THE TRADITIONAL RULER ON ASCENSION TO THE THRONE IN 1994 PUT IN PLACE A COMMITTEE TO DEAL WITH VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AS A STRATEGY TO PREVENT FAMILY VIOLENCE
- THE COMMUNITY HAS HAS DIFFERENT WAYS OF PUNISHING PERPETRATORS OF ACTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

## ONDO STATE CONTINUES

- FOR RAPE – THE TRADITIONAL RULER SENDS A VERIFICATION TEAM TO FIND OUT IF THE INCIDENT REALLY HAPPENED. IF IT IS CONFIRMED ...
- THE ACCUSED IS MADE TO PAY MEDICAL BILLS OF VICTIMS WHO ARE NOT MARRIED. IF THE VICTIM IS MARRIED THE CULPRIT IS BANISHED FROM THE COMMUNITY
- IF THE CULPRIT IS AN INDIGENE OF THE COMMUNITY, OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS WILL BOYCOTT HIS HOUSE FOR THREE MONTHS

## ONDO STATE CONTINUES

- FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE- HE COUNSELS THE PARTIES AND RECONCILES THEM ESPECIALLY IF THEY ARE MARRIED
- WHEN PARENTS MALTREAT THE CHILDREN THE OBA RESOLVES THEIR PROBLEMS

## CONCLUSION

- FROM THE FOREGOING DISCUSSION IT IS OBVIOUS THAT CAMPAIGNS TO CREATE AWARENESS, PREVENT AND END ALL FORMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ARE MAKING PROGRESS
- HOWEVER, THERE IS STILL A LOT OF WORK TO DO IN COMMUNITIES TO SENSITIZE THE WOMEN ON STRATEGIES TO PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
- TEACH WOMEN ABOUT THE EXISTING LAWS THAT PUNISH ACTS OF VIOLENCE SO THAT THEY CAN USE THEM
- WINET WILL COLLABORATE WITH PARTNERS INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING COMMUNITY WOMEN TO FORM GROUPS TO CHECK AND PREVENT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AS IN UGWOGO NIKE

## CONCLUSION CONTINUES

- WINET WILL ALSO ENGAGE IN ADVOCACY TO TRADITIONAL RULERS IN COMMUNITIES THAT ARE YET TO TAKE ACTION TO STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
- *THANK YOU ALL FOR LISTENING!!!*

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***DOMESTIC `VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN – A STORY  
OF COMMUNITY PREVENTION STRATEGIES  
FROM TWO STATES IN NIGERIA, ENUGU AND ONDO***

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# **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN -A STORY OF COMMUNITY PREVENTION STRATEGIES FROM TWO STATES IN NIGERIA, ENUGU AND ONDO**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This paper will focus on domestic violence against women in Nigeria and review promising interventions being adopted at the community level in Enugu and Ondo States to change attitudes about violence and violent acts against women.

Violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women which has led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and the prevention of women's full advancement (Beijing Platform For Action, paragraph 118).

Until the Human Rights Conference in Vienna in 1993, the problem of violence against women was viewed as a sensitive and private affair. At the Vienna Conference it was uncovered and exposed as a global and serious problem affecting millions of women and girls of all ages and across all socio-economic, religious, educational and political strata. The conference put into motion the Global Movement to eradicate violence against women, thus giving strong impetus to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Violence Against Women was further identified as one of the twelve critical areas of the African and Beijing Platforms for Action, Equality, Development and Peace in 1995.

## **Definition of Terms**

**Violence** is the application of force, which can kill, injure or hurt people. There are different types of Violence; they include Physical, Verbal, Psychological and Economic Violence.

**Violence**, according to Gelles and Straut is "any act carried out with the intention or perceived intention of hurting another". With the declaration on Violence Against Women (VAW) in 1993, the United Nations further expanded the meaning of violence to include physical, sexual abuse of children in the household, dowry related violence, marital rape, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), non spousal violence, rape, intimidation at work and educational institutions and elsewhere, traditional practices, trafficking in women, exploitation and forced prostitution. According to Article 2 (a) of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, **Domestic Violence** is: "Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, and other traditional practices harmful to women"

## **FORMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Domestic violence refers to violence that occurs in the domestic sphere within the home or by a family member.

In domestic violence (abusive relationships), the abuser may use a number of tactics to maintain power and control over his spouse or partner or relation. These include:

- **Verbal Abuse.**  
Name calling, threatening, intimidation. Some men threaten and intimidate their partners with abusive language.
- **Emotional Abuse.**  
Criticism, public humiliation, isolation and domineering attitude.  
Putting down the partner, talking down on women and telling children stories that are not true about their mothers.
- **Financial Abuse**  
Withholding money, keeping partner impoverished.  
Refusing to provide adequate money for house keeping and feeding or not providing at all. The result is that women who are not earning any money of their own suffer.
- **Physical Abuse**  
Pushing, Slapping, Hitting, Kicking, Choking, Using weapons,  
Locking partner in room, Acid bath. These are very common and often end up in the man beating the women.
- **Sexual Abuse**  
Rape, including marital rape. (In Nigeria marriage confers conjugal rights which include rights to sexual intercourse.), Attacking sexual parts, Forcing partner to perform sexual acts, Women suffer from sexual abuse in the domestic sphere, sometimes including marital rape. There are cases of fathers sexually assaulting their daughters and male children assaulting their mothers and sisters.
- **System Abuse**  
Violating restraining orders, Violating child Custody agreements and telling lies about spouse to court.

The above listed is by no means exhaustive.

Across cultures and nationalities, women and girls suffer various forms of the listed domestic violence as part of daily realities because of their gender.

It is true that women become victims of violence because of their low status and poverty. For decades, Nigerian women have continued to suffer the consequences of violence,

which have sometimes caused death and done great damage to their bodies, lives and emotions. This is partly because culturally, the society accepts that women can be beaten by their spouses or fathers. The Penal Code used in the Northern part of Nigeria permits wife beating as a way of correcting wives, provided the force applied is reasonable. The law does not however explain how to determine reasonableness thus giving a blank cheque to men to beat their wives. Some cultures and groups in Nigeria seem to condone or tolerate certain practices, which are considered violence and abusive against women. Certainly most cases of violence against women could be linked with male privileges and control over women, which in many respects take their roots from traditional and cultural values. Thus, the prevalence of violence against women has remained submerged under social, cultural and religious value orientations in many parts of Nigeria.

In most States of South-East Nigeria, there are some harmful widowhood rites and practices, which are regarded as acts of violence against women. For example, insisting that a woman should drink the water used in bathing the corpse of her dead husband in order to establish innocence of causing the death of the late spouse. It is a known fact that women suffer from many forms of violence outside the home but the most frequent forms of violence against women occur in the home by a known perpetrator - partners, boyfriends or husbands, former partners, stepfathers, brothers, fathers-in-law, sons or other male / female relative in case of widowhood and inheritance practices. In all these, one person gains power through the use of physical or emotional coercion.

#### **REPORTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

Concerned about the issue of domestic violence against women, the media in Nigeria have highlighted reports of domestic violence from parts of the country. The Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (Radio Nigeria) is involved in a campaign to check incidents of rape in the society. The Radio Station brought to national attention the case of two students of institutions of higher learning allegedly raped by three policemen in Enugu State. In the year 2000 in Enugu State, a woman who had just been nominated into the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission by the Federal Government was allegedly killed by her husband, two days after she was reported to have asked the police to protect her.

Let us take a look at a few accounts of violence against women as reported in the Nigerian media from March to August 2005. The reports are seen as the media's intervention to put the issue of domestic violence in the public domain for discussion and possible solution.

#### **MAN BEATS NINE-MONTH PREGNANT WIFE TO DEATH**

**Published in Punch of Thursday, March 24 2005**

“A young man is currently in police net in Lagos for allegedly beating his wife to death during a domestic scuffle. The incident, our correspondent gathered, occurred at the

family's residence on Arigbodo Street, Ola-Ona Area, Ikorodu on Sunday. It was gathered that the man, Mr. Oriyomi Jaiyesimi, allegedly engaged his wife, Basirat, in a fight over a yet-to-be ascertained matter. Apparently affected by the heavy blows received from her husband Basirat, who was nine months pregnant, reportedly went into forced labour. Efforts to save the woman by neighbours and sympathizers proved abortive as she died in the process. Officers from Ikorodu police station subsequently arrested the husband, following a report lodged at the station. The corpse has since been deposited at a mortuary for autopsy”.

### **Published in City People Magazine April 13, 2005**

”The Delta Steel Complex town of Ovwain-Aladja in Udu Local Government Area of Delta was enveloped in fear when the Bishop and Founder of Great Faith Ministry in the town, Most Reverend Kingsley Okoro set his wife, Mrs. Gladys Okoro and their rented home on fire. Investigations revealed that the man of God had returned from an outing when he invited his wife to bring something from his car that he claimed to have forgotten inside. Before the wife returned with the key, the Bishop had sprayed the living room with petrol and lit a stick of matches on the rug carpet. It was gathered that the wife started to plead with her husband not to set the house on fire, but her pleadings fell on deaf ears as the Bishop left the house and locked the door leaving the wife to be roasted. While the house was on fire, sympathizers and neighbours rushed into the living room to rescue the Bishop's wife who had almost been burnt to death. She was then rushed to Warri General Hospital. City People further learnt that the before the fire incident, the Bishop had often threatened to kill his wife for unknown reasons. The victim was shown on State television and she later died in the hospital”.

### **SEXUAL VIOLENCE:**

Sexual violence seems to be the most widely reported in the media.

### **Saturday Sun July 16<sup>th</sup> 2005, page 47**

“A woman who suspected that an adult in her neighbourhood was molesting her four-year-old daughter sexually, Tuesday, at about seven o'clock in the morning, had her worst nightmare confirmed. According to a source, the bad guy in the house was exposed when the housewife identified as Amina Garba of Daki Tara quarters, Katsina went to a shop in their house and met the owner of the shop on top of her daughter having an illicit romance.

The man Ashiru who is currently being detained by police was arrested following an alarm raised by the distraught woman. The girl, it was learnt often accused the man of sticking his fingers into her private part whenever her parents discovered bloodstains on her pants”.

**Daily Sun Thursday July 14<sup>th</sup> 2005, page 3**

“A community in Delta has placed a curse on six armed robbers who raped their daughters in Abakaliki, Ebonyi state.

Daily Sun exclusively reported on Thursday June 16<sup>th</sup> how a female student of Ebonyi State University and her mother were raped by a six-man gang of armed robbers”.

**Daily Sun Thursday July 28<sup>th</sup> 2005, page 19**

“A sixty -year old native doctor has been held by the police in Lagos for impregnating his tenant’s fourteen- year old sister. The victim who is now four months old pregnant told the policemen at Okota Division that she became pregnant after series of sex with the landlord. Police has given permission for both parties to reconcile because the sixty year old had signified intention to marry the girl”.

**Daily Sun Wednesday August 10<sup>th</sup> 2005**

“For forcefully having carnal knowledge of a six -year old girl, a thirty-year old man, Mr. Joel Umanna is now being remanded in prison custody.

Umanna, a native of Ikparakwa in Oruk-Anam local government area of Akwa-Ibom State but resident in Port-Harcourt was alleged to have lured the little unsuspecting girl with one hundred naira and had carnal knowledge of her”.

**Daily Sun, Friday August 12<sup>th</sup> 2005, page 10**

“Two Docked Over Rape of 7-Year Old Girl

Two men have been arraigned before an Ikeja Magistrate’s Court over their alleged roles in the rape of a seven- year old girl. They were charged for conspiracy and defilement”.

**STATISTICS**

Many cases of violence against women and rape are not reported by the victims for fear of repercussions or stigma that might arise. For instance, many women who are battered do not want to expose their husbands to the public. However, the Chairman of the National Population Commission in Nigeria gave some figures at an event to mark the 2005 World Population Day celebration. In the Daily Sun newspaper of Wednesday, July 13<sup>th</sup> 2005, on page 6, the Chairman of Nigeria’s National Population Commission (NPC), Chief Samu’ila Danko Makama said that in Nigeria one in every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex or abused in some other way – most often by someone she knows including her husband or another male family member.

Giving the data in commemoration of the 2005 World Population Day Celebration, the NPC chairman said one woman in four has been abused and in Sub-Saharan Africa, young women aged 15-24 are more than three times likely to be infected with HIV as

young men. He said over 70,000 teenage girls are married everyday and nearly 40,000 give birth on daily basis.

The statistics show that indeed many Nigerian women are victims of domestic violence. According to the Amnesty International 2005 Report on Violence Against Women in Nigeria, one –third of women in the country are believed to have experienced sexual, psychological and physical violence in the family. The report states that 50% of men and women justified the beating of women. The study also showed that 64.5% of women and 61.3% of men said that a husband has the right in hitting or beating the wife for some reasons including lateness in cooking food.

It is in the light of this that some communities are developing strategies to prevent domestic violence in their areas.

### **LEGAL PROTECTION EFFORTS**

Since 1999 when, Nigeria returned to democratic rule, the Women's Movement in Nigeria and various groups have engaged in advocacy campaigns for legislations to check various forms of violence against women, even though there are provisions in existing laws to punish perpetrators of assault and rape, among others. There are advocacy efforts for the domestication and implementation of important human rights treaties and regulations which offer protection to women such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol both of which Nigeria has ratified. This is important because the Nigerian Constitution requires domestication of International treaties before implementation. The Nigerian Penal and Criminal Codes also penalize rape (with life sentence), assault, battery and indecent assault. The standard of proof prevents the punishment of many perpetrators of rape and domestic violence which is regarded by the police and the society as a private and family issue to be addressed domestically by the men who are heads of families. Other international laws ratified by Nigeria include the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been domesticated as the Child Rights Act. The implementation strategies are less cumbersome as sexual offences and child abuse are penalized.

In Enugu State, The Prohibition of Infringement of A Widow's and Widower's Fundamental Rights Law 2001, was initiated by the Nigeria Association of Women Journalists, Enugu State Chapter to check the harmful widowhood rites to which widows are subjected to in the area. Similar laws are in place in Rivers, Ebonyi, Anambra and Cross River States. There are however no reported cases where the laws have been implemented. This is largely due to ignorance of the laws by the populace and the law enforcement organs of the State. The laws prohibit acts such as forcing widow's to shave their hair while mourning, to wail or weep loudly at intervals after their husband's death or to sit on the floor anytime during the burial rites.

Enugu State has also passed another law titled the Female Violation And Discrimination Law 2005. It prohibits the practice of Female Genital Cutting (FGC), which is seen as an act of violence against women in the area. According to the National Demographic Health Survey Report 1999, Enugu State has a Female Genital Cutting prevalence rate of 59%.

In 2001, Global Rights Nigeria (former International Human Rights) organized a stakeholder's conference in respect of the bill on violence against women, through which the Legislative Advocacy Coalition on Violence Against Women (LACVAW) was formed. The Coalition drafted a bill on Violence against Women (Prevention, Protection and Prohibition) Act 2002. The bill was formally presented to the National Assembly on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2002 but was not passed before the tenure of that Assembly expired. However, the bill is now being reviewed to be re-presented to the current National Assembly. The Categories as contemplated in the Act are:

- a) Sexual Violence: Rape, Incest, Sexual abuse, Sexual slavery, Sexual exploitation and Sexual harassment.
- b) Domestic / Family Violence
- c) Psychological Violence: Stalking, Intimidation
- d) Harmful Traditional Practices: Widowhood rites, Female Genital Mutilation, Denial of economic rights, Child marriage and Child betrothal
- e) Physical Violence: Assault, Battery, Acid baths and Ritual violence.

The Legislative Advocacy Coalition of Violence Against Women is working hard to ensure that the bill is passed into law.

In Anambra State, a bill for a law to prohibit violence or all forms of harmful Traditional Practices Against Women and for the Enforcement of Law Against Gender Based Violence was introduced in the State House of Assembly in 2000 but has not been passed.

### **COMMUNITY PREVENTION STRATEGIES IN ENUGU AND ONDO STATES**

Domestic violence is prevalent in several communities in Enugu, Ondo and other States in Nigeria. However, the increasing awareness on the issues of domestic violence against women in Nigeria has led communities and organizations to take action to prevent it. There are remarkable efforts by non-governmental organizations, women's groups, government and other agencies to create awareness on violence against women and to campaign against it. This has led to women's groups being sensitized to put in place strategies to prevent domestic violence in their communities. In some areas, the people themselves are in the vanguard of checking violence against women, while in others the traditional rulers are involved in checking family violence and are taking steps to prevent 8

it. However, there are some communities where the women are not sensitized to the issue. There are several coalitions of organizations and non-governmental organizations in Nigeria campaigning to end violence against women, they include the Legislative Advocacy Coalition on Violence Against Women (LACVAW), the National Coalition on Violence Against Women and Project Alert on Violence Against. Here are some strategies used by some communities in Enugu and Ondo States in Nigeria to check domestic violence.

### **ENUGU STATE SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA**

In Ugwogo-Nike Community, Enugu East local government area of Enugu State, a women's group "Udoka Women Association" deals with reports of violence against women reported to the group by victim. The group uses dialogue to resolve problems between the parties, which are mainly the husband and wife. The strategy is that after a woman has made reports that her husband had beaten her, all women of the group visit the husband to find out what happened that led to his beating the woman. During the visit, the women hold a dialogue with the man as well as advise him against such abuse on the woman. The man who feels ashamed that many women and people of the community have heard that he beat his wife, he feels disgraced. This leads to a change of attitude and then he stops beating the wife. This strategy has worked very well in Ugwogo-Nike.

The Udoka Women's Group was set up in 1998 by the elders in the Community as a result of complaints by women of violent acts on them by men. The group resolves an average of ten cases of reported domestic violence in the family every month. The group also engages in building community development projects and has built a school hall for a secondary school in the community. The traditional ruler of the Community, Igwe Linus Ekte is very supportive of the activities of the women. The Igwe who has twelve women as members of his Cabinet banned the practice of Female Genital Cutting often regarded as violence against women in the area in 2000.

In another Community, Ogui-Nike (Enugu Urban) in Enugu State, the women are encouraged to report acts of violence on them to the traditional ruler. There is a community law in the area that forbids domestic matters being taken to the Police.

This is because one is not allowed to take a fellow community member to court without exhausting the option of seeking resolution by the traditional ruler's council. According to the traditional ruler of the community, Igwe Tony Ojukwu, a veteran journalist, his cabinet is re-orienting the men of the community to imbibe modern ways of resolving conflict in their family and desist from battering and physically assaulting their wives or children. This was formerly acceptable as a form of corrective measure for women and

children. At community forums, the Igwe speaks against violence against women and encourages victims to make reports to the palace.

During an advocacy visit by the Legislative Advocacy Coalition on Violence Against Women (LACVAW) to Igwe Tony Ojukwu in 2003, he recounted an incident in which a woman reported to him that her husband beat her and had been beating her for sometime. The Igwe summoned the man to the palace and explained to him that it was wrong to beat his wife because it was an act of violence. The Igwe advised him that if he had a serious problem with his wife, there were various options to take to seek redress. These include holding a discussion with the woman to resolve the problems, or by making a report to the palace. After the Igwe's admonition, the man asked him "Igwe, so I can no longer beat my wife" and the Igwe responded in the affirmative, emphasizing that violence is no longer an acceptable way of corrective measure. He explained to the man that since the cause for violence against women and disagreements in families sometimes border on customs and tradition, such matters should be brought to the Palace for resolution.

Since 1997, when he ascended the throne as the traditional ruler of the community, Igwe Tony Ojukwu had been encouraging both men and women of the community to bring their domestic problems to the palace, where he works with some members of his Traditional Council. He said problems handled by the palace court include disinheritance of widows, wife battery and other acts of violence against women. He said the Palace handles an average of twenty cases of violence against women in one year. The Igwe gave an account of a young man who started keeping late nights soon after he got married. When his wife sought to find out why this was so, he beat her up and the woman reported to the Igwe. The young man was admonished and asked to buy the wife a piece of wrapper. He bought it and brought it to the palace where he presented it to his wife in the presence of the witnesses while promising not to beat her again. Igwe Tony Ojukwu is one of the traditional rulers in Enugu State trained by the British Department for International Development DFID on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR).

## **ONDO STATE SOUTH-WEST NIGERIA**

In Idoani-land inhabited by several communities of people including Ebiras Igbominas Igbos and Okas (a farming community), in Ose local government area of Ondo State, South –West Nigeria, His Royal Majesty, Oba Aderemi Atewogboye the second, Alaani of Idoani-land, explains that acts of violence against women are common in the area. It is for this reason that on ascension of the throne twelve years ago, the Oba put in place a committee to deal with issues of domestic violence against women, as a strategy to prevent family violence. In the community, the traditional ruling council advises the people to report only criminal cases to the police, while other matters including violence 10

against women and rape are taken to the Oba's Palace court. The community has different ways of punishing perpetrators of violence against women so as to deter others.

## **RAPE**

In the case of rape, the Oba sends two of his chiefs to the scene to interview the people to verify whether it really happened. If the husband of the woman raped or the parents of the girl raped are not interested in the matter being taken up by the Police, a fine of a goat and money is imposed on the perpetrator to appease the gods of the land. It is the belief that if this is not done, crops will not grow on the land anymore. As a farming community, the people do not condone anything that will affect their source of livelihood. The accused is also made to bear the cost of medical bills of the victim. If the victim is a married woman, the culprit is sent away from the community. If the culprit is an indigene of the community, community members will boycott his house for period ranging from three months to one year.

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

The Oba says that cases of wife battery are reported to him very regularly, but he does not have the figures. In the case of wife battery, the Oba explains that reasons adduced by the husbands for beating their wives include allegations that the woman did not cook delicious meals, did not serve food on time, comes back to the house late, goes out too often or that she is unfaithful. According to him, from his independent investigations, he has found out that when some men want to take a second wife, they begin to maltreat and beat the first wife so as to make her unhappy. Also when some of the men are having extra-marital relationships, they keep late nights and when their wives complain, they beat them. In all cases reported to the Oba by the women, he ensures that the committee listens to both parties before judgement is given. He said that occasionally some couples who have been fighting report to him that they are no longer willing to stay together. However, he counsels such couples to go back together.

In cases of violence by parents on children, the Oba explains that parents come to report that their children do not want to help on their farms or refuse to run errands when sent. The parents could then beat them or refuse to pay school fees for them. Some children go to report to the Oba that their father is having extra marital relationship, thereby neglecting them by not paying their school fees. The Oba counsels both parents and children and resolves the problems.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the foregoing, it is evident that various campaigns to create awareness, prevent and end all forms of domestic violence against women are making progress. However, there are some communities where the messages of the campaign to end violence against

women are yet to permeate. There is the need to educate the communities especially the women of the laws that are available to protect them from violence thus giving legal backing to the campaign to end violence against women. This is a challenge that our organization, Women Information Network will take on in more rural communities in Enugu State. WINET will work with interested partners to support women to form groups to check and prevent domestic violence against women in their communities. WINET will also engage in advocacy to the traditional rulers in communities that are yet to take action to stop domestic violence against women.

Thank you all for listening!

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