

Women's Right to Education Programme (WREP)

Report of the side event organized at the fifty second session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

Topic: livelihood empowerment for women for transparency and accountability in oil extractives.

March 4th, 2008

11.45-13.15

Church center, Boss Room 8th floor

United Nations (UN) Plaza, New York.USA.

Distinguished Panelist:

Louis Brown Ogbeifun, PhD: Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) Abuja-Nigeria

DISCUSSANTS:

Maria Fernandez-Stuart: Forensic Solutions Limited, Belize, Central America.

Hauwa Imam, PhD, University of Abuja, Abuja-Nigeria.

MODERATOR: Ms. Hauwa Shekarau, LLB, LLM.

COORDINATOR

Ms.Mimidoo Achakpa (WREP)

1.0 THE EVENT

The parallel event was a panel discussion on **livelihoods empowerment for women for transparency and accountability in oil extractives**. The event was organized by Women's Right to Education Programme (WREP) Nigeria to fit into the overall goal of providing a level playing ground for gender mainstreaming and financing that guarantees economic opportunities for sustainable development. This activity at the 52nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) envisaged an intensification of efforts towards improved cohesion with respect to gender related advocacy and engagement in the extractive industries sector. Central to discussion was the envisaged outcome: facilitating the push for a healthy policy framework in Nigeria and at global level, and ensuring gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women in the EI sector.

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The event was attended by participants from INGOs across the world at the CSW, government representatives from Nigeria, and some staff of the United Nations. In all, a total number of 56 persons participated in the side event.

2.0 THE LEAD PRESENTATION

THE LEAD PANELIST, Dr. Louis Brown Ogbeifun, dwelt extensively on the topic **Livelihoods Empowerment form Women for Transparency and Accountability in Oil Extractives: Financing for Gender Mainstreaming in the Extractive Sector**. He gave participants a bird's eye view of oil exploration in Nigeria. The extractive industries , and oil and gas sub sector In the extractive industries, the three key sectors include the upstream, downstream and services sector. Tracing the agrarian economic activity of the people of the Niger Delta from a historical perspective before the discovery of oil in the region, Dr. Ogbeifun said the exploration of oil led to environmental degradation which translated to loss of livelihoods. This according to him, had profound effect on women since the men could fend for themselves in different ways, legitimate or otherwise.

Taking a cursory look at the corporate environment in the EI sector, the lead presenter stated that males have dominated plum positions and contract executions. Females thus remain in the domain of providing catering and other ancillary support services.

Dr. Ogbeifun articulated constraints: violation of women's rights, most vulnerable in crisis, illiteracy, lack of access to economic programme women face which limits their active involvement in EI, and these are both economic (limited access to the factors of production) and political in nature. To address this anomaly and ensure livelihoods empowerment of women, he suggested the following solutions:

- Formation of women movements for advocacy
- Appointment of women into the National Stakeholders Working Group (NSWG) of the Nigerian Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (NEITI)
- Economic empowerment schemes
- Coalition of women entrepreneurs with the assistance of foreign technical partners in the refining and ownership of oil blocks
- Political empowerment through enhanced representation
- Equal opportunities in appointive positions in the oil and gas industries
- Deliberate educational policy targeted to improve intake of womenfolk in all educational levels
- Rebuilding of devastated farm lands and water ways due to the negative impact of oil exploration
- Vocation training for less educated women
- Resolution of the Niger Delta crisis
- Capacity building for CSOs in oil and gas policy issues and operations

For the above to be achieved, the presenter suggested the reduction of the dominance of patriarchal structures. With the unique role women play in the society, he concluded by

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stating that involving women at the highest level of policy formulation in oil and gas will undoubtedly bring about the desired results in transparency and accountability.

3.0 THE DISCUSSANTS' COMMENTS

Maria-Fernandez Stuart said the experience of women with respect to oil and gas extraction is different from that in her country which has experienced a change of political administration in recent times. In her country however, women have access to land and can own or inherit land. One point of similarity is that exploration that is being done in her country is done on vastly fertile land and the environment is being devastated. There is also no official disclosure of oil revenues and not much is done in the provision of social programmes. Women then are advocating for such social programmes and therefore women from her country would work closely with WREP and others to bring about change globally.

Dr. Hauwa Imam: She gave participants an account of her personal involvement in advocating for the present situation of the Niger Delta and the place of women in it by way of a poem written by her over 2 decades ago. With the unique situation of the Niger Delta region, she called for the formation and strengthening of an advocacy group for the Niger Delta, **MOTHERS UNITE**. Calling for women to unite in order to create opportunities for empowering women in the oil and gas sector.

4.0 REACTIONS

- 4.1 Mrs. Yemi Tinubu (YWC Lagos):** We should encourage our children, especially females, to go into oil and gas related educational fields. Let us support our women in all development sectors
- 4.2 Chief Mrs. F. O. Odetoibo (YMC Lagos):** We need to show unity among ourselves and support Dr. Imam's call for **MOTHERS UNITE**
- 4.3 Ms. Aminat Sillah (Journalist, from the Gambia):** Make the media your friends in the cause. Others should learn from the Nigeria experience. Women should advocate for clean and healthy environment
- 4.4 Ms. Shakrah Sadou (WABNET Niger):** Commended Dr. Imam for the initiative idea of **MOTHERS UNITE**. We must promote women's active role in the productive sectors. Everyone in Africa looks up to Nigeria for leadership.
- 4.5 Prof. Olufunke Egunjobi (Nigeria):** Congratulated the presenters. Women are blessed with foresight and vision. Let us make our voices heard. We should influence the education of the girl child
- 4.6 Hon. Commissioner Dr Diana Ochoga (Women Affairs Benue State, Nigeria):** There is a partnership initiative in Benue State Nigeria by the ministry of women affairs with local council municipalities to encourage women plant economic trees thus introducing them to economic management of forests
- 4.7 FIDA Anambra (Nigeria):** There should be a post CSW Summit soon
- 4.8 Mrs. Virgy Etiaba (Deputy Governor Anambra State, Nigeria):** Congratulated WREP for organizing the laudable event and the lead presenters. She gave a brief note on her role in political leadership position. Reiterated the call for educating the girl child

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5.0 THE FINAL SUBMISSION

5.1 Dr. Hauwa Imam

Pleased that the initiative of MOTHERS UNITE is gaining momentum. Looking forward to WREP starting it in Abuja Nigeria. She recited another poem composed by her.

5.2 Ms. Maria- Fernandez Stuart

I learnt more from you. Let's go ahead with enthusiasm. The journey of a thousand miles begins with a step

5.3 Dr. Louis Brown Ogbeifun

- We have all agreed that our advocacy role needs to be increased and that educating our children particularly in the sciences should be encouraged
- Women should be part of the management boards of oil corporations
- Women coming together as MOTHERS UNITE. There cannot be a better project
- Make friends with the media. All that is needed is the goodwill
- Timeline for the Post CSW Summit. Need to meet soon to be able to determine that.

5.4. Ms Mimidoo Achakpa (Executive Director WREP)

She thanked everyone for attending the session and participating constructively. She was overwhelmed with the side events success and stated that MOTHERS UNITE project will be taken up once back in Nigeria, according to her, the process has begun already