

## INVOLVEMENT OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH PROGRAMME IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA.

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### Abstract

The study investigated involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the implementation of sexual and reproductive health programme in Cross River State, Nigeria. One research question and one hypothesis were used to guide the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study while stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used in selecting 500 respondents from a population of 1000 from 6 local government areas in the study area. Non – governmental Organizations and Sexual and Reproductive Health Questionnaire (NGOSRHQ) which had two sections (A and B) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts in measurement and evaluation in University of Calabar. Cronbach alpha reliability was used for ascertaining the reliability coefficient which yielded 0.69 to 0.87. Hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. One sample t-test analysis was used to analysis the data using SPSS. The result showed that the involvement of NGOs in implementation of sexual and reproductive health programme of adolescent girls is significantly higher in the study area. From the findings, it was recommended that sex education should be introduced in the school curriculum so as to enlighten the youths on the needs of good sexual and reproductive health.

**Keywords:** Non-governmental, organizations, implementation, sexual, reproductive health, programme.

### Introduction

Cross River State, is indeed one of the states in Nigeria where Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) operate in their numbers. The state plays host to local and international NGOs. Their choice of Cross River State may be as a result of the historic antecedence of the state. Firstly as the first colonial seat of Administration in Nigeria. Secondly, because of the divers cultural heritage of Cross River State and the problems associated with its culture and cultural practices as well as the frequent call by the state government on individuals and corporate bodies to form a synergy with the government so as to fast-track development in the state.

A careful study of NGOs' involvement in Cross River State have shown that majority of these NGOs operate in Calabar, the Cross River State Capital. Infact only

very few of them have their head offices in other local government areas. However, some NGOs who have offices in Calabar also intervene in the Central and Northern Senatorial Districts of the state. The following NGOs operate in the study area; Social Health Development Foundation (SHDF), Concern Universal, Grassroot women empowerment programme (GWEP) others are daughters of Mary and sons of Joseph, save life foundation.

Generally, NGOs that operate in Cross River State are: Nigerian conservation foundation (NCF), Girls' Power initiative (GPI), Living Earth Foundation, Africa forest Research Project and Drill Ranch, Centre for Development and Population Activities (CDPA), Pro-health Organization, Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria, Life Empowerment Foundation, Organization for Rural development. Furthermore, other NGOs are Community Development Volunteers' Network (CDVN), Radiant Women Development option, Non-governmental coalition on environment (NGOCE), War against HIV/AIDs and malaria.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are not new. The existence is however traced to the First World War. Shedding light on the issue, the Organization for Economic Corporation and Development, OECD (2008) submits that the first generation of NGOs began shortly after the First world War. A classical example includes the caritas Agencies which were in number of countries as well as the Near East Foundation in the United States. The formation of NGOs was however informed by the growing needs for the welfare of the victims of the war. It could be recalled that the war left in its trail-poverty, hardship, diseases, orphans, hunger as well as lack of basic necessities of life, such as food, shelter and clothing.

The emergence of NGOs in the Cross River State, which comprised all the local government areas, is primarily to lend a helping hand to the government. The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria does not only recognize the three tiers of government which are the Federal, State and Local Government, but the constitution has also conferred authority on these levels of government to protect her citizenry as well as provide basic infrastructure for the well-being of the people. The explains why government builds hospitals; roads, provide potable drinking water, electricity, security of lives and properties as well as education. Experience have shown that hitherto the government used to try her best in providing these services at littler or no cost to her citizens. For instance, there was free education in the then Western Nigeria during Chief Obafemi Awolowo's administration. In the 70s there were free meals for students in tertiary institutions. Until the late 80s medical bills in government hospitals were almost free.

Today, the story is different. The government is obviously faced with more challenges than she ever had. For instance there are more people today competing for the services the government is making available in our hospital, schools and markets. These explain why there is systematic failure in our public institutions. For example safe drinking water and electricity have become a luxury in Nigeria. This has brought about condemnation, hence a way out, the government has called on NGOs to assist by way of providing succor to the less privileged so that the citizenry can have a new least of life. In response to the above call, there has been influx of NGOs in the state. These NGOs specialize in different areas of human endeavor. While some are concerned about addressing environmental problems such as erosion, deforestation, global warming, others are concern about educational programmes such as illiteracy

eradication and curbing examination malpractice/examination ethics. Interestingly also is the fact that some NGOs are interested in health related issues. These NGOs address issues such as HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Eye care.

Community development is not a new or strange ideas among people of Cross River state. The idea dates back to period when people began to live together under a common leadership such as the Ntol of Ogoja, Utsu of Obudu, Obong of Calabar and Ndidem of the Qua etc. During this period, various age grades were engage in providing security for the community, they also constructed roads, and did the cleaning of village squares. Some of the community based projects are building of town halls, market, schools, bridges, health centres and several more are product of community based projects. It is perhaps in recognition of this fact that the Cross River State government place premium on community development programmes or projects as a vehicle for rapid rural transformation. This, it has done by the establishment by the Cross River community Based poverty reduction Agency. To this end, it has held series of meeting with the NGOs through its representative with a view of challenging them to be up and doing.

From the foregoing, it is evident that NGOs activities are numerous in Northern Cross River State, but the extent to which the activities are complement the effort of state government in the study area is commendable.

In 1999 the United Nations fund for international partnerships (UNFIP), commonly known as the Turner foundation, provided US \$2.34 million to UNFPA for "improving reproductive health in pacific Region. A multi-island, multi-sectoral approach" it has provided adolescent reproductive health activities in the pacific, based on the development of a comprehensive regional adolescent reproductive health (ARH) project framework United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP, 1999).

The overall goal of the specific regional project is aimed at defining and developing new initiative to meet the unmet reproductive and sexual health needs of adolescents' especially adolescent girls. The project recognized the distinct and divers interest of young people and the need to adapt innovative strategies to address ARH issues.

Umoren, (2002) asserted that adolescent are particularly vulnerable because of their lack of information and access to relevant service in most countries. It is apparent that in order to safeguard privacy and client confidentiality, young people must be provided with access to reproductive health service from outlets other than the mainstream health system. Moreover adolescents prefer to access reproductive health (RH) information and service from Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) instead of the main stream network. This is mainly due to the personalized service, privacy and confidentiality which are accorded to clients at NGOs run-clinics.

The percentage of teenage pregnancies and STDs is one of the major problems faced by youth. Smyke (2000) reported that at least 500,000 young women die of pregnancy related cases each year, 99 percent of them in developing countries. Sexual abuse and young adult reproductive health: Most young adult reproductive health programmes generally operate on the premise that young people are engaging in consensual sex. Yet sexual abuse is unfortunately common among youths. Sexual abuse is a violation perpetrated by a person who holds or is perceive to hold, power over someone who is vulnerable. The abuse may physical, verbal and emotional components. It includes such sexual violation as rape, sexual assault, sexual

harassment, incest, sexual molestation etc. Some victims experience sexual activity that is neither wanted nor agree to. Some Non-government Organizations (NGOs) also consider very early age at marriage to be a form of sexual abuse. Adolescent girls who have been abused often have difficulty differentiating between sexual and affection behaviours, and have a incidence of teenage pregnancy and STD/HIV infection than in their non-abuse peers. Girls' power initiative (GPI) educates adolescent girls aged 10-18 years about human sexually, sexual and reproductive health, rights and responsibilities. Under these broad headings; several strategies have been adopted and they are as follows:-

- i. To assist the girls to achieve personal empowerment by rejecting gender inequality
- ii. To educate the girls to take action to overcome the risk to their health arising from gender violence and discrimination.
- iii. To sensitize them to take social actions and educate their peers on risky behaviours harmful to their health.
- iv. To give information to assist them to overcome harmful traditions.

In order to educate adolescent girls, GPI makes use of public and media outreach, policy advocacy, a Gender Development institute, a regular newsletter, radio and television. Through these media, the organization is able to provide for adolescent girls to meet and share information, ideas, speak out and identify their needs, aspiration, as well as learn options from which they adopt solution to problems.

Asia (2002) states that advocacy and awareness raising techniques to mobilize women on health matters have been used by Non-governmental Organizations like Mac Arthur foundation, Girls Power Initiative, International Center for Reproductive Health and Sexual Right (INCRHSR) etc. who volunteer to support the government. Specifically, Mac Arthur foundation which supported initiative in India, Mexico and Nigeria modeled sexuality education programmes for in-and-out-of-school youths. Improving young people's access to productive health service and promoting an enabling environment for young people to seek those services. The foundation is dedicated to helping groups and individuals foster lasting improvement in human condition. The foundation also fosters development of knowledge, nurtures individual creativity, strengthens institution, helps to improve public policy, and provide information to the public primarily through support for public interest media. The foundation supported the international conference on population and Development in Cairo (1994) by working on maternal mortality aimed at increasing the chances of women having safer pregnancy and deliveries (Asia, 2002).

Government has been making notable efforts in bringing about rural development. Despite the effort made by government, illiteracy is still on the increase in Cross River State. However, projects seeking development in these rural areas are so many that NGOs and individuals community have been making their contribution towards community development as well. For instance, poverty is the order of the day. The incidence of unemployment among young school leavers is better imagined than explained. There is also the problem of child trafficking among adolescent girls which may lead to premarital sex as well as unwanted pregnancies which may result in abortion and destruction of the reproductive organs.

**Research question**

1. To what extent are non-governmental organizations involved in the implementation of sexual and reproductive health programme?

**Hypothesis**

The involvement of NGOs in the implementation of sexual and reproductive health programme of adolescent girls is not significantly high.

**Methodology**

This research adopted survey research design. This design was used because the researchers make description of variable the way and manners it appears as at the time of investigation without further manipulation. The study was conducted in Cross River State. Six local government areas were selected for the study. The population consists of 1000 respondents. From this target population a sample of 500 adolescent girls was drawn from six local government areas of Cross River State for the study.

Instrument used for data collection was a researchers’ developed instrument titled “Non-governmental Organizations and Sexual Reproductive Health Questionnaire (NGOSRHQ)”. The questionnaire has two sections (A and B). Section A consisted of personal data while section B consisted of 20 items. The instrument was validated by three experts in measurement and evaluation while Cronbach Alpha was used to test the reliability and the coefficient yielded 0.69 to 0.87. Data obtained through questionnaire administration were coded and analyzed via SPSS using one sample t-test analysis.

**Presentation of result**

**HO1:** The involvement of NGOs in the implementation of sexual and reproductive health programme of adolescent girls is not significantly high.

Table 1 indicated that at .05 level of significance, the calculated t-value of 29.226 was greater than the critical t value of 1.96 with 499 degree of freedom. Given that the sample mean (18.428) is greater than the expected mean ( $\mu = 15.00$ ), this means that the involvement of NGOs in implementation of sexual and reproductive health programme of adolescent girls is significantly higher than expectation. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate upheld.

**Table 1:** Summary of the one sample t-test analysis of the involvement of non-governmental organizations in sexual and reproductive health programme of adolescent girls in Cross River State.

Variable	N	X	SD	$\mu$	T	Sig-level
Sexual and reproductive health	500	18.428	2.623	15.00	29.226	.000

### **Discussion of finding**

The result of testing the hypothesis as presented in Table 1 revealed a positive involvement of NGOs in the implementation of sexual and reproductive health programme of adolescent girls significantly high. This findings is in line with International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) Conference held in Mauritius (2018) which state that, in most African countries abortion laws are restrictive, illegally induced and unsafe abortion constitute a major cause of maternal mortality, hence an importance and growing public health problem. Adolescent are especially vulnerable. They have extremely high rates of maternal mortality. They are the target of sexual assaults and they also have STD and HIV infection rates that are higher than those of adults. The finding is in consonance with the view of Umoren (2002) who states that adolescents are particularly vulnerable because of their lack of information and access to relevant service in most countries.

### **Conclusion**

The task of providing for the people alone by the state government is no longer fashionable, hence the ever increasing needs of the citizenry. The upsurge of NGOs in the state particularly in recent times should be seen as prayers answered. This is more so because NGOs efforts are obviously seem to complement the effort of the government in meeting the needs of the people. The collaboration of both the state government and non-governmental organizations is a sure bet for meeting the yearning of the masses. Based on the findings it was concluded that the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the implementation of sexual and reproductive health programme of adolescent girls is significantly higher in the study area.

### **Recommendations**

1. In order to prevent HIV/AIDS as well as sexual abuse, societal awareness should be created by bringing the issue of sexual abuse in to the public domain.
2. The awareness must involve policy makers, parents, teachers, community leaders, police and the media with educational campaigns.
3. Government and non-governmental organizations should organize town hall meeting and public awareness campaign programmes in the study area.

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