

## **Brief Report of Initial Mobilization Visits to Project Locations in Delta and Edo States**

### **Project “*Gender Inequality and Rural Women’s Health in Post-Covid-19 Nigeria: Towards Inclusive and Sustainable Rural Women’s Health in Nigeria*”**

This report is based on an initial mobilization visit to relevant stakeholders in Edo and Delta states and visit to six (6) target project local government areas in the two states. The visit afforded the program staff to meet with key stakeholders and intimate them of the ongoing project in Edo and Delta States.

#### Mobilization of Policy/Decision Makers in Edo and Delta State

Policy and decision makers in the two project states (Edo and Delta states) and their relevant ministries and agencies were specifically targeted during this initial visit, including the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Local Government Affairs, Ministry of Women Affairs, Community and Social Development, Ministry of Youth and Gender Issues, the Ministry of Local Government, Community and Chieftaincy Affairs, amongst others. During this visit, several meetings were held with Directors, Permanent Secretaries and some commissioners. The visit was to officially inform the various Ministries and agencies about the commencement of work in the project LGAs and also seek their support. All actors present during the meetings promised to cooperate with Centre for Population and Environmental Development in the implementation of the research project in the two states and to support the team to ensure successful completion of the project in the target LGAs.

#### Mobilization visits to Isoko South Local Government Areas of Delta State

Isoko South Local Government Area is one of the three LGAs selected for the Women Rise project implementation in Delta state. Located in the Delta South Senatorial District of Delta state, Isoko South Local Government Area covers a low-lying section of the larger Niger Delta Basin, interspersed with streams, canals and rivers. It is located in a region of deciduous and evergreen forests, with patches of mangrove forest, as well as a forest reserve along the Aviara clan area. With a population of nearly 400,000 people, the residents of Isoko South LGA are predominantly farmers. Agriculture, fishing, and the production of palm oil and kernels are the main economic drivers of Isoko people. Yams and cassava are the primary food crops, with corn (maize), beans, peppers, and peanuts (groundnuts) as supplementary crops.

Mobilization visits were made to selected communities in the LGAs where the survey instruments would be administered. Leaders of the communities, including women leaders, youth leaders and leaders of social groups in the various communities were

adequately mobilized. The communities visited in the LGA include Uzere, Oleh, Irri, Emede, and Igbide.

*Uzere* community has become one of the largest petroleum oil producing communities in Nigeria. Uzere community has a King (Ovie). The Kingdom is also known for the production of groundnut, cassava and fish. Though Uzere is known for oil exploration, it has recently developed into an industrial town with a cassava processing factory in place. Uzere has a cottage hospital built and equipped by the Shell Petroleum Development Company and health centers. The community is currently in total blackout from the National grid, hence depends on the use of generators, solar panel and local lamp for lighting

*Emede* is a town headed by a monarch called the Ovie of Emede Kingdom. He is also the traditional custodian of the people's customs, culture and tradition. The affairs of the town are run by three organs of leadership: the monarch, town Progress Union and the community Youth council. The kingdom has eight clan namely, *Uruara, Etevie, Adaza, Ewrokpe, Okporo, Odhe, Enuoto and Ahiname*. These are administratively controlled by the President General of Emede Progress Union. The women/girls of Emede are predominantly fish farmers. Their economy is tied to fishing, farming and trading. The major crops are cassava, plantain, yam, guava, corn, groundnut, sweet potato etc.

Oleh is the administrative center of Isoko south LGA, it houses the council offices. The town is under the leadership of a monarch, His Royal Majesty (H.R.M.) Ovwah A. Omogha 1 (JP). In addition to the monarch and his chiefs, there is also an Oleh community executives headed by an elected president. The leadership of the community is characterised by inequality as there are no women heading executive positions in the leadership of the community. There are different economic classes in Oleh, ranging from civil servants, merchants, skilled and unskilled personnel and farmers. The farmers mostly specialize in food crop farming, fishery, livestock farming and sometimes hunting of bush animals. The food crops cultivated by the farmers include cassava, maize, oil palms, plantain and yams. **Women form a large proportion of the farming population.** They also engage in trading of food crops for cash to meet other basic household needs. The Delta State University has a Campus located in Oleh with Faculty of Law and Engineering.

*Irri* community is one of the petroleum producing communities in Nigeria. It is bordered by Uzere, Aviara, Oyede, Idheze and Oleh. The Irri people have been known to be farmers and fishermen. The Irri people are majorly Christians with a very small number of individuals still practicing traditional beliefs. Irri town and her sub-clans namely Ikpide-Irri, Kannan-Irri, Onitsha-Irri and Warri-Irri, which are located above the bank of River

Niger. The community is ravaged by floods almost every time water is released from the Cameroon dam, with scores of inhabitants of the community, especially women and children being dislodged from their homes. Even though they have cried out for help from the state government and other relevant agencies, the situation has remained the same year by year. The situation is further compounded because of oil exploration activities in the community which has led to soil infertility affecting crop yield, and rivers pollution affecting aquatic lives.

*Igbide* community's predominant occupation is fishing and farming, especially cassava and groundnuts. The *Igbide* people took early to Christianity. *Owodokpokpo*, a community in *Igbide* clan, is regarded as one of the main entry points of Christianity into *Isoko* land. *Igbide* community has experienced a recent intercommunal crisis with *Emede* community and *Enhwe* Community.

During the visit to *Isoko* South LGA, the secretary of the local government, **Hon. Vantus**, who represented the chairman of the LGAs was on hand to welcome the team. Hon. Vantus, along with his LGA authority staff were briefed about the Women Rise Project and how the LGA can collaborate with the project team for the successful implementation of the project. Other issues covered in the discussion during the visit include the security situation of the LGA, especially during data collection and intervention in selected pilot community. The LGA boss reiterates their commitment to working and collaborating with the team and reports any area of concern to his former teacher and vice chancellor, Professor. Emeritus Onokerhoraye who is also one of the Project Principal Investigators. Representatives of the various departments such as departments of Primary Healthcare, Agriculture, Environment and Sanitation were all in attendance during the visit to the LGA secretariat.

### Mobilization visits to *Ethiope* East Local Government Areas of Delta State

*Ethiope* East Local Government Area (LGA) is located in Delta Central Senatorial District of Delta State and is home to three districts and 67 settlements. These include *Agbon* district, *Abraka* district and *Isiokolo* districts. The LGA has a population of more than 200,000 people. During the mobilization visit to the Local government Area, the project team held several meetings with the authority at the secretariat located in *Isiokolo* town. HODs of departments of Primary Healthcare, Agriculture, Environment were all present and were briefed about the 'Women's Rise Project' and solicited their cooperation in its implementation. Leaders of the communities selected for data collection were also mobilized to prepare them for the work ahead in the LGA.

Some of the Communities visited include *Isiokolo*, *Orhoapor*, *Oviorie*, *Ovu Inland*, *Okpara Inland* and *Kokori*. It was observed that the majority of inhabitants of the LGA are farmers while few are into petty trading. Most of the farmers are mainly into Cassava farming (for

Garri processing) and oil palm farming and production. The Cassava farming is more common at Isiokolo Ward while The Oil Palm is more common among the farmers at Orhoakpor and Kokori Community. Most of the women/girls in the community are both farmers and traders. Some have shops along the streets of the communities, trading farm produce such as maize, okra, yam, pepper, green vegetables, etc. for the purpose of feeding the household.

Infrastructural facilities like electricity, portable water, housing etc. are necessary amenities needed in different communities. These are scarcely uneven in the 5 selected wards of Ethiope East LGA mobilised for data collection activities. There is a general pipe borne water system seen in some parts of Isiokolo, Ovu and Okpara Inland where the community can get clean water, but these are not replicated in Kokori and Orhoakpor community where the open and the ring well system are common, though they are also able to get water from other households with boreholes. The source of electricity in the 5 communities visited is the national electricity power, which many claim they hardly receive up to 1hour a day. This has resulted to majority of the community household to the use of Candle light, Kerosene lamp and solar system for those who can afford it.

The majority of the farmers use farmlands owned by their extended family for their farming business, a few of them hire farmlands for their farm work which they pay for either monthly or yearly based on agreement.

There are government health Centre located in the various communities, but some community members hardly visit the health centres for their use. This may not be unconnected with high cost of receiving health care. Their limited use of the healthcare facilities may also greatly be influenced by the fact that most of the residents practice traditional religion who believe in the use of herbs and other traditional medicine, even though some also indulges in multiple worship. The belief system of the community and low education of some has greatly influenced their use of the community health services in the various communities visited.

#### Mobilization Visits to Ika South Local Government Council (Delta State)

Ika south local government area is located in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta state. Igbo, Urhobo, and Itsekiri people make up the population of the cosmopolitan and thriving Ika South LGA. The LGA is also home to a number of tourists attractions, including the Agbor Museum and the Ogbe-Obi Market. The LGA has an area of 436 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 162,594 at the 2006 census with projection population of 229,000 by 2022. Ika South is a major agricultural region, and its economy is based on the production of palm oil, rubber, and cassava. The LGA also has a growing industrial sector, with a number of manufacturing plants located in Agbor.

During the mobilization visit to the Local Government Council, heads of department and other key personnel of the local government council were present to receive the project team. The Executive secretary of the council and LHA Dr (Mrs.) Nwabuwa Adaeze who represented the LGA chairman during the visit commended the project team for the visit and for selecting Ika South as part of the 6 LGAs in Delta state for the project. She expressed the LGA authority readiness to work with the team during the research phase to generate relevant data and when interventions to empower women and girls in the target project communities, commences. During the initial mobilization phase, different communities and their leaders were visited including Ozanogogo, Aliagwa, Alifekede, Igbogili, and Udomi communities respectively.

The occupation of majority of people of **Alifekede** are engaged in farming (Mainly okro farming) and trading and most of the women are full time traders. The people of **Ozanogogo** community speak Oza which is closely related to EDO language unlike other communities that speak Ika dialect. The community is underdeveloped with a lot of mud houses and few modern houses. This community makes use of open wells and a few pipe-born waters. Most of the residents in this community are predominantly elderly while most of the young population have migrated to Agbor and other big cities in the state and beyond. The people of the community are known for production of local gin and crop farming.

#### Mobilization Visits to Esan Central Local Government Area

Esan Central Local Government Area is located in Edo Central Senatorial District. Its administrative headquarters is the town of Irrua. The population of Esan Central LGA according to 2006 census was 105,242 people. As at 2022, the projected population of Esan Central LGA became 155,500 people. Esan Central is primarily a rural area because farming is still the major source of employment for the locals. The defunct Bendel Feeds and Flour Mills, Ewu and the Federal Ministry of Agriculture Grains Reserve Irrua give the region's agricultural credentials some credibility. However, in recent years, table water plants, sawmills, hotels, private schools, big-box stores, and other commercial establishments have all opened.

At the time of visit to Esan Central Local Government Area, the LGA chairman and his staff were on grand to receive project staff and mobilization officers. The local authority was briefed about the women rise project and solicit for their cooperation in the implementation of the project. Mrs. Evelyn Idahosa, a senior staff member of the LGA, thank CPED team and the mobilization officer for the visit and pledge the support of the LGA authority to ensure the team achieve success in the project implementation.

Other issues discussed during the visit to the LGA were insecurity, especially kidnapping and banditry activities taking place in some communities of the LGA. The LGA promised

to work with the team to provide security personnel to be with the team during data collection and at other times as may be needed by the project team.

The team also visited some communities/wards and met with Chiefs and Odionwelles of different communities. The Chiefs were informed about the research project that would be implemented in their various local communities. The communities visited include Idinegbon-Eidenu, Akho, Eguare, Eko-Ewu, Ugbegun, Ekhu and Usugbenu communities. Below are the names of the targeted communities for the project.

#### Mobilization Visits to Etsako East Local Government Area

Etsako East is a local government council located in Edo North Senatorial District of Edo state having its headquarters at Agenebode, which is surrounded by a number of other settlements, including Egori, Imiegba, Ivianokpodi, Agiere, Ebelle, Ofukpo, Uzanu, and Okpeteku. With members of numerous tribes living there, Etsako East LGA is expected to have 231,789 residents. In the Etsako East LGA, Islam and Christianity are the two most prevalent religions. The Okpella Cement factory is a famous landmark in the Etsako East LGA, which also hosts a number of events including the Idaechie and Adu Ikukun festivals.

Agriculture is the main occupation of the people of Etsako East LGA with crops such as maize, yam, cassava, and plantain grown in the area. Trade is also an important feature of the economic life of Etsako East LGA with the area hosting several markets such as the Imegba central market. Etsako east LGA is also rich in minerals such as limestone, potassium, and coal and the area is known for the production of cement in substantially large quantities.

During the mobilization visit to the local government CPED team briefed the council officers about the project implementation. The team also had meetings with the Head of Department (HOD) health, Mrs. Roselyn Iduh. Furthermore, different communities and wards were visited, and community Chiefs and Royal Highest were met at the different communities. The communities visited include *Idoko, Ivioghe, Ekwotsor, North Ibie, and Iviukhue* communities respectively.

#### Mobilization Visits to Ovia South West Local (Edo State)

Ovia South West Local Government Area is located in Edo South Senatorial District. Iguobazuwa is the headquarter of Ovia south west local and it is a very large community predominantly occupied by the Benin's, Yoruba's, Igbos, Ogoja, Urhobos and few other tribes. Their main source of income and occupation is farming and few others who are artisans. have a common problem bedeviling the community which is the continual destruction of crops by cattle and herdsmen which in turn make lives and living standard hard and difficult for the populace of Iguobazuwa. Iguobazuwa community has some



boreholes where people get water, but it is not close to many homes and not accessible by people living with disability.

At the time of visit to the LGA the Director of Administration and General Services, Mr. Justice Osabor (Esq.) welcomed the project team. Mobilization briefed the LGA boss about what the project entails and concluded by highlighting the need for the Local Government Authority to collaborate with CPED on the project. The LGA staff who attended the meeting were delighted beyond measure that a project of such nature is about to take place in their Local Government. They promised to provide the necessary support for the project and make sure all findings and recommendations from this work will be forwarded to the appropriate authorities for implementation. The LGA boss further added that should there be any harassment or resistance as the work is being carried out in the respective communities he should be contacted.

Other issues discussed relate to the security situation in the various communities of the LGA and how this can be mitigated during data collection and intervention activities.

The Mobilization visit also extended to the HOD of Environment, Mrs. H. A. Okunrobo who was also briefed on the purpose of the visit and her support was requested. She was happy that CPED is back with another project that will foster development in the Local government. After discussing extensively, she promised to support the project just as she did in the past projects.

Mobilization visits were also made to the intended communities where the survey instruments would be administered. The mobilization officers sort the support of the local leaders including the community chairman, vice chairman, outh president, women leaders, amongst others. Some of the wards visited include Iguobazuwa West Ward, Udo Aken, Okha, Ikoha, Igbogui,



**Photo:Left-**CPED staff at Agenebode with Chief Admin officer in the office of the HPM; **Right-**CPED staff in a group photo with the Chief of Ekwotsor Community in Etsako East LGA



**Photo: Mobilization visit at Igbogili Community, Ika South LGA, Delta state**



**Photo: Site of Cattle Herder moving freely in the community of Ovia South West LGA**





**PHOTO: CPED Team in a Group Photograph with Barrister Justice Osabor, Director of Admin and General Services, during Mobilization visit at Ovia South West LGA**



**PHOTO: CPED Team in a Group Photograph with a Staff of the Department of Health, during Mobilization visit to Ika South LGA**



**Photos 1: Hon. Secretary, Supervising Councilor for Works and CPED Program Officer during mobilization visit to the council secretariat in Isoko South**