

# **LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION FOR AFRICAN GIRL-CHILD AND WOMEN**

## **Report Of Mentoring Seminar**

**Title:** Building Winning Attitude To Girl- Child Development 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition  
**Venue:** Girls' Secondary School Akwakuma, Owerri, Imo State.  
**Date of Event:** July 10, 2015.

All over the world, the girl-child is faced with a lot of challenges such as poor access to education, poverty, health, violence and religious discrimination, among others. In much of the developing world, cultural constraints can impose additional barriers to the existing ones and thus hinder the development of the girl - child. In view of these barriers, and to position the Nigerian girl – child for the present global attention on empowering women, Leadership Foundation For African Girl-Child And Women, organised an awareness and mentoring programme on how to overcome these barriers by building a winning attitude in order to overcome some of them and maximise their development potential.

### ***Assumptions:***

It is generally believed that one third of the world's girls are married before the age of 18; and one in every nine girls are married before the age of 15.

Research by International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) revealed that in 2010, 67 million women within ages 20-24 around the world had been married before the age of 18. If the current trends continue, it is assumed that 142 million girls will be married before their 18th birthday over the next decade. In addition, girls who marry before 18 are more likely to experience domestic violence than their peers who marry much later, which may be as a result of immaturity and other related issues, such as complications in pregnancy that is widely believed to be among the leading causes of death for girls within ages of 15 to 19.

The National Council for Children's Services (NCCS 2007) revealed that reasons such as preserving and ensuring virginity before marriage, promiscuity-control, rape, poverty and other economic reasons, among others, could also contribute to early marriage.

Sen and Grown in their 1998 research work argue that if the goals of development include improved standards of living, removal of poverty, access to dignified employment and reduction in societal inequality, then it is quite natural to start with women. It is worth noting that failure to grant the rights of the girl - child in childhood stage may have effects on the child's development programme in the future.

### **Collaborators**

Organisations such as [United Nations Girls' Education Initiative \(UNGEI\)](#) had collaborated in addressing the development of the girl – child by launching a partnership that embraces the United Nations system, governments, donor countries, non-governmental organisations, civil society, the private sector, and communities and families in April 2000. This was done by providing stakeholders with a platform for action that galvanises their efforts to get girls in school and was aimed at narrowing the gender gap in primary and secondary education to ensure that by 2015, all children complete primary schooling, with girls and boys having equal access to all levels of education.

The Nigerian government to support the development of the girl-child, established some national laws and support centres but the question remains how helpful, accessible and effective these are to her development.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action laid a lot of emphasis on the rights of the Girl-Child, and established the framework for advancing “the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of humanity.”

Nearly 20 years after, this task still “requires urgent action in the spirit of determination, hope, cooperation and solid reason can be cultural diversities and a unified approach.”

In view of this, Leadership Foundation for African Girl Child And Women (LFAGCW) is ready to collaborate with the girls, women and other stakeholders in promoting their right, status and other aspects of their lives that can enhance development and maximisation of their potentials.

The question remains how do we achieve this? We believe that pulling experiences together and sharing our success secrets with our girls, would position our girls better in facing the future challenges and that would enable them maximise their output.

While we wait for these agents of change, the Foundation’s initiative to set the ball rolling by organising awareness and mentoring programme tagged “Building Winning Attitude to Girl-Child Development” had revealed some areas of threat to the development of the girl – child which was a part of the objectives of the programme. The main objectives of the event include:

- Creating a platform for discussing the issues, drawing insight and proffering solutions to the common ones that can be threats to the girls’ development and maximisation of their potentials.
- Bridging the communication gap by enlightening the girls on the available help lines and how to use them when they need assistance.
- Showing them how to overcome or avoid these issues and become better persons in the society, with a rationale that building winning-attitude in girls can be useful to the transformational agenda.
- Transforming the girls’ psyche on the issues as a source of their limitation would improve their personalities.
- Providing a platform where girls can discuss their issues with their peers and take decisions that can benefit them and the society at large would boost their morale and encourage networking.

## **THE PROGRAMME**

The targeted audience were teenage girls, although some adults comprising both male and female were present and a few numbers of attendees were below the age of 13. Over 30 schools in Imo State were invited through the Imo State Education Board and the turnout was amazing. It was a mixed audience where the schools in attendance came with counsellors as well. Government Secondary Schools were in the majority followed by Private Secondary Schools.

The programme outcome complied with the programme objectives and the rationale. These were achieved through presentations, questionnaire response, drama, dance, feedback forms, networking and Q and A sessions, among others.

During the programme, Mrs. Viola Okoro, Executive Director of the Foundation, read an opening speech, listing the goals of the Foundation and counselling the attendees on ways to stay focussed. She mentioned tactics such as forgetting the past and focusing on the future, walking in groups and not alone to avoid being raped, dressing appropriately, being security conscious, avoiding peers' negative influences, embracing education and above all, the fear of God, was highly emphasised. That set the tone for a lively discussion of the topic of the day, as other speakers, invited guests and participants freely expressed themselves.

Some of the issues discovered in the Lagos programme that could be a threat to the development of the girl-child which led to our decision of repeating the same programme in other geo-political zones in Nigeria, were also revealed at the Owerri programme. The issues and some others that some of them are finding difficult to handle were revealed as well. This implies that our quest to plan the same programme in other geo-political zones in Nigeria to have balanced information on the current issues and how to manage them is becoming realistic.

Questionnaires were administered to the girls alone. The questions in the questionnaires were used to test some of the issues raised by other researchers. These are the issues that could pose a big challenge to the development of the girl – child if not addresses. Some challenges such as gender discrimination, early marriage, and domestic work to early pregnancy, among others, were tested.

## **PARTNERS**

Some organisations such as Imo State Education Board, Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) Owerri and some individuals offered their support. Lady Ozurumba G. A, Director, Universal Basic and Secondary Education represented the Imo State Commissioner of Education. Her presentation brought a lot of hope and confidence to the girls. She displayed a good knowledge of what the challenge of the girl - child is and her experience as a teacher, mother, leader and a girl – child also threw more light on some of the challenges. She mentioned how they used their cartoon skill to pass some funny information in their secondary school days as a young girl. She stressed the need for the rising of the girl-child such as taking her place in the society, being career- minded which can reflect on how often she researches the books in the library, being morally acceptable and hardworking, among others. Her presentation was embedded in building winning attitudes to issues that may limit their development. She encouraged them to call the appropriate authority or even this Foundation when they run into situations that are difficult for them to handle. In conclusion, she said “you are no longer alone; take your place and make the world a better place.”

The girls hardly got tired of asking questions and we were happy that the girls were opening up. It was an exciting moment for all of us seeing our girls in such mood. Many questions were asked and we were unable to answer just a very few due to time constraints and that has led to our new plan of establishing a Forum where such questions could be discussed and other questions relating to our area of niche would be treated as well. The Foundation has concluded plans for a follow up strategy for girls who are still finding it difficult to manage their experience.

We may not get large number of them on the internet due to the fact that many of them have no access to the internet, which was revealed in their feedback forms. The guardians and teachers were not left out in the mentoring and interacting session. The girls were really anxious to know how to get the best out of life and we encouraged them not to give up and that one day, they would be glad that they did maximise their potential. We concluded the interactive session by encouraging them to *“keep a running note of what works and what doesn’t work for them, what they like and what they don’t like, what they’re good at and what they aren’t good at.”*

Some of the guardians of the attendees acknowledged the great improvement in the lives of their girls who attended the programme. They disclosed that they observed a measurable change in the lives of their girls after the programme, especially those with low - esteem issues. Many counsellors from different schools in Imo State and other volunteers were present.

## **THE PROGRAMME QUESTIONNAIRE REPORT**

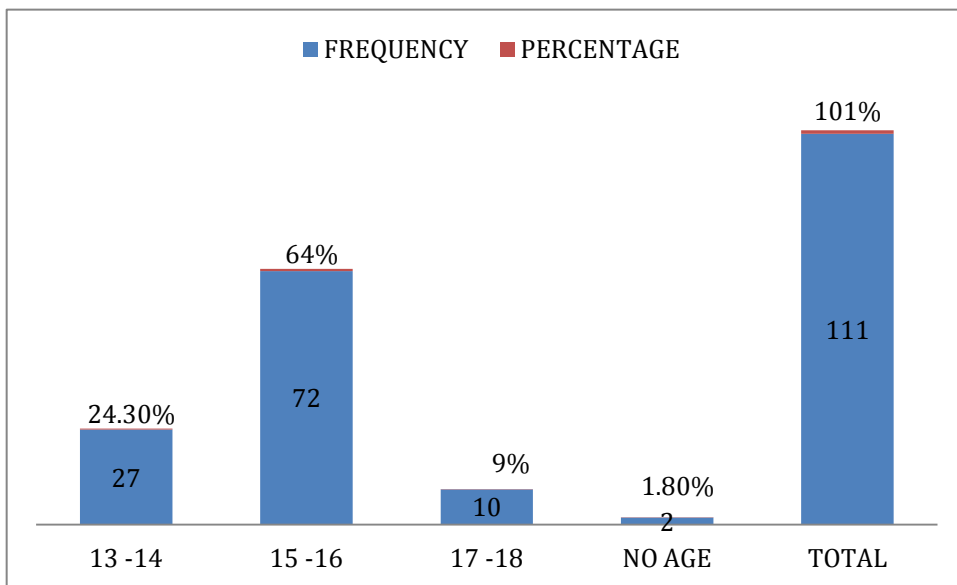
### **Methodology**

The questionnaire was written in simple English and was randomly distributed to 130 girls. Only one (0.8%) questionnaire was returned unattended to, 111 (85.4%) were returned which comprised of complete and incomplete response although two (1.5%) out of the 111 returned were without age category while 19 (14.6%) questionnaire forms were not returned.

The table below illustrates the age frequencies and percentages of those who responded. The age categories of the girls that responded to the questionnaire are as follows: 2 (1.8%) represent no ages indicated, 27 (24.3%) represent 13-14 age categories; 72 (64.9%) represent ‘15 to 16’ age group; 10 (9%) represent 17-18 categories of age. It appears that age categories ‘15-16’ has the highest number of response and this is the peak of teenage age followed by ‘13 -14’ age categories. Meanwhile, ages 17 – 18 categories are 9% which tallied with Lagos response within the same age category.

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
13 -14	27	24.3%
15 -16	72	64%
17 -18	10	9%
NO AGE	2	1.8%
TOTAL	111	101%

The following bar chart illustrates the Ages, Frequencies and Percentages of those who responded.



The girls were asked five questions in all and an open question; these were the pattern of their responses to each question in the questionnaire.

Question 1 (Do your parents discriminate against you because of your sex?)

The responses for the above question fell in these patterns:

22.2% of girls within the ages of 13 – 14 category agreed that there is still discrimination due to gender difference going on their family which could affect their development. 8.1 of the girls within the ages of 15 – 16 category agreed that gender discrimination in families still exist. 0% of girls within the ages of 17 – 18 category of age agreed that gender discrimination in families is no longer common. 0% of girls within no ages indicated category also agreed that gender discrimination is no longer common.

From their responses pattern to the question above, it appears that gender discrimination in families is decreasing and this could enhance the development of the girl – child because it encourages equal opportunity to all gender categories.

**Question 2** (Does excessive domestic work affect your performance in school?)

Here are the patterns of their responses to question number two:

29.6% of girls within ages of 13 – 14 category agreed that it could affect their performance in school. 18.1% of girls within ages of 15 – 16 category agreed that it could affect their performance in school. 50% of girls within ages of 17 – 18 category agreed that it could affect their performance in school. 50% within no age's indication category agreed that it could affect their performance in school.

The pattern of responses to question number two appears to be fluctuating and some high percentage of threat is observed and this needed some level of attention. This could affect any child in school if not taken care of even in the boy –child. Teachers, leaders and people in authority should educate parents and guardians on how to manage this problem and assign chores to them appropriately.

**Question 3** (Does early marriage affect the development of the girl-child?)

The response pattern to question number three are as follows:

92.6% of girls within the ages of 13-14 categories agreed that this could be a threat to their development. 95.8% of girls within the ages of 15 -16 categories agreed that this could be a threat to their development. 90% of girls within the ages of 17- 18 categories agreed that it could be a threat to their development. 100% of girls within no age category agreed that it could be a threat to their development.

The pattern of response has changed again; high level of threat is revealed and if not taken care of, could broaden the gap existing in gender development.

**Question 4** (Does teenage pregnancy affect the development of the girl-child?)

100% of girls within the ages of 13–14 categories agreed that this could affect the girl-child development. 98.6% of girls within the ages of 15-16 categories agreed that this could affect the girl-child development. 100% of girls within the ages of 17-18 categories agreed that this could affect the girl-child development. 100% of girls within no age categories agreed that this could affect the development of the girl-child.

High level of threat is revealed here and if the girls are not supported on how to manage this, one of the assumptions made by one of the researching teams (UNGEI) in early pages of this report may occur.

**Question 5** (Does being a girl have an effect on your educational performance?)

7.4% of girls within the ages of 13 -14 categories agreed that being a girl could affect their educational performance. 6.9% of girls within the ages of 15-16 categories agreed that being a girl could affect their educational performance. 10% of girls within the ages of 17-18 categories agreed that this could affect their educational performance. 0% of girls within the ages not indicated agreed that this could be a threat to their educational development.

Summarising the responses above, it appears that some of these issues are less threatening to the development of the girl – child than others. However, no matter how less threatened some of the issues could be, the girls facing such challenges need support because leaving it unattended to would minimise their potentials. What happens if the issues with high-threatening risk remain unattended to? That's the reason for this research because the open question area revealed about 40% having a relationship issues.

**THE TABLE BELOW REPRESENTS THE FREQUENCIES AT WHICH THE ATTENDEES RESPONDED TO THE QUESTIONS IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

AGE CATEGORIES	QUESTION 1		QUESTION 2		QUESTION 3		QUESTION 4		QUESTION 5	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
13-14	6	21	8	19	25	2	27	0	2	25
15-16	6	66	13	59	69	3	71	1	5	67
17-18	0	10	5	5	9	1	10	0	1	9
No age indication	0	2	1	1	2	0	2	1	0	2

An open question was given in order to test for other new issues that we may not have mentioned that could be a threat to the development of the girl-child and it was revealed that: 15% of the attendees' responses reveal issues relating to sex and relationships, and those in this group are between the ages of 15 – 17.

25% of them have issues they were not ready to disclose and this could be attributed to lack of trust and lack of awareness of the foundation platform which they can relate with.

In conclusion, it was also discovered that with proper mentoring and counselling, the girl-child can be trained into developing the right winning attitude to face the challenges and manage distractions associated with life issues.

Watch out for our next programme scheduled to hold in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria in September, 2016!

## QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Girl-Child,

Kindly fill this questionnaire, there is no right or wrong answers and the answer will not be traceable to you; rather, it would help the organisers of this programme to know the issues that are threatening the development of the Girl-Child. Always remember that you have the right to SPEAK.

Please be honest with your answers.

Age group    13-14     15-16     17-18

**Yes/No**

Do your parents discriminate against you because of your sex?

Does excessive domestic work affect your performance in school?

Does early marriage affect the girl child development?

Does teenage pregnancy affect the girl child development?

Does being a girl have an effect on your educational performance?

What is your deepest secret?