



POLICY BRIEF ON AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES AGAINST SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (SGBV) IN NIGERIA.



Women's Rights
And Health Project
(WRAHP)



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WOMEN'S
DEVELOPMENT
FUND



WE WILL
NOT BE

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Background

In Nigeria, due to widespread discrimination, extensive rights violations, neglect and stigmatization, women and girls living with disabilities are at 3 times greater risks of suffering physical, sexual and economic abuse compared women and girls without disabilities.

This risk is further exacerbated by lack of information and limited capacity of women living with disabilities to assert their sexual and reproductive rights, report rights infringements/violations and demand a more inclusive justice system that caters to their unique needs.

Often, we hear unfortunate cases such as:

- A 21-year-old survivor, an amputee who was raped by a family friend and also threatened by the perpetrator to release a video recording if she reported. The case is still in court.
- The cable news of April 19, 2022 captured a 42-year-old survivor, a woman with disability, who narrated her near-death ordeal with her ex-husband, Timothy, who not only battered her physically but assaulted her self-esteem. She did not report to the police because of fear of back-lash from the society.
- "A 13-year-old deaf girl has been severally raped by 3 elderly men. Themen are; Alhaji Isiyaku alias Alhaji Mai Bredi (70), Mohammed Sani Mai Kalifa (60), and Yusuf Iyataliya (50) at Gangaren Kwadi in Tudun Wada area Zaria LGA, Kaduna State. The primary 6 pupil was several times raped until her mother discovered (Daily Trust Newspaper, November 1, 2022).

Some of the barriers affecting women and girls with disabilities from accessing justice are:

- Lack of access of information and limited capacity of women and girls with disabilities (WGDs) to assert their rights, report violations and demand a more inclusive justice system that caters for their unique needs.
- Insufficient knowledge and understanding of the rights of people with disability and response by service providers.
- Many WGDs are scared of reporting perpetrators who are mostly caregivers and close relatives for fear of stigmatization and discrimination.

- Difficulty in accessing relevant offices for SGBV response for women and girls with mobility impairment.
- Most WGDs do not have the financial capacity to demand for their rights due to lack of support structures to empower them financially.
- Limited number of signers at strategic reporting and SGBV service provision locations and law enforcement agencies.

It was to address this challenge that Women's Rights and Health Project (WRAHP), implemented a one-year project (February 15, 2022- February 15, 2023), titled, "Amplifying the voices of women and girls living with Disabilities survivors against SGBV in Ebonyi and Lagos States". The objectives of this initiative were to : amplify the voices of Women and Girls with Disabilities (WGDs) in Ebonyi and Lagos States in advocating for their rights to be free from violence as enshrined in the Ebonyi State VAPP Law, Lagos State GBV Law, Lagos Special Peoples' Law and other existing laws; improve access to justice and response services for women and girls with Disabilities survivors of SGBV and improve the implementation of laws on violence against women and girls within the justice sector.



Consultative meetings with stake holders in Ebonyi and Lagos States

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THIS ONE-YEAR PROJECT INCLUDED:

- 44 key influencers of public opinion and stake holders in Lagos and Ebonyi States engaged via advocacy meetings to support the rights of women and girls with Disabilities. These comprised representatives from; (government Ministries and Agencies, international development partners, civil society organizations and networks including persons living with disabilities, Security/Law Enforcement Agencies including Nigeria Police Force, the media, health care providers etc).

- 79 women and girls with Disabilities in Lagos and Ebonyi States empowered with knowledge and skills and engaged as advocates in addressing issues of sexual and gender-based violence affecting their peers in private, public and political spheres.
- 1201 persons with disabilities (majority women and girls) in Lagos and Ebonyi States sensitized by trained advocates through peer-to-peer physical learning sessions to be aware of and exercise their rights against SGBV and all forms of rights violations.
- Women and girls with disabilities SGBV survivors provided psychosocial counselling support services. Arrests and court filings were made against perpetrators.
- 32 media organizations in Lagos and Ebonyi States sensitized and engaged in coverage that demonstrates accurate and holistic understanding of sexual and gender-based violence affecting women and girls with Disabilities from a human rights perspective.
- Promoted public access to basic information and exiting laws relating to sexual and gender-based violence affecting people with disabilities by producing and distributing the simplified edition of the following:
 - 2000 copies of the Lagos State Special Peoples' Law.
 - 2500 copies of Policy Briefs on Protecting women and girls with Disabilities against sexual and gender-based violence.
 - 3000 copies of Sexual and Reproductive Health Fact Sheet on Violence against women and girls with Disabilities.
 - 2500 copies of the Simplified Edition of the Ebonyi State Violence against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Law.
 - This was to further engage more populations to advocate on issues of SGBV affecting women's and girls and with disabilities.



Stakeholders in Ebonyi and Lagos State discussing key recommendations on how to forge ahead

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES AGAINST SGBV

- Domestication of the National Disability Act by all the States in Nigeria and the establishment of Persons with Disabilities Commission with designated Desk Officers to champion issues of SGBV affecting women and girls with disabilities.
- Establishment and strengthening of Sexual Assault and Referral Centers (SARCs), to increase access to qualitative and comprehensive SGBV response services for persons with disabilities survivors of SGBV. This should include having SIGNERS at such Centers for improved communication.
- Training and engaging more women and girls with disabilities as advocates and leaders to champion efforts to end violence, abuses and rights violations against their peers.
- Increasing access of women and girls with disabilities to existing laws and policies against all forms of violence and injustice as a strategy to strengthen their advocacy and demand for justice efforts.
- Livelihood empowerment for women and girls with disabilities survivors of SGBV to promote financial independent and scholarship programs for their children.
- Sustained comprehensive sexuality education program that addresses holistically the sexual and reproductive health needs of women and girls with Disabilities. Such a program should also aim to empower them with knowledge and skills to be aware of and exercise their rights to bodily integrity and autonomy.
- Inclusion of persons with disabilities in all State level SGBV response strategies and coordinating mechanism.
- Programming on SGBV for women and girls with disabilities should be inclusive involving all clusters (e.g., hearing impaired, vision impaired, physically challenged, dwarf, albinism etc). No cluster should be excluded.
- Working with clusters of women and girls with disabilities should be highly promoted as this helps to strengthen their group coherence, solidarity, associative strength and capacity to work together to address a common health and development issue that affect them.
- Criminalization of cases of undue interferers especially from families, friends and communities of survivors of SGBV because of the adverse effects on reporting and conviction of perpetrators.

- Training and engaging of more Signers at; Police Gender Desk Offices, health institutions and other organizations providing SGBV support services as a strategy for improved reporting and provision of services for hearing impaired survivors.
- There is need for improved support structures for survivors of SGBV. Many survivors and their families remain silent because of poverty and fear of stigmatization.
- Increased synergy and collaboration between the media, law enforcement agencies, civil society actors, government agencies and Ministries to make the SGBV response against persons with disabilities more comprehensive and effective.
- All key partners should work closely with the Government of Nigeria to ensure the full implementation of the African Disability Protocol (ADP) recently signed by Nigeria (February 2023), as a significant step towards promoting the rights of PWDs in Nigeria. The protocol provides a comprehensive framework for the protection and promotion of the rights of people with disabilities in Africa, including the right to education, employment, healthcare and accessibility.
- Having a national, state and community level data base for all SGBV cases involving women and girls with disabilities, including cases of convictions for perpetrators. This will help to contribute to more evidenced based responses/interventions.



Stakeholders passionately making their recommendations on how to forge ahead.

About WRAHP

Women's Rights and Health Project (WRAHP), managers of Irete Resource Centre is an innovative, nongovernmental, not for profit organization that promotes the health and general development of women, young people and communities using the rights-based approach. Currently, WRAHP has physical offices in Lagos, Edo & Ebonyi States.

Vision

A just society where the dignity of women, young people and communities is respected and they enjoy sound health and maximize their potentials.

Mission

To use a rights-based approach to improve women, young people and community health and development by equipping, mobilizing and actively engaging community members as agents of social change through information sharing, capacity building and advocacy.

WE WILL NOT BE CANCELLED

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