

REPORT OF THE JUST CONCLUDED KEY INFLUENCERS FORUM AT BRIDGE WATER HOTEL ENUGU

Arrival of the guest was followed by filling of the attendance sheets, the meeting proper commenced by 10.30 am with a national opening prayer led by Raymond Ukwu.

Introduction of participants followed suit after which Raymond introduced Youth Network for Community and Sustainable Development Nigeria, what we do and the key influencers forum.

Pretext and tea break came up next following the introductions.

Next session was on FGM with Enugu in focus this session was handled by Mrs Evelyn. She explained the myths around FGM in Enugu, the prevalent practices and the work so far by their organisation. This session raised questions from the participants which made the meeting engaging, Raymond and Onyinyechi stepped in to clarify the arising issues.

Next was the session on Transforming social norms underpinning FGM by Raymond Ukwu. In the course of this session, the participants asked questions on the status of FGM as a norm, the myths around it as well as clarifications on such. The interesting part in this session was that most of the participants stood to share personal experiences with FGM. Bar.Mrs Onuoha shared the experiences of her sister who had undergone FGM and the numerous challenges she had been through as a result of FGM. Pastor Chris Asadu shared the experience of a fellow clergy man who had just wedded and only to find out on his wedding night that his wife had type three FGM (infibulation) and no opening for normal sexual intercourse as is expected in marriage. This incidence he said brought so much controversy and almost led to the resolution of the marriage.

Several other cleric also shared their experiences on what they used to know as FGM. The session ended with Usman Ugwoke a Muslim cleric stating the Muslim stand on FGM practice and asking question on FGM involving the removal of the prepuce, the myths that the clitoris grows if not removed and the vagina smells badly without undergoing FGM.

All these question where answered by Onyinyechi Mbam-Ikokwu who happened to be the next session faciliator. She used the medical angle to give proper explanations to the question raised by the Muslim cleric before taking on her session being 'Understanding the roles of religious leaders in ending FGM.

This session engaged the clerics and had them see what they can do being one of the most influential people on earth in support to the EndFGM campaign message. The session was an interactive one. Pastor Zion Ugwu of the Christian religion asked questions saying "if I organise a program where we can talk to my members and train them will you people (YNCSD) come?"

The rest of the clerics voiced their joy over the great learning they got in the meeting, saying they are now well oriented on what FGM is and the role they can play in ending the practice.

They further splitter into the group work session to discuss how to take the campaign further as clerics from different religious backgrounds. At the end of the group work each of the cleric made a pledge to Join the EndFGM campaign and spread the message further.

Post-test was administered to them after which the meeting came to an official end at 3.30pm.