



Women's Voice

NEWSLETTER



A Publication of **Ajegunle Community Project (ACP)**

Motto: To reduce social inequalities among grassroots women and the girl child

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ACP INAUGURATES ANTI-VIOLENCE CLUBS IN NEW SCHOOLS

As part of efforts to address the problem of Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination in our society, the Ajegunle Community Project (ACP) on the 1st of July 2009, held a one day Peer Educators Training workshop on Gender-Based Violence under the Education District Six, which culminated to the inauguration of ACP Anti-Violence Clubs in the various schools.

The reason for working with schools

at Oshodi-Isolo education district is because of the location which is a ghetto area that is prone to sexual harassment, rape, child abuse, fighting, youth's restiveness, gambling, and smoking of Indian hemp.

Albeit, we want more of the Anti-Violence Clubs in Secondary Schools whereby the ACP Facilitators Manual will be utilised in order to instill behavioral change among the students.

Schools in attendance were; Metropolitan Senior College Isolo, Isolo High School, Ajumoni Senior Grammar School Okota,

Ire-Akari Senior Grammar School Okota, Ijeshatedo-Junior Grammar School, Central Senior High School, Ilamoye Senior Grammar School, Ilamoye Junior Grammar School, and Eko Girls Junior Grammar School.

Also, the workshop drew 258 students that participated from the selected Schools mentioned above; and the programme of event consisted of opening session, paper presentation session, an interactive session, question, and comments.

Alhaja Roli Raliat Daniju, the Executive Director ACP, in her

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ACP officials and officials from Education District VI Oshodi-Isolo L.G.A.

ACP PRESENTS ONE HOUR DOCUMENTARY OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE VICTIMS

We bring you another edition of our newsletter for the year 2009. This edition highlights our Youth enlightenment programme in Schools on Gender-Based Violence and the inauguration of ACP Anti-Violence Clubs in Education District Six under Oshodi-Isolo Local Government Area.

Our awareness campaigns on Violence Against Women took a new dimension with the production of a film documentary, "Sound of Silence", which was produced by Mr. Wole Oguntokun, a seasoned film producer is aimed at educating the students on their rights and to sensitise people on nature and implication of abuse and discrimination on the Girl-Child in our society.

Also, there are reports of one day Seminar challenging Patriarchy with members of the Community Development Association (CDA) at Amuwo Odofin Local Government Area and Ifelodun Local Council Development Area on the new bill on Violence Against Women passed by the Lagos State House of Assembly. Women Political Forum was organised to bring experience female politicians to share knowledge with upcoming ones and the need for more women to participate in active politics; while women's rights is an issue for our Perspective Column.

Our regular cartoon and Workshop Photo Speak are there in this edition. Finally, do remember to send us your comments and contributions.

Domestic violence is common in Nigeria and cuts across every grouping: religious, ethnic, class, and generation. It is to this end the Ajegunle Community Project (ACP) Anti-Violence Club in relation to Gender Based Violence in schools was set up to tackle the frequent abuses the girl-child faces in school and even at home.

To further achieve this objective, ACP produced a one-hour documentary with the theme: "Sound of Silence" through a seasoned producer, Mr. Wole Oguntokun, who is also the producer of the "Vagina Monologues" the Nigerian story, a play written to raise awareness on violence against women. The one hour documentary is aimed at educating the students on their rights and to sensitise the audience on nature and implication of abuse and discrimination on the Girl-Child in our society.

Alhaja Roli Raliat Daniju, the Executive Director of Ajegunle Community Project, in her welcome address, said the proper psychological development of the students is very important because they are the leaders of tomorrow. She went further to say that ACP exists to reduce social inequalities among grassroots women and the girl child.

She concluded by advising the students to be focused on their studies, that this is how their parents would be proud of them. Also, she informed the students not to hesitate to come to the office of ACP at 64A Kirikiri Road Olodi Apapa Lagos whenever they have any problem. She said ACP has youth friendly centre where they can be counseled.

Speaking at the event, Mrs. Mubo Akosile said that the documentary was produced to compliment the work of the teachers/counselors working with ACP Anti-violence clubs in the schools. She added that during the editing of the documentary the teachers and head of the local education district were called to make inputs to the project; having taken into cognisance the roles of teachers in changing behavioral patterns of the students.

On challenges that confront adolescents, Mrs. Akosile posited that access to pornographic materials and sites on the Internet is a problem to the proper upbringing of a child. She advised the students that if they are going to make use of the Internet they should visit educative sites that would develop their minds. More so, she enjoined the female students not to dress in a provocative

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One of the resource persons during the presentation of the One-hour Documentary on Gender-Based Violence.

WOMEN'S POLITICAL FORUM

At both the national and international levels, there is a growing academic interest in the level of participation of women in politics. The 'third wave' of globalisation emphasises the issue of democratisation, women and human rights, which dominate world interests in Africa. African women, especially in Nigeria, are exploited and marginalized.

Despite the fact that women constitute about 49% of the total population, they are discriminated against in the political process. The marginalisation of Nigerian women is more pronounced in the democratisation processes. Women in Nigeria constitute more than two-thirds of the country's 70% adult non literate population while they hold less than 5% of the important decision making positions.

The present National Assembly in Nigeria has an appallingly low average of 0.05% of women in both houses. This limited conception of the political relevance of women is responsible for their political

marginalization. While it is important to increase the number of women in public offices, the more fundamental question raised is about the character of democracy in Nigeria.

Against this backdrop, the Ajegunle Community Project (ACP) organised a one-day Workshop on Women Political Forum on the 3rd of February, 2009 at the Embassy Hotel Lagos. The objective of the Women Political forum was to bring experienced female politician to share their experiences with the younger ones, challenges faced by them, and to learn from each other.

Alhaja Roli Raliat Daniju, the Executive Director ACP in her welcome remarks at the event, said that women's voice could only be heard if they are actively involved in politics. According to her, the era of "siddon look" attitude of women has gone. Women should wake up from their slumber and take their destiny into their hands.

Mrs. Olushola Akai the Head of

Programme ACP in her paper on women participation in politics said, there has been growing acceptance of the importance to the society of active participation of women in decision-making. The actual participation of women in politics is not significant. In the National Policy on women, provision for 30% political positions for women was made. Nevertheless, women do not represent up to 3% of the political positions.

She mentioned the cause of under representation of women in politics; lack of gender sensitive attitude towards women in the society, unaccountability of elected officials and political parties for promoting gender equality and women's participation in public life, lack of social awareness of the importance of balance participation of women and men in decision-making and unwillingness on the part of men to share power. However, the forum highlighted the following strategies to succeed as a political aspirant;

Making Decision to Run For Election

- Be personally convinced that you have the urge to run.
- Reflect over your decision to run over a period of time, to be truly convinced.
- Ensure that you have the qualities of a good politician.
- Weigh the negative and positive sides of politics.
- Be challenged by the odds and obstacles that you are likely to meet.
- Put appropriate strategies in place to check all odds against you.
- Be convinced that you can make a difference in the lives of your people.
- Be sure that you first discuss



Mrs. Olushola Akai making her speech at the Women's Political Forum

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ACP PRESENTS ONE HOUR DOCUMENTARY...

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manner that would negatively attract the opposite sex, and that they should not go to places that could endanger them to be raped.

The climax of the event was the showing of the documentary to the participants. The documentary titled, "Sounds of Silence" contains stories of victims of violence raging from rape, sexual harassment to women trafficking. Some violence against women and girl child scenes were also acted. At the end the programme, there was a questions and comments session, which was handled by Mrs. Olushola Akai, the Head of Programme ACP.

WOMEN'S POLITICAL FORUM

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your intention with your trusted friend(s) and political mentor.

- Win the confidence and support of your family.
- Confide in the relevant political party chieftains that are close to you.

Work with Time Table of Election

- Design your personal time table to fit into the INEC/SIEC approved time table.
- In designing your campaign schedule, do not consider any constituency too big or too small to be reached.
- Ensure that there are free

days, so that your team is not exhausted.

What Qualities make you stand out?

- Your past achievement in public service or private life.
- Your contributions to the public service or private life.
- Those personal and professional qualities of yours that can be used to serve political purposes and the people better.

What do you have to offer?

- Design a programme that is suited to the post you are contesting.
- Emphasise on the programmes that will appeal to the people.
- Make promises you can fulfill.

Make Specific and General Offers

- Target specific groups and make offers that will appeal to them.
- Checks to know what are the most important things people want or need in their various constituencies.

Strategy of Delivery

- Put your ideas in pamphlets.
- Simplify your ideas into leaflets.
- Use diagrams and drawings to show what you are saying.
- Translate your programmes into key languages spoken in your area.
- **Knowing Your Constituency**
- Identify or note the number of polling booths in your constituency.
- Visit it physically, wards, local government.

Assessing Opponents

- Know the strengths and weaknesses of your opponents (e.g. are they wealthier, drunkards, and flippant person.)
- Take the key messages and promises of your fellow contestants and weigh them against yours - make sure you have quality and better contributions to make.
- Check the excesses of your opponents - use of thugs, attempt to rig etc through the law.
- Ensure that all contestants have zero - tolerance for electoral malpractices.

LEGAL CASES



1. A woman (name withheld), light complexioned, of average height, married for 27 years with children, came to our office to complain of how she's been consistently battered by her husband. She said the husband do mercilessly beat her whenever they a minor quarrel at home. Our counselor asked what she wants us to do on the matter. Her response was that she wants divorce. We (ACP) have referred the matter to Welfare Department of Ajeromi-Ifelodun Local Government Area.

2. In the last edition of our Newsletter, we brought you the story of a 7 year old girl that was raped by a 37years old man who happens to be the friend of her father. Our Legal department is handling the case at the Magistrate Court, Malu Road, Apapa, Lagos. But recently, both parties have decided to settle the case out of court.

3. Miss Rose (not her real name) a young and dark in complexioned lady reported to us of her step father who has been making sexual advances to her. She said she is being victimized by the step father at home, because of her refusal to succumb to his pressure. She went further; that the man has refused to give her money for food, and making her stay at home

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-ACP ORGANISES ONE DAY INTERACTIVE SEMINAR ON MEDIA CAMPAIGN CHALLENGING PATRIARCHY IN IFELODUN AND AMUWO-ODOFIN LGA

The Ajegunle Community Project (ACP), with the support of Action-Aid Nigeria held a one day Seminar challenging Patriarchy with members of the Community Development Association (CDA) at Amuwo Odofin Local Government Area and Ifelodun Local Council Development Area on the 30th April and 28th May 2009 respectively.

There was media campaign and advocacy visit by staff of the Ajegunle Community Project (ACP) to the office of the Chairman of Ajeromi-Ifelodun Local Government Area and the wife of the Chairman Ifelodun Local Council Development Area. This is to intimate them on domestic violence laws that was newly passed by the Lagos State House of Assembly.

The law is to improve protection of women and children from domestic violence, family violence, and other international instruments like the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the National Policy on Women were also discussed. They said ACP is doing a laudable work on awareness raising and they are ready to partner with the organisation.

Mrs. Olushola Akai, the Head of Programme, ACP, said the objective of the media campaign is to address the problem of patriarchy in our society and bring about gender equality and women empowerment. A major challenge from this, is how best to ensure that gender role functions are effective and accountable, not only within government, but also within private sector and the civil society.

"It is important that these sectoral and institutional interests share the same understanding of the gender equality and women empowerment. This can only be achieved through a well targeted coordination, networking and monitoring efforts" she said.

Again, she submitted that the National Gender Policy framework is anchored on Gender equality principle, and a process in which women's roles in reproduction and production are not only valued, but are seen as the core of the nation's wealth upon which national development is anchored.

"Transforming the Nigerian society



Mrs. Funmi Adeniyi ACP Legal Officer making a point at the Seminar

must be informed by altruism; a nation that is engendered is endangered, while the gender 'variable' needs to occupy a central stage in national development. A major challenge for the National Gender Policy Framework therefore, is confronting traditional structures that impede women's maximum participation in development processes that provide a breeding ground for gender inequalities in the society" Akai said.

Speaking at the event, Alhaja Roli Raliat Daniju, the Executive Director ACP, informed the participants that the primary purpose of the seminar is

to alert the people at the grassroots community to issues of gender based violence on abuse of women and the girl child. She said that a bill has been passed by the Lagos State House of Assembly, which is now a law that protects women and children against violence.

Mrs. Funmilayo Adeniyi, the Legal Officer of ACP, in her presentation, reiterated that the essence of the Seminar is for community leaders to be aware of a bill on Violence Against Women that has been passed into law by the Lagos State House of Assembly. She went further that the Law protects women and men against domestic violence, such as wife battery, rape, forced prostitution and child abuse. She stressed that it is

against the law for a man to beat his wife or girl-friend. The law also protects children, particularly the girl child from abuse by their parents or any body, she added. A copy of the law was distributed to the participants, to go through when they get home.

Alhaji G.M Adegun, during the question and comment session, spoke about three of the wives that are in Pudah according to the Islamic sharia law,

where-by women are not allowed to go out to work; they must cover all parts of their body and must not be seen when they are outside their home. He asked if their rights have been abused.

Mrs. Olushola Akai, in response, submitted that it is the obligation of the three wives either to accept or not to be put in Pudah, but on the grounds that the husband is taking proper care of them. However, it would be a violation of the fundamental human rights of the women to work and earn a living if the man places them in Pudah and he is not taking proper care of them.

ACP INAUGURATES ANTI-VIOLENCE CLUBS IN NEW SCHOOLS

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opening speech, exhorted the students to say "no" to sexual advance and to focus on their studies. Also, Mrs. Olushola Akai, the Head of Programmes in her paper titled: "Youth and Sexual Violence" asserted that sexual abuse is often hidden behind closed doors. But whether it is exposed for all to see or hidden, it has the same effect, it destroy the victims sense of self, breaks the spirit and leaves the victim totally dependent on the perpetrator; if the cycle of abuse is uninterrupted, she said.

She pointed out that one out of every five female children and one out of every ten male children have been victims of sexual violence. The perpetrators are mostly family members, parents, step-father, uncles, cousins and grandparents. They can also be beloved individuals such as god fathers or close family friend. She went further to highlight types of sexual violence and the most common types of rape, precautions youth can take to avoid being raped, and factors that lead to youth sexual violence.

Thereafter, Mrs. Tosin Omosholuyi the Assistant Programme Officer

for the youth project on ACP Anti-Violence Club made a presentation with the aid of the ACP Youth Manual. She said the essence of setting up the clubs is to equip Secondary School Students with knowledge and skills to combat violence against women and the girl-child, and to bring them into the fight against gender-based violence.

The clubs provide a platform for education and information dissemination on sex education, reproductive health issues. Each of the club would be headed by a facilitator and experienced teacher, or the School Councillor.

On the whole, the Ajegunle Community Project (ACP) was able to achieve its objectives because, not only did students participate actively in the workshop by displaying their understanding of the issues relating to violence against women and the girl-child but they were also, enthusiastic to join the ACP Anti-Violence Clubs in their various schools. At the end of the workshop, stickers and posters were given to the students to paste in their various Schools.



Mrs. Olushola Akai during her presentation at the workshop.

LEGAL CASES

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miserable. She narrated her ordeal to her mother but the woman (her mother) is afraid of meddling in the matter because she wants to keep her marriage.

The mother of the girl was called to office and was counseled to look for another accommodation for her daughter among her own family members. This option will definitely put a stop to the sexual advances, protect the family from irredeemable damage and conflict, and also protect the girl's psychologically.

4. A 28 years old lady came to our office to report a man, the father of her child. She said she was impregnated by the man and he (the man) had earlier promised to marry her. After given birth to the child, the man in question went ahead to marry another woman. However, he promised to be giving her Seven thousand naira (N7,000) for the upkeep for the three years old boy. Her major complain was that the money is not enough for her and the boy's upkeep.

Our legal counselor advised the lady advised to further her education or to take up a trade to augment the amount of money the father of her child has agreed to be giving her. Also, the organization promised to assist her with our micro-credit facility if she decides to go into trading.

5. Our Legal Officer got a call from Apapa Magistrate Court that a woman has been charged to Court for illegal roaming at 7 45pm. Our Legal Officer went to Court and it was discovered that the woman was actually detained over the night and during that period she was not allowed to consult her Lawyer. The legal officer took up the case with the particular police station. The lady was later allowed to go home and the case was stroke out.

PHOTO SPEAK



Round table discussion with school heads, counselors and officials of Education District V on Best Approach to solving Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination in Secondary Schools.



Group photograph of the participating school at the end of the One-hour Documentary on Gender-Based Violence (GBV).



Participants taking down notes during the workshop.



Group photograph with participating schools at the end of the Workshop.



A cross section of students during the interactive section with the resource person at the One-hour Documentary on Gender-Based Violence.



Group photograph of ACP officials with one of the schools at the end of the workshop.

WHY WOMEN'S RIGHTS?

Taking a trip down the annals of history; most early peoples in the western world considered women to be inferior to, or less than, men. Through laws and mythology (stories describing beliefs), the view that women were weak was passed on from one generation to the next. This inferiority of women to men was even more pronounced in such cultures as existed in the African setting.

However, some ancient civilisations knew powerful women. For example, Queen Hatshepsut ruled Egypt as a mighty Pharaoh in the 15th century BC. In Nigerian history, stories of Queen Amina of Northern Nigeria, Moremi of Western Nigeria and more recently, Magaret Ekpo of Eastern Nigeria depict women who were in leadership positions in society. For many women however, their lives and future tended to be tied (and for many women are today still tied) to the fortunes of their husbands or other male relatives.

During the late 1700s, in a time called the Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason, some free-thinking women began planting the seeds of change. For example, in 1792 English author, Mary Wollstonecraft, wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. She boldly proposed that women receive the same opportunities as men in education, work, and politics.

Before we begin to view the demand for equal rights and equal opportunities for women and men, as having been Western orchestrated, in Nigeria, some women, such as Queen Bakwa Turunku (mother of Queen Amina), believed in the promotion of equal opportunity for men and women.

In the sixteenth century, Queen Bakwa Turunku was a notable leader in Hausaland who promoted the course of women and believed in equal opportunity, irrespective of sex. Amina was 16 years old when her mother became queen, and in recognition of her military skills and war-like nature, she was given the traditional title of *magajiya*. She honed her military skills and became famous for her bravery and military exploits, and was referred to as "Amina

daughter of Nikatau, a woman as capable as a man."

WHAT ARE WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Millions of women throughout the world live in conditions of abject deprivation of, and attacks against, their fundamental human rights; for no other reason than that they are women. Women's rights, as a term, typically refers to the freedom inherently possessed by women and girls of all ages, which may be institutionalised, ignored or illegitimately suppressed by law, custom, and behavior in a particular society.

These liberties are grouped together and differentiated from broader notions of human rights because they often differ from the freedoms inherently possessed by or recognised for men and boys; and because activism surrounding this issue claims an inherent historical and traditional bias against the exercise of rights by women.

Modern sociological theories maintain that the differences between men and women are, at least in part, socially constructed 'differences', (i.e. determined through history by specific human groups), rather than biologically determined, immutable conditions.

Issues commonly associated with notions of women's rights include,

though are not limited to, the right to:

- Bodily integrity and autonomy (reproductive rights);
- Vote (universal suffrage);
- Hold public office;
- Work;
- Fair wages or equal pay;
- Own property;
- Education;
- Serve in the military;
- Enter into legal contracts; and
- Have marital, parental and religious rights.

Today, women in most western nations can vote, own property, work in many different professions, and hold public office. These are some of the rights of the modern woman. But women have not always been allowed to do these things, unlike the majority of men throughout history.

Proponents of Women's rights have waged and in some places continue to wage long campaigns to win the same rights as modern men and be open to equal opportunity in society. Today women in some conservative Arab countries still do not have the right to vote and many women in Nigeria are yet to enjoy the rights of inheritance.

It has been opined by women's rights activists that women's rights cannot be attained until safety of the female half of every population is ensured. This safety can only be reflected by the complete eradication of all forms of violence against women.

