



CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH AND INFORMATION (CEWHIN)

Past and Current Projects of the Centre

The Centre for Women's Health and Information (CEWHIN) came into being in the year 2002 as a step forward in the process of institutionalising the activities carried out in executing the project titled *Empowerment of Young Persons in Non-Formal Sector: The Case of Female Adolescent Domestic Workers in Municipal Lagos*, being a project executed under the Fund for Leadership Development (FLD) of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The Centre is engaged in innovative research and advocacy on issues relating to women and young people's reproductive health and rights. The Centre has been involved with carrying out the following projects since inception:

- Improved Reproductive Health for Young out of School Youth in Municipal Lagos
- Improving Women's Access to Emergency Obstetric Care Services in Lagos State
- Women's Access to Health Campaign (WAHC)
- Effective HIV/AIDS Communication Programme: Targeting Primary School Students
- Survey of Traditional Healing Practices Prevalent In the South Western Part of Nigeria
- Internship and Volunteer Programme
- Training Workshop on Effective NGO Management and Development
- Support to the National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA) in receiving inputs from the women constituency in reviewing the National HIV/AIDS Policy
- Promoting Gender Equality and Human Rights Sensitive Policy Environment in the Nigerian HIV/AIDS National Response
- Advocacy Skills Building meeting for women living with HIV/AIDS and press Briefing/Media campaign to commemorate World AIDS day/Human Rights Day
- Awareness on Maternal Mortality with specific focus on pre-eclampsia.
- Promoting Better Health and Hygiene Practices for market Women and Men in Lagos State
- Improved Quality of Life of Caregivers in Lagos and Kwara States of Nigeria (An income generating empowerment programme).

Improved Reproductive Health for Young out of School Youth in Municipal Lagos

In view of the poor state of young people's reproductive health coupled with the current challenge posed to the Nigerian society by HIV/AIDS epidemic, the Centre has been engaged in activities geared towards improving young people's access to reproductive health information and other HIV transmission prevention measures. The group of girls targeted by this project (young out-of-school girls such as domestic workers) are seldom catered for in major health

programs institutionalised for addressing young people's health information and service needs. The Centre produces and airs on radio, talks and drama on reproductive health issues including HIV/AIDS in Yoruba and Pidgin English and engages the services of field officers to monitor the participation of young out of school girls. The Centre also provide counseling services to young girls as well as provide educational scholarships and training opportunities for those found to be serious about their future, but lack the financial means to pursue their desired objectives (we solicit individual financial support to execute this). We produce flyers and comics towards raising awareness on the prevention of HIV/AIDS and other issues related to their health and well-being among out-of-school youth in Lagos State.

Project on Improving Women's Access to Emergency Obstetric Care (EmOC) Services

This project was executed in collaboration with the Lagos State Chapter of the Medical Women's Association and the Lagos Team of Prevention of Maternal Mortality Network and funded by the Averting Maternal Deaths and Disability Program of the Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, New York. It was aimed at promoting women's access to emergency obstetric care services towards reducing the high maternal mortality ratio that Nigeria records annually. Furthermore, it was designed to promote government accountability to women in the delivery of EmOC services to women in Lagos state.

In executing the project the following activities were carried out:

• *Field Research at Ibeju Lekki Local Government Area*

In a bid to have a fair appreciation of the readiness of the community people and the health care service delivery system for effective management of maternal health demands in the local government areas where we worked, the project working group carried out a needs assessment of the available government and private health facilities that offer obstetric care services within the local government.

Our findings revealed among other things the lack of appropriate facilities and drugs, lack of a systematic/efficient response system to obstetric emergencies. The assessment exercise revealed that none of the government owned Primary Health Care Centres at Ibeju Lekki Local Government Area was equipped to offer basic emergency obstetric care services.

The health system of the two local government areas also lack an integrated HIV/AIDS management system in view of the fact that pregnant women in the area (Ibeju and Lekki local government areas) prefer to use the services of Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) who are not skilled enough to prevent the transmission of the virus either from mother to child or from one person to the other.

One of the crucial reasons why women do not go to the health centres to seek care from skilled

health workers is due to lack of funds to pay for such services. This is why at the moment the Centre is working closely with the Lagos State government towards the development of an Emergency Obstetric Care Trust Fund for the State through private sector support.

• ***Advocacy Visits***

The Centre undertook a series of advocacy visits to the Chairman of the Lagos State Hospitals Management Board, The Local Government Civil Service Commission, and The Local Government Secretariat Chairmen both at Ibeju and Lekki. The team also visited the Epe General Hospital being the major referral Centre that services the Ibeju Lekki Local government area amongst others. All these visits were geared towards enlisting the support of all stakeholders involved in providing health care services for women for improved access to emergency obstetric care services as well.

The working group on the project and other members of CEWHIN went on an advocacy visit to the Commissioner for Health, Lagos State Ministry of Health on Tuesday 19th August 2003. The purpose of the visit was to intimate the commissioner on the project highlighting the project objectives and future activities. The group also sought the support of the commissioner and the Ministry for the success of the future follow-up activities.

• ***Consultative Forum on Improving Women's Access to Emergency Obstetric Care Services in Lagos state***

As part of the project on “ Improving Women's Access to Emergency Obstetric Care Services in Lagos State ”, a consultative forum with officials of the Lagos State Ministry of Health, private and public sector health care providers and women's health advocates was held on Monday September 29, 2003 with the aim of presenting the findings of work that was done at the Ibeju Lekki local government area to policy makers and service providers as well as to advocate the evolvement of simple and practicable low cost strategies that can promote women's access to emergency obstetric care services in Lagos state.

The forum recommended effective community awareness and mobilization for increased knowledge on recognition of danger signs; exploration of public/private partnership in promoting women's access to EmOC services; the creation of an emergency obstetric care trust fund for Lagos State; creation of training opportunities for health staff at the Ibeju/Lekki local government; free antenatal care and emergency obstetric care services at all levels of health care service delivery in Lagos State; establishment of monitoring mechanisms within communities with full community participation and ownership for ensuring access to quality EmOC services.

• ***Information Dissemination Seminar***

Consequent upon the completion of the needs assessment carried out in implementing the project titled “Improving Women's Access to Quality Emergency Obstetric Care Services in Nigeria”, an information dissemination seminar was held on Thursday, November 27, 2003 at the Akodo Secretariat of Ibeju Lekki local government area. The outcome of the assessment was shared with the 50 participants that were at the seminar.

The participants were Ibeju/Lekki health workers, members of the Catchment Area Planning Committee (CAPA), women of child bearing age and representatives of all the wards that constitute the local government where the project was executed. Although at the inception of the project Ibeju Lekki was one local government area, but towards the end of the project period, the Lagos state government created additional local government areas. Hence, the local government became Ibeju and Lekki local government areas.

The forum served as an opportunity for the community to participate in the process of developing appropriate interventions for addressing some of the problems that were identified. At this forum a committee was set up to ensure that the provision of obstetric care services in the area was improved and that the rehabilitation of the two public health facilities selected by the communities be carried out successfully and in good time.

• ***Community Awareness Campaign among community people on recognition of danger signs of obstetric complications and to encourage the use of services being provided by rehabilitated Primary Health Centres***

In view of the outcome of the needs assessment carried out at the beginning of the project which revealed low level of knowledge among community people and Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) of danger signs of obstetric complications, in pregnancy and childbirth, we organised a Community Awareness Campaign during the year 2004.

A training of trainers' workshop was held for eight (8) Nurses/Midwives who work in the local government area. They conducted the training of community people and Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) on the recognition of danger signs in pregnancy and childbirth. In all, eight (8) training sessions were held with community people selected from fifty seven (57) communities under Ibeju and Lekki local government areas.

A total of two hundred and two (202) participants attended the training sessions. One training session was organised for Traditional Birth Attendants and this had twenty one (21) participants selected from fifteen (15) communities in attendance.

A Consultative Session was also held with the executives of the Catchment Area Planning and Action Committee (CAPA) on how to monitor the health system for effective delivery of EmOC

services. Issues relating to early referral by TBAs, record keeping, government accountability and the right of access to functional health care services were discussed at this forum.

• ***Assessment of the quality of emergency obstetric care services that women receive in three hospitals in Lagos state***

This study arose out of the Centre's concern for the high maternal mortality rate that Nigeria records and the need to seek simple and practicable means of ensuring that a downward trend is achieved.

The survey was small in size and was aimed at exploring means of developing minimum standards that will help promote women's access to quality Emergency Obstetric Care (EmOC) services so as to ensure that women who are able to escape the first and second internationally agreed forms of delays in accessing care do not die having reached the hospital where they are ordinarily supposed to be able to access needed care. Furthermore, the survey was designed to understand how all EmOC service facilities can be monitored in relation to established standards on a regular basis.

The survey was conducted at two secondary facilities and one tertiary facility in Lagos state: Lagos Island Maternity Hospital, Gbagada General Hospital and Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (Ayinke House).

The assessment exercise revealed among other things that all the hospitals assessed were under staffed for the level of patients that visit them for care and that all three facilities lacked adequate equipment and supplies that they require to be able to work effectively and therefore provide quality EmOC services. One of the recommendations that came up as a result of this assessment was that strengthening the primary health care system will go a long way in drastically reducing the pressure that is put on the secondary and tertiary facilities and eventually lead to the effective deliverance of comprehensive EmOC services at their level and therefore reduce the pressure being put on secondary and tertiary institutions. A report on findings from the small survey was sent to the hospitals involved and follow up activities are being pursued to ensure that the maternal mortality rate in Nigeria is reduced.

Women's Access to Health Campaign (WAHC)

The Centre coordinated the Women's Access to Health Campaign in Nigeria from the year 2004 having taken over from the Women's Empowerment and Reproductive Rights Centre (WERRC) till 2006. The Centre was the global coordinator of the Campaign for the year 2006. An awareness raising campaign was carried out among members of the general public about the International Day of Action for Women's Health as well as to encourage more health oriented non-governmental organisations and community based organisations to join the campaign. The main objectives of WAHC campaigns have been to: raise awareness on the state of violence against women in

Nigeria; demand accountability from government on issues surrounding women's health in Nigeria and present the Women's Access to Health Campaign to the general public.

Women's Development and Action Network (WODANET) - Investing in women for a change (CEWHIN SCHOLASHIP PROGRAMME).

WODANET is set up in order to promote the realisation of women and girls' reproductive health rights through access to economic empowerment opportunities, skills development programmes as well as useful information on their well being. WODANET is a project of the Centre set up as a network of organizations and individuals across the country. One of the activities of this network is to seek out girls who do not have the opportunity to be educated or to further their education beyond certain level due to financial constraints or girls who are willing to learn a trade but do not have the wherewithal to do so. These are girls whose reproductive health right would be jeopardised if they do not have access to such developmental opportunities. WODANET is unique in that it is a network of women and organizations whose main mission is to empower disadvantaged girls/women.

WODANET achieves its aim through its Scholarships for Girls/Women's educational or vocational training. Scholarships are given to girls in primary, secondary and high school. We cover the cost of sending girls to school for the entire year, and if necessary, we pay for transportation to school and lunch. WODANET also has an entrepreneurial scheme for women and girls who do not have an education and feel they are past the age or who feel they are not bright enough to continue their schooling. This scheme provides the opportunity for girls to learn a vocation of their choice, e.g. sewing, catering, hairdressing, etc.

The scheme has been able to support fifty (50) students including four at the university level. The level of request for support from disadvantaged students is very high.

Survey of Traditional Healing Practices Prevalent In the South Western Part of Nigeria

The Centre carried out a survey on traditional healing practices prevalent in the South Western Part of Nigeria, focusing especially on the activities of Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs), Bone Setters and Massage Therapists for the Nigerian Natural Medicine Development Agency (NNMDA) in 2007. The survey was designed to promote a deeper understanding of the scientific basis for the methods and practices of TBAs, bonesetters and massage therapists in South West Nigeria. The survey report documents their healing methods, the materials that they use as well as the kinds of facilities they use for their practices. The role of traditional healers in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. They have a crucial role in building the health system in Nigeria as well as strengthening and supporting the national response to safe motherhood and bone setting. It is on this premise that the survey was carried out.

Training Workshop on Effective NGO Management and Development

The Centre organized an effective NGO Management and Development Course for members of the public who are interested in starting NGOs. The course had in attendance people from all walks of life. The objectives of the course were to:

- provide participants with an understanding of how to start up a non governmental, not for profit organization;
- develop participants conceptual, analytical and advocacy skills useful in the NGO world
- explore how to build up an effective board for an organization
- explore strategies for ethical corporate governance
- explore fund raising and sustainability strategies

Internship and Volunteer Programme

The Centre's internship and volunteer programme is targeted at young people for the purpose of building their capacities for promoting positive social change in Nigeria and other parts of the world. Interns participating in the Centre's internship programme consist of young out-of-school girls who are planning to proceed to the university but are awaiting their results or university students who are on long breaks as well as women who want to acquire knowledge on setting up and building a non-governmental organization. The programme assists participants to develop their skills in various areas such as writing and presentation, computer and internet usage, critical thinking on social and human rights issues, advocacy, information management as well as leadership. They are also exposed to the nature of work that non-governmental organizations do.

Promoting Gender Equality and Human Rights Sensitive Policy Environment in the Nigerian HIV/AIDS National Response

The overall aim of the initiative, funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) through the Nigerian AIDS Responsive Fund (NARF), was to promote the emergence of a coherent policy environment for the achievement of the gender responsive and human rights-based targets of the National Strategic Framework on HIV and AIDS. UNIFEM provided leadership and coordination in bringing together the Gender Technical Committee (GTC) of NACA, networks of women living with HIV and human rights advocates to identify policy gaps in terms of gender inequality, and through well coordinated capacity building of key stakeholders including NACA and the GTC, and sustained advocacy, to promote policy reforms. The project was aimed at improving the health of Nigerian women and men, girls and boys through the control of the spread of HIV/AIDS and the provision of sustainable equitable care and support of those infected and affected by the disease. It was also designed to contribute to reversing the spread of HIV and AIDS amongst women and girls

Advocacy Skills Building meeting for women living with HIV/AIDS and press Briefing/Media campaign to commemorate World AIDS day/Human Rights Day

With the support of the United Nations Development Funds for Women (UNIFEM), the Centre for Women's Health and Information organized an Advocacy Skill Building Training for women living with HIV/AIDS and an advocacy/media campaign in Abuja in 2009.

The Advocacy Training/Media Campaign was held with following as its specific objectives:

- To raise awareness on and promote respect for the rights of women living with HIV/AIDS
- To create a platform for women living with HIV/AIDS advocate respect for their rights
- To build the capacity of positive women for improved advocacy
- To carry out a media campaign in commemoration of the 2009 World AIDS Day

The Advocacy Training had in attendance 23 participants. It was divided into three sessions - Opening session, Training/Skills Building Session and Group Work. A position paper on the situation of women living with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria emerged from the training meeting. A Press briefing/media campaign was held on the 10th of December commemorating the World AIDS Day/Human Rights Day 2009 at which the position paper was presented. The position paper stated that the current evidence on HIV/AIDS infections reveals an increase in the national prevalence rate despite the enormous human and financial resources that have been committed to HIV/AIDS programs. It highlighted the necessary actions required of the Nigerian government and all relevant agencies at different levels and called upon them to take urgent actions in ensuring the implementation of their recommendations.

Promoting Better Health and Hygiene Practices for market Women and Men in Lagos State

The project titled '*Promoting Better Health and Hygiene Practices for Women and Men in Lagos State*' was implemented in select markets within Surulere and Ikorodu Local Government Areas of Lagos State. It was designed to equip market women and men with knowledge and skills that promote a good appreciation of the health benefits of good personal and environmental hygiene. The project sought to promote behavioural change to waste management among market women and men as well as to identify and test creative solutions and alternative techniques for addressing urban environmental health and sanitation problems.

In more specific terms, the project was designed to improve environmental and personal hygiene practices of market women and men in Lagos state. In implementing the project, the project team sought to have an understanding of the administrative structure of the markets as well as the perceptions of the market women and men about environmental and personal hygiene issues and their linkage to disease and death.

The project revealed among other things that, market men and women have a mental knowledge of the linkage between a sanitised environment, healthy hygienic practices and personal health. However, this knowledge does not translate into positive responses towards maintaining a sanitised environment and healthy personal hygiene practices. In spite of the different awareness

programmes put in place by environmental sanitation agencies like Lagos State Waste Management Authority, (LAWMA) the attitude of market men and women to a sanitised environment remains grossly unchanged. Poverty was found to play a significant role in the achievement of a sanitised environment and healthy hygiene practices among market men and women. Furthermore, government participation in the provision of basic infrastructure like water, electricity and security is scarce and often does not exist in many markets. Toilet facilities were also found to be grossly inadequate and do not sufficiently cater for the needs of the market population. Waste disposal was found to constitute a major challenge to the markets as Private Service Providers (PSPs) do not provide adequate and timely services to the markets.

In view of the existing disconnect between the knowledge of market women and men on the linkage of a sanitised environment and healthy hygiene practices to personal health, advocacy remains a necessary tool in bridging this gap. The project calls for government presence to be more visible in the markets through the provision of social amenities like electricity, public mains water supply, security, tarred roads and adequate toilet facilities. The project also highlights the need for sanitary health officers from the local governments to be more germane in their roles in ensuring compliance with statutory laws of environmental health. There is a need for closer monitoring of the PSPs in the markets. LAWMA being the supervisory agency should put adequate structures in place that would ensure that PSPs perform the duties for which they are paid. This would be better achieved if adequate channels are created for feedback from the markets.

Given the multiplicity of women's responsibilities and the need to combine business with family care, local governments should look into establishing crèches and public health centres within the market communities or its vicinity. This will promote prompt access to healthcare services and reduce susceptibility of children to infection and diseases. It will also reduce women's daily work burden and increase their ability to tap into business opportunities that may be opened to them from time to time.

Improved Quality of Life of Caregivers in Lagos and Kwara States of Nigeria

The project titled Improved Quality of Life of Caregivers in Lagos and Kwara States of Nigeria, is being implemented in collaboration with the National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA) and with support from the Millennium Development Goal/Debt Relief Gains. It is aimed at mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS on caregivers in Lagos and kwara States.

Specific Objectives of the Project are:

- To promote a deeper understanding of the impact of HIV/AIDS on care givers in Lagos and kwara States of Nigeria
- To enhance the capacity of care givers to generate income
- To build the capacity of care givers on effective management of income generating activities

- To create awareness on the fundamental human rights and civic responsibilities of caregivers and people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS in Lagos and Kwara state
- To promote gender equality in the provision of care services to HIV positive persons

Caregivers play a very important role in providing especially home-based care and support to infected persons as well as orphans and vulnerable children. With health systems failing and people living longer with HIV, many poor women and girls are increasingly forced to devote their time, energy, skills and the little resources they have to care for their family members at home and provide their services to the wider community.

In implementing the project, the Centre is interacting with caregivers within Lagos Island and Alimosho Local Government Area in Lagos State and Caregivers in Asa an Offa Local Government Areas in Kwara State. Our interactions with them reveal that caregivers are faced with a lot of challenges including but not limited to

- Difficulty in relation with the payment of school fees for the children that they care for
- Inability to afford good and regular meals
- Lack of skills and capital to run businesses towards self reliance
- Health challenges and the lack of funds to take adequate care of themselves and the children that they cater for.
- Experience of stigma and discrimination

A series of capacity building workshops on the production of soap, pomade and snacks, business management and entrepreneurial skills have been held. With the support of NACA and funds from the MDG office

- 212 caregivers received training in income generating activities such as Soap making, Catering, Pomade making and Tie & Dye making etc.;
- 203 caregivers empowered to generate income;
- 2 Cooperative groups were formed with focus on soap making, tie and dye and pomade making in Kwara State;
- 1 Cooperative group was formed on soap making in Lagos state;

The financial/equipment support to the Lagos state recipients were made in the form of revolving loans so that in due course, more caregivers will be able to benefit from the provision that NACA and MDG/DRG has made available.