



News from our Partners

News from Nigeria

By Lawan Balami

The development Research and Projects Center (dRPC) is a partner under the Femininities and Masculinities cluster of the CSiW project. The center is expected to use qualitative research techniques in investigating and understanding the causes and consequences of abduction for forced marriage by Boko Haram who have waged war predominantly in the north eastern part of Nigeria over the last 8 years. The war in the north east is still ongoing, and the dRPC continues to provide novel findings on abduction for forced marriage by conducting one on one in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with women and girls who were victims of such human rights abuses.



In the last month we compiled two reports from the findings of our interviews with survivors of abduction for forced marriage by Boko Haram. One of the reports detailed the life stories of the girls from how and why they were abducted, their experience while in captivity, forced marriage to the militants, their escape/ rescue as well as psychosocial, rehabilitation and reintegration needs; the second was the CSiW country report detailing a thematic content analysis of nuanced and novel findings from our research. The reporting process involved transcription, translation, analysis and reporting of interviews conducted among women and girls who were abducted and forcefully married by Boko Haram insurgents across three Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps within Borno state which is the heart of the insurgency.

We also recently held project meetings to review project activities, outputs and outcomes for the year; there were also discussions and planning towards future activities. In the meetings we discussed proposed research plans, schedules, evaluation and performance indicators. Together with the CSiW Project Director, Professor Annie Bunting, we paid a two-day



visit to development partners and women leaders working with victims of sexual and gender based violence in Kaduna state, Northern Nigeria. The purpose of the visits were to

share experiences, knowledge and best practices towards meeting justice and reparations needs of survivors of sexual and gender based violence.

The activities conducted contribute new knowledge to the cluster of masculinities and femininities in times of war and conflict and more specifically to multiple project objectives such as abduction for forced marriage, children born of war and the stigmatization they face. These findings when published will help inform policies, decisions and planning of advocacy strategies to stimulate dialogue and improvement in laws governing justice and reparations for victims of sexual violence in times of war and conflict. Also collaboration with development partners and women leaders working with the victims will aid in nurturing a healthy networking relationship with other actors in the sector hence enriching our research by sharing findings, experiences and best practices. In the upcoming month we plan to perform a review of the country report and then submission of the final copy. We also intend to draft a work plan for the proposed activities in year 3.

News from Sierra Leone

By Rosaline Mcarthy

Women's Forum (Sierra Leone) is following closely the events leading to the Presidential and Parliamentary elections slated for March 7, 2018. Voter registration has been done; the Political Parties Registration Commission is confirming various political parties intending to contest the elections. In addition to the ruling party and the main opposition party, other parties have sprung up and their flag bearers are being named. A key issue being addressed is the one relating to violence during elections. Various initiatives are being organized to appeal to the youth in particular to desist from violence.

Women are trying to urge their compatriots to come out in their numbers to vote and be voted for. Recently, Women's Forum (S.L.) teamed up with the Mano River Women Peace Network, the Campaign for Good Governance and the 50/50 Group to organize a national consultation on strategies for increasing



women's political participation. Women were encouraged to speak with one voice and to support each other. We are hoping that the number of women MPs will increase after the next elections. For now women are disappointed that they have not been granted the 30% quota for women's representation in decision-making at all levels.



In continuation of its advocacy and awareness raising role, Women's Forum (S.L.) has visited the Reparations Directorate at the National Commission for Social Action to find out the current status of the Reparations Programme. Authorities at the Directorate disclosed that there are plans for paying the sum of Le1 million (one million Leones) each to victims of sexual violence who did not benefit from skills training and other war affected people. According to them, this amount has been budgeted for and will be paid when funds are made available. Also victims with lingering health problems will be identified and given additional assistance.

It was further disclosed that the Reparations Programme will come to an end in 2018. However, the residual caseload of the reparations programme will be subsumed under the Social Protection programme currently being implemented by the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) so that they will be served when funds for vulnerable groups are available.

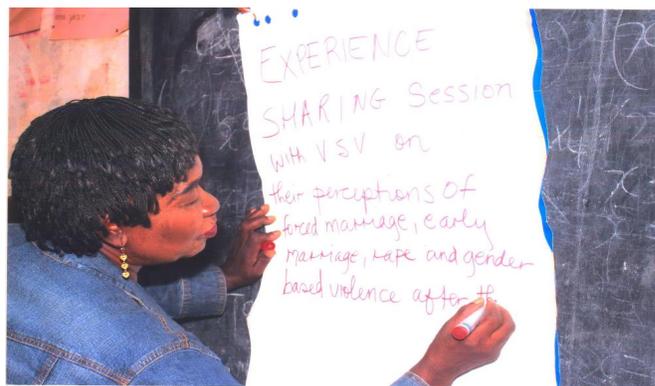
Additionally Women's Forum (S.L.) organized an Experience Sharing Session with victims of sexual violence during the war at Grafton War Wounded Camp. The main purpose of the activity was to find out the perceptions of the clientele about rape, forced marriage, reparations and sexual and gender based violence after the war and to give them an opportunity to add their voice to the discourse on the linkages of the above pre, during and after the war. Participants expressed deep appreciation to Women's Forum and Partners for keeping them informed. Some of the points they made are:

- Forced marriage still exists in their camp. Some parents force their children into marriage because of poverty.

- Rape is another phenomenon in the camp. Most of the time when this happens the perpetrators either run away to escape justice or try to get the families to compromise by offering money. It was revealed that a ten-year old girl was raped by a very old man and the man escaped.
- Another pregnant young woman was beaten to the extent that she lost her baby. To add insult to injury, the so-called husband became abusive when confronted by the woman's relatives.
- It was further explained that harbouring is a common happening. Young girls leave their parents' home and take up residence with men. These men are not responsible and sometimes maltreat them.

It was concluded that all of the above are happening because of poverty, lack of understanding about the existence of laws and the tendency for families to compromise. Participants promised to seek redress from the Family Support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police in future.

Participants further went on to say that the reparations package they received was not commensurate with the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Participants opined that forced marriage is not good; they stated that they were still affected by what they experienced during the war. The children of those unions are still with them and they have challenges with them. They expressed concern for those victims who did not benefit from reparations just because they did not register with the programme.



The above activity is closely related to the thematic area of linking wartime violence to historical gender norms. Customs and traditions continue to play a great role in the forced marriage, rape and sexual and gender based violence. Women's Forum will continue to monitor happenings in the reparations sector. They will find ways of getting involved in the sensitization of victims to be mounted by the Reparations Directorate. We are also awaiting the final signal to commence the research on children born of war. We need to obtain the final instruments and final budget for the activity. Meanwhile we are liaising with people in the field.