

**NOT TOO YOUNG TO KNOW ADVOCACY PROJECT
REPORT OF THE PHOTO EXHIBITION**



**HELD ON 9TH APRIL 2019 AT FIRST MOLAC HOTEL
AKURE, ONDO STATE**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sequel to the report submitted on the training of the 19 adolescents on the NOT TOO YOUNG TO KNOW Advocacy project ongoing in four schools in Akure, Ondo State, this report contains activities carried out during the photo exhibition ceremony, on the 9th of April, 2019, at First Molac Events Centre, Ondo road, Akure, Nigeria. In attendance were over a 120 people interested in what the adolescents had to say, these include teachers, the media, parents, heads of Non-governmental organization, government representatives and the adolescents themselves.

Personalities and dignitaries present include representatives of the Commissioner for Education, Commissioner for Health, Permanent Secretary Ministry of information, Ministry of Youth and Sport Development, Director Child, Ministry of Women Affairs, Representative of the DG, Nigeria Television Authority (NTA), Editor in Chief of TRACE Magazine, Representatives of the Principals of the four different schools whose students participated in the project, Representatives from Religious organizations (Christian and Muslim), traditional rulers, security agencies (police), Chief Executive Officer, Executive Director and all members of staff and volunteers of Kids & Teens Resource Centre.

Highlights of the exhibition included goodwill messages by all the stakeholders present, overview of the NOT TOO YOUNG TO KNOW project presented by the ED, Kids & Teens Resource Centre, presentation on the implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Ondo State by the Ministry of Education, presentation of the pictures/findings by the adolescents themselves, opening of the exhibition arena and viewing of the exhibition stands by the representative of the Ministry of Education and all stakeholders present, feedback/dialogue session coordinated by the CEO, K&TRC, Martin-Mary Falana, and finally, commitment statements from stakeholders.

The program came to an end at 2:35pm with smiles on the faces of everyone present, and a new hope for the adolescents.

INTRODUCTION

The exhibition, held on the 9th of April started with the arrival of guests and dignitaries from various Ministries, Departments and Agencies of the State Government, parents of the adolescents, school principals and teachers. The Adolescents were already seated before 10am for final rehearsals and venue settings.

Guest started trooping in at 10:15am, and were ushered to the registration stand, after which they were led to the exhibition stands mounted by adolescents who took time to explain what each picture meant to them and why they had taken that particular picture to reflect their needs and experiences. These went on for 30 minutes and at 10:45am, the program started with the M.C, Joel Adeniyi, calling everyone present to take the second stanza of the Nigerian National Anthem as opening prayer. After which he introduced dignitaries and ushered them to the high table.

Next on the agenda was the welcome speech given by the Executive Director, Kids & Teens Resource Centre (K&TRC), Folashade Bamigboye, where she warmly welcomed everyone present and specially thanked the parents for releasing their kids to take part in the project. She said the Not too Young to Know Project is an advocacy project focusing on the adoption of the revised International Technical Guidelines on Comprehensive Sexuality Education and that, it is being implemented with support from Women Deliver, an organization in the United States which focus on the wellbeing of women and girls. She implored everyone to listen to the messages the adolescent would be presenting and ensure that they use their power to amplify the voices of the adolescents so that they can get the desired change sought after.

GOODWILL MESSAGES

Immediately after the welcome speech, was the goodwill messages from the different government bodies present, the media, the religious bodies, the traditional rulers, etc. The first goodwill message was given by the representative of the Ondo State Agency for the Control of AIDS (ODSACA), Mrs Funmilade Joyce Akinrelere; she began by stating that adolescents in Nigeria are at significant risk for poor Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) outcomes. As a result, at SACA level, there have been lots of interventions targeting in and out of school youths in the state, some of the interventions, especially for in-school youths include the Family Life Health Education (FLHE), which is embedded in the school curriculum, wherein ODSACA has trained about 500 teachers on the use of the FLHE guidelines in both public and private schools.

She stated that ODSACA also supports the Ministry of Education in monitoring the implementation of FLHE in schools, including making funds available through the support from the state Government. She brought her goodwill message to a close by appreciating the efforts of the organizers of this special and educative event, she appreciated the organization

implementing the project, Kids & Teens Resource Centre for its efforts so far in reducing the prevalence of HIV in the state from 1.6% in 2016 to 1.1% in 2019. She also appreciated the efforts of all stakeholders present, teachers, students and government officials in Ondo State.

The next goodwill message was given by the representative of the Ministry of Youths and Sports, Mrs Olukemi Okupe. She commended the effort of everyone who put hands together to bring about this beautiful event. She stressed on the fact that parents should pay adequate attention to children in their formative years; religion or means of survival should not be an excuse for parents to neglect their duties towards their wards. She stated that adolescents have rights and these rights should be well respected and acknowledged. She concluded by commending Kids & Teens Resource Centre for its tenacity and persistence at providing adequate information for all and sundry in the state and also standing out amongst other organizations within the state.

The third goodwill message was given by Mrs. Toyin Onisile, representative from the Ministry of Information. According to her, Kids & Teens Resource Centre is one of the foremost organizations in the state which helps in promoting adolescent rights, she urged the Organization to keep up with the good works. It is very important for adequate information to be passed around, adolescents often find themselves with wrong information which leads to the terrible decisions and choices they make.

Next goodwill message was from Chief Pius Komolafe, the co-ordinator of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the state. He began by admonishing the adolescents to stand in the gap and pass across to other adolescents what they have learnt so far in the over four weeks of training they underwent in the NOT TOO YOUNG TO KNOW project. He said *'knowledge is a potential power when not put into action, but a great instrument when used in a proper way'*. This is a great call to our parents and care givers to treat adolescents with respect and keep them well informed. Finally, he posed a question to everyone in the hall, *"what is next after we leave this venue?"*

Mr. Lekan Adesida, the representative of the Ministry of Education in his goodwill message said a lot of what he knew growing up was gotten from his peers, this implies that adolescents will seek information from their peers and weather good or bad, and the information they get will form the basis of the decisions they make. Parents, as the first point of contact any child has to get information from should be factual and give adequate information to their children. If we as parents fail in our role to provide adequate information to our children, the internet will do so for us, either good or bad, our children's peers will do so, either good or bad, and people who will want to take advantage of our wards will give them the wrong information as well. He concluded his speech by thanking all the organizers of this program, Women Deliver, the Young

Leader who won the grant and Kids & Teens Resource Centre for implementing the program in Ondo State.

The representative from the National Television Authority (NTA), the two main religious bodies; Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Nasrul-lahi-li Fathi Society (NASFAT), the traditional ruler, etc all gave their goodwill messages as they came in.

OVERVIEW OF THE NOT TOO YOUNG TO KNOW PROJECT



The overview of the NOT TOO YOUNG TO KNOW PROJECT, was taken by the Executive Director K&TRC, Folashade Bamigboye, but just before she took the microphone, a short video clip was played showing the adolescents advocating for the need for Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), in their curriculum and policy supporting CSE was projected.

In her presentation on what the project was all about, Folashade said older adolescents, age 15-19 have always had all the attention in SRH programming while most interventions often neglect the much younger adolescents age 10-14, hence the need to work more with these set of young people to ensure they learn early and develop into responsible adults.

She explained in details the components of CSE, questions adolescents ask which requires scientifically correct answers and dealt with common concerns that stakeholders have about exposing adolescents to sexuality education too early.

She stated that when we keep adolescents well informed, we tend to keep them guarded and help them make the right decisions for their lives. The NOT TOO YOUNG TO KNOW project is about adolescents advocating for their rights to quality and comprehensive sexuality education using the PHOTOVOICE approach.

She concluded by saying, providing Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), should not be the role of the parents alone, but all stakeholders should put hands together to make CSE available for adolescents, these includes the government, religious bodies, traditional rulers, schools, etc.

INTERLUDE



Display of talents

The adolescents had a musical presentation titled 'Ancient walls', displaying how adolescents can use their talents positively.

PRESENTATION ON THE STATE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE ON PROVISION ON CSE

After the short interlude, the Ministry of Education, ably represented by Mr. Lekan Adesida, gave the presentation on the implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Ondo State. In his statement, Family Life Health Education (FLHE), which is similar to Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), has been in the curriculum of secondary schools across the state. Some of the teachers in these schools have also undergone trainings on how to present and teach these topics to the students. Therefore the Ministry promises to give every support necessary to make sure that FLHE is taught in depth across all schools but he also admonishes parents not to relent in their part of giving the adolescents appropriate information they need to make the right decisions.

PRESENTATION OF THE PICTURES/FINDINGS OF THE ADOLESCENTS



The adolescents that took part in the NOT TOO YOUNG TO KNOW advocacy project were officially introduced before they presented their pictures/findings under different themes like Risky Sexual Behaviour, Positive Deviance, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Access to products, services and information, Gender issues, Child's right and Sexual Orientation. Here, the adolescents came out to discuss extensively on the pictures they took, the meanings, implications and why the inclusion of CSE in their curriculum is very paramount.

OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE EXHIBITION ARENA



The representative of the Hon. Commissioner for Education, Pastor Adesida opening the exhibition arena

Opening of the exhibition arena was formally done by the Honorable Commissioner for Education, represented by Mr. Lekan Adesida. The CEO of K&TRC, ushered him to cut the tape, after which all invited guest trooped to the exhibition stand to view the pictures. Each adolescent stood by their pictures and gave explicit description of the pictures

exhibited. Guests took over half an hour to move from one stand to the other and gave their comments at the comments stand, close to the exhibition arena.

COMMENTS FROM INVITED GUESTS

Olarinde Victor from Fiwasaye Girls Grammar School said *“I honestly wasn’t expecting what I saw here today, this shows that both individuals and government still have a lot of effort to put in place to make things right for our adolescents”*

Civil Society Organizations: Chief Mrs. Smart wrote down *“I am impressed with the level of understanding of the adolescents in all the areas of sexuality education”*

High Chief Pius Komolafe wrote *“this exhibition speaks volumes, the messages passed were clear, I wish the ministry of Education can scale up this program for behavioral change in our schools and societies”*

Parents: Mrs. Ogunlaka *“these pictures tells us we still have a long way to go in making our adolescents realize that their decisions affects their lives”*

Press: Ebenezer Adeniyani from TRACE Magazine wrote *“it has been a wonderful experience and performance by the adolescents. I commend the organizers and promise to show support towards further efforts in this direction”*

Oluwaseun Akingboye from Guardian Newspaper wrote *“K&TRC is making history by engaging the most neglected agents of socialization, the adolescents, in this type of advocacy, with this, there is hope for the coming generations”*

Comments from the Adolescents: Ojomo Moyinoluwa wrote *“with the help of this project, I have gotten to know more about Comprehensive Sexuality Education”*

Obaya Joy wrote *“I am absolutely amazed and surprised by the unbelievable knowledge I have gained during this project. It has changed my illogical and stupid mentality and given me a broader perspective”*

Ige Samuel wrote *“the pictures show how adolescents behave in the community and what they face in the society”*

FEEDBACK/DIALOGUE SESSION

The feedback/dialogue session by stakeholders was anchored by the CEO, K&TRC. Some of the parents were quiet surprised by some of the findings from the pictures taken by these adolescents in some of their schools and environment. The security agencies, stated that the rate of rape and violence has increased which further buttresses some of the pictures taken under themes such as risky behaviors and sexual orientations. This segment took another 30 minutes and led to the final segment of the program which was the commitment statement from stakeholders present at the program; this was anchored by Stella Ikeokwu, one of K&TRC’s volunteers.

ADVOCACY ASK BY ADOLESCENTS



The Adolescents came out with messages directed to key stakeholders; MDAs, Teachers, Parents, Security Agencies, Religious Leaders, Traditional Leaders, Health Care workers and the Media to use their position, influence and authority to create a change that will be long lasting in their communities and Ondo state as a whole



Adolescents displaying advocacy messages to key stakeholders

COMMITMENT STATEMENTS FROM STAKEHOLDERS

The Ministry of Information: Mrs Onisile said *‘As a ministry we are committed to disseminating information that pertains to Sexuality Education but this event will make us even focus more attention on disseminating information on Comprehensive Sexuality Education, in particular, jingles, to catch the attention of adolescents and the society at large.’*



NASFAT: Representative of the Muslim religious sect, NASFAT said: *“We promise to give a full report of this program and inform parents about the need to give their adolescent’s proper information and education about their sexuality and general wellbeing”.*



ODSACA: Mrs Akinrelere promised ODSACA’s support for the provision of CSE in schools and *“in particular if a good proposal is submitted, we will render all help that we can, financially and otherwise.”*



Deputy Superintendent of Police: Mrs. Ojumu, appreciated the initiator and sponsors of the project and said, *“my office will uphold the law and discharge our duties especially as it relates to adolescents, without being biased when it has to do with such issues as rape.”*



Ministry of Youths and Sports: In her commitment statement, the permanent secretary to the Ministry of Youths and Sport represented by Mrs Okupe, said *“we will send a letter to the organizers of this program for the Not too Young to Know Advocates to participate in the up-coming program slated for next month where they would come and educate other adolescents on their finding as well as stakeholders’*

CSO Coordinator in the State: Representing the Civil Society Organizations in Ondo State, Chief Pius said *“Members of CSOs are ready and prepared to give their full support anytime they are called upon, they are ready to honour any invitation and give their support technically financially, and physically for the full implementation of CSE in schools.”*

Chief Mrs. Falana, Executive Director of Girls to Women Research and Development Centre also promised to uphold the adolescent’s plea of inculcating CSE both at home and in the society at large. There is need for civil societies to step up CSE among adolescents in rural communities where such may be scarce.



Parents: The parents of the adolescents were not left out, Mr. Amuni, said *“I will spread the message by carrying out advocacy to my church members and fellow parents in church as well as those in my environment.”*

CLOSING

The closing remark was given by Mrs. Olamide Falana, she appreciated the adolescents as well as the parents and stakeholders in attendance, she admonished everyone to see themselves as advocates, most especially the adolescents, she said they should always find a way to take the advocacy messages to their communities and disseminate what they have been working on for the past 4 weeks, she said it should not end in the four walls of this auditorium, rather they should be agents of change, going about and relaying what they have learnt to their peers.

Finally, the vote of thanks was given by Damilola Faponle, a staff of K&TRC, she appreciated Women Deliver for sponsoring the project, she thanked the adolescents for being good ambassadors of their various schools, the schools for releasing the students for the project, the parents for entrusting their kids to K&TRC, the various stakeholders present for honoring the invitations and the entire staff and volunteers of K&TRC for working tirelessly to make the Not Too Young to Know project a success.

She made a request to the stakeholders present that the project has not come to an end, rather, there will be advocacy visits to most of them to further request them to use their power and influence to push for the inclusion of CSE in the schools' curriculum in Ondo state.

The second stanza of the national anthem was said as a form of prayer and the program was brought to an end at 2.35pm

PICTURE GALLERY



poster picture presentation to stakeholders



cross section of participants at the event

POSTER PRESENTATION BY THE ADOLESCENTS



