

WOMEN ON THE MOVE



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CEDPA Nigeria Field Office

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Foreword

For the past twenty years, CEDPA has worked with Nigerian women from all social classes and regions of this vibrant, ethno-culturally diverse, and most populous nation in sub-Saharan Africa. Inspired by the *Women on the Move* series initiated by Nancy Russell and CEDPA Nepal Field Office staff and partners, this book captures, in the women's own words, their experiences of the empowering effects of USAID-sponsored family planning and democracy and governance programs on their lives. They also speak on the impact of these projects on their various communities.

CEDPA's mission is empowerment. Are women, individually and collectively, gaining greater access to crucial resources? Are they becoming more aware of their rights and acting to protect these rights? Is equity a realizable goal? Are there lessons to learn, and can we draw inspiration from women's experiences? What are the strategies for the future? This book, dedicated to Nigerian women, provides insights and possibly some answers to these questions.



Dr. Enyantu Ifenne
Resident Advisor
CEDPA Nigeria Field Office

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List of Organizations

- Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)
- Community Women and Development (COWAD)
- Confederation of Osun NGOs (CONWOG)
- Country Women's Association of Nigeria (COWAN)
- Development Education Center (DEC), Enugu
- Grassroots Health Organization of Nigeria (GHON), Kano
- Muslim Sisters Organization (MSO), Kano
- National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS), Osun and Katsina
- National Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Kano
- Northern Cross River State Women's Association (NCRWA)
- United Women's Association (UWA), Kano
- Women in Nigeria (WIN), Katsina

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Commonly Occurring Acronyms and Abbreviations

CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
CBD Agent	Community-Based Development Agent
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CONWOG	Confederation of Osun NGOs
COWAD	Community Women and Development
COWAN	Country Women’s Association of Nigeria
CRS	Cross River State
DEC	Development Education Center
DG	Democracy and Governance
FIDA	National Federation of Women Lawyers
FP/RH	Family Planning/Reproductive Health
GHON	Grassroots Health Organization of Nigeria
LGA	Local Government Area
MSO	Muslim Sisters Organization
NCRWA	Northern Cross River State Women’s Association
NCWS	National Council of Women’s Societies
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PIC	Project Implementation Committee
TBA	Traditional Birth Attendant
UWA	United Women’s Association
VOW	Voice of Women
VVF	Vesico Vaginal Fistula
WIN	Women in Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Since 1983, the Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) has been working with Nigerian women's organizations to support more active involvement in women's development issues. In 1993, CEDPA began to provide family planning under the "Access to Family Planning Through Women Managers" Project. CEDPA's first family planning subproject in Nigeria was implemented through the National Council of Women's Societies (NCWS) in Plateau State and the Country Women's Association of Nigeria (COWAN) in Ondo State. By early 1997, the number of CEDPA family planning subprojects in Nigeria had grown to 15. These included six separate NCWS projects, four projects by statewide Women Network organizations, and five small grants to support community mobilization for women's health focusing on special issues and populations, including female genital mutilation, vasico vaginal fistula, and refugees. By working through CEDPA alumni and grassroots-based organizations, these projects are contributing to women's health by addressing maternal and child health, STDs, and reproductive health in addition to providing family planning services. At the same time, the projects have built the capacity of individuals and women's organizations in service provision, project management, and sustainability.

To be sustainable and successful, women's health programs must go beyond simply providing family planning and reproductive health services, because Nigerian women face a number of constraints in their daily lives that limit their ability to take full advantage of such services. In order to respond to economic constraints that limited the time and resources that women could devote to family planning services and projects, a CEDPA subproject in Ondo State evolved to include linkages with economic development activities. In order to respond to cultural, social, and political constraints, a Democracy and Governance (DG) Initiative was launched in 1996 in collaboration with Johns Hopkins University/Population Communication Services (JHU/PCS) to promote women's political participation, fundamental human rights, and empowerment. These programs, linked with family planning services, are helping to increase the number of choices available to women and meet community needs, and are consequently consistent with CEDPA's mission to empower women at all levels of society to be full partners in development.

This book records the stories told by Nigerian women and men involved in and affected by these initiatives. It further describes the projects that they have designed or are participating in. These individuals shared their thoughts with CEDPA Nigeria during a series of visits to the subprojects in July 1997.



"Through the effort of CEDPA, integrated health advocacy has now become a reality. We got little impact trying to do it on our own initially but now we have the support of CEDPA."

— Chief Bisi Ogunleye,
Executive Director,
Country Women's
Association of Nigeria
(COWAN)

WHAT IS EMPOWERMENT?

CEDPA's mission is to empower women at all levels of society to be full partners in development. CEDPA views empowerment as a dynamic process with four major stages: **Access**, **Conscientization**, **Action**, and **Equity**. As an individual woman passes through each stage, she comes closer to reaching full empowerment. Each phase describes a goal that CEDPA programs are striving for in their attempts to achieve women's empowerment. Organizations coordinating women's development programs may also experience these stages as they strive to design and implement projects that are responsive to women's needs and the reality of gender inequity.

ACCCESS is the stage at which women are able to gain access to *all* types of resources on an equitable basis with men.

“We listen to the radio through this Northern Cross River State Women’s Association [NCRWA] project. They advise us to listen to the radio and read newspapers, so that we can take action, get involved. We are told not to wait for our men in the house to bring us information about what is going on. You know, if we wait for them, they may not inform us since they feel that we may take over from them. But this is not our intention [in the project]. We are in the project . . . to be side by side with them.”

— **Her Royal Highness Ubi Ujong Inah**, wife of the Obol Lapon of Ugep, Yakur Local Government Area (LGA), Cross River State, and liaison officer for NCRWA Democracy and Governance subproject in Yakur LGA

“When I was at home, I was alone . . . but when I came here, I found many people in my condition, so I am freer and can move about.”

— **Maimuna Sanni**, Vesico Vaginal Fistula (VVF) patient at Babar Ruga General Hospital, Katsina, and beneficiary of a CEDPA-sponsored vocational center run by the National Council of Women’s Societies (NCWS)



“Here in Katsina, we did an assessment of what women really need. They came back with . . . actually what one must first talk of is money. . . . If you ask them to do this or that, they will say they are poor, they don’t have money; so, that is why men are twisting them anyhow. We asked them whether, if we gave them loans to start a business, they would take part in politics. They said ‘yes.’ So, we gave them loans, and after some months they started paying back. In the process of explaining this to them, we give them the message of Democracy and Governance.”

— **Amina Abdullahi**, Public Relations Officer, Women in Nigeria (WIN), Katsina State chapter

“Many of us did not even know where to put our thumb prints when voting. So, a lot of votes were lost this way. In the last [local government] election, UWA (through the 100 [Women] Group activities) taught women how to correctly apply thumb prints on the right spot. So, we now know how to vote properly.”

— **Bilkisu Muhammed**, member of Knitters Association, one of the community-based organizations (CBOs) under the United Women’s Association (UWA), Kano State

CONSCIENTIZATION is the stage at which women have become aware of their rights and recognize gender inequities. This understanding enhances women's ability to take control over their own lives and take advantage of development programs targeted at women.

"The Project is an eye-opener to me because of the lectures I've had. . . . The most interesting one was called Women and the Law. And now, because of this project, I know my rights as a woman. In fact, there are many things that were hidden to me. But I now know my rights through this project. So, it is a very interesting project and I really thank the NCRWA, and I am happy to belong to that association."

— Rosemary Ofem, NCRWA



"Now, no one can buy my vote with money. We have been told this several times. Now we are telling others."

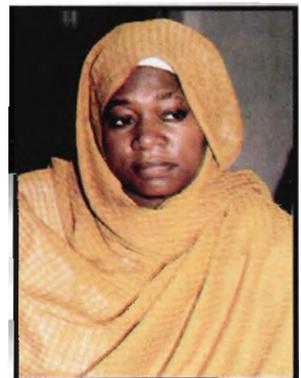
— Danejo Ibrahim, member of the Married Women's Association, a United Women's Association CBO

"The Democracy and Governance program has created awareness. Before, politicians did not reckon with women, but the program has helped to change this. When we gather together, we invite the politicians not to see us as rivals but as partners. In the community, we have men and women. Women also have a role to play and we all belong to the same community."

— S.O. Ogundele, NCWS, Osun State

"Awareness has been created. Everyone who participated in the camps now knows that she is supposed to choose a suitable leader and support women who are interested in politics, if the female politician is herself credible. They now know they should not take money from people canvassing for votes. They are aware that they should view such a person's position objectively before making a decision."

— Jamil Ibrahim Yahaya, President, MSO, Kano



ACTION is the stage at which women increase their participation in decisions and activities that directly affect their well-being. It is marked in CEDPA programs by women taking action individually and collectively to make practical and strategic changes to their environment.

A rally organized by the Confederation of Osun NGCs (CONWOG). Women are becoming more aware of their rights and taking action.



“There was a woman councilor in Abi LGA who did not belong to the party that produced the chairman and a majority of the executive committee (EXCO) members. . . They put her aside and did not give her a position that would expose her or give her more challenges. . . . We received word of this at Voice of Women (VOW) and took up the matter. She was taken to the tribunal. We were there, and based on our efforts, the matter was struck off. She’s now allowed to work freely in the Abi council.”

— *Anne Oden, Coordinator, Voice of Women (VOW), member, NCRWF*



“The women are now more enlightened on programs, most especially politics. Unlike before when women did not come out to vote, during the recent local government election, there was massive attendance of women. Women are also coming out in groups. In Kumbozo, we have a woman standing for the House of Representatives. She is a member of the 100 [Women] Group and her name is Mariam El-Hussein.”

— *Amina Suleiman, Assistant Organization Secretary, UWA, Kano*

“Last week in Ikem, they took some 20 women and locked them up because they had some little quarrel on the farm. The group leader went to the mobilizer of Ikem community. The mobilizer took three groups in the community who belong to the 100 Women Group and they marched to the police station. The men came and told the women, ‘Go back home, you women; when did you start coming to police station to bail suspects?’ But the women persisted and sat there until the detained women were released, and they were released with nothing [no fines] and they went back.”

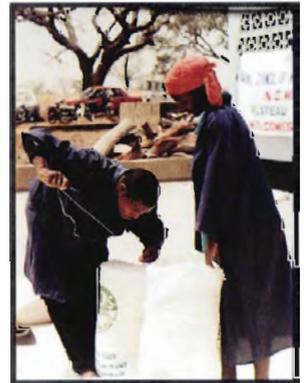
— *Cecilia Asogwa, Executive Director, Development Education Center (DEC), Enugu*

EQUITY is the stage at which women have fair and appropriate access to and control of resources and their distribution. Equity also implies that women have gained the ability to participate fully in decision-making and to set an agenda that responds to their specific needs.

“Equity will be reached when resources, the means of production, decision-making (in both private and public spheres), and other ingredients necessary for sustainable development are available to women (and men) in proportion to their respective numbers. This will be the ultimate in empowerment—when Nigerian women (and men) have equal access to resources.”

— **Dr. Enyantu Ifenne**, *Resident Advisor, CEDPA Nigeria*

Garri, a cassava-based staple food in Nigeria, processed and here being packaged ready for sale as part of a CEDPA-sponsored subproject implemented by NCWS, Plateau State. Unless men work with women as partners, equity and sustainable development will remain a dream.



“Women are so bold now. Before, we used to be shy. Even illiterate women, in their 100 Women Group, are determined to do something at the elections. Mrs. Morakinyo wanted to be a councilor but then we did not know anything. When she came to me, I told her I will support her and all the women around me will support her. She won in the primary ward but in the other election she lost. The men played money politics. What we are telling the women now is that even if the men give you N300 [\$4], do not take it. . . . I am believing that when another election comes, women will do something.”

— **Mrs. V.A. Bedu**, *Coordinator, COWAD, Osun*



The reality in Nigeria today is that, in spite of their numerical strength, women still enjoy less representation than men in the most crucial areas, such as decision-making. Picture shows a training session of a workshop.

BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION

There are countless barriers that hinder women's efforts to improve the quality of their lives. Compared to men, women have less access to crucial resources such as information, education, skills training, health (especially reproductive health and family planning), cash income, and credit, all of which are necessary for survival within the current stifling economic depression. Women are not well represented in decision-making, both within the household and in public life. Most women have to get permission from their husbands to attend a meeting or be involved in some activity outside the home. They have less bargaining power, which may be dependent on their ability to earn income. Further, women are still largely responsible for household labor and child care, finding they have little or no time left to participate in other activities. Religious and cultural traditions may also act as barriers and create constraints for women, prescribing what a woman may or may not do and contributing to the acceptance of the status quo, no matter how repressive.



“Last week, a woman in one of the villages told me that after the woman and the man come back from the farm in the evening, the woman starts cooking. After cooking, at about 10 p.m., she invites the man to dinner. . . . He beats her and says, ‘Have you just finished cooking?’ When a woman in the crowd was asked the cause, she said, ‘It is the custom. I am a stranger.’”

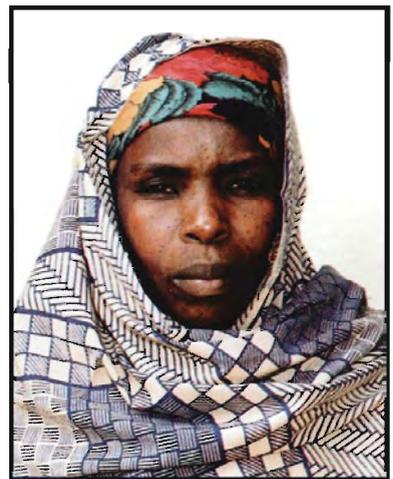
— *Cecilia Asogwa, Executive Director, DEC, Enugu*

“A lot of women are in abject poverty. They are now breadwinners in their homes. They take care of their children, they take care of their husbands and extended family too. It is so tedious on them; they really can’t cope, and that is why you have a lot of them begging from house to house. . . . They are not organized, they are not educated, and they don’t even have any means . . . any income-generating activity. The problem is that now in Nigeria we have this economic problem; but it is harder on those in the grassroots area and more especially in Kano. For some, their husbands cannot feed them anymore and they don’t have jobs. Because a mother is closer to the children, she cannot tell the child that she does not have. Mothers have to look for means and ways of getting food for the children. So, you have women now doing petty trading, any little thing they can lay their hands at. Now that the country is in a transition to civil rule and we want to democratize the country, the women need to have some little bit of money; otherwise, we can’t really plant any good democracy. They will sell their votes to solve some of the immediate problems they have.”

— *Laila Buhari, member, National Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Kano. FIDA Kano receives CEDPA funding to run two legal clinics in Kano; the emphasis is on rights of women and children.*

“We are poor, first of all, and the major problem is money. We lack money to do business. Secondly, education is too low. Here, we do not have good teachers and, thirdly, we are being neglected by husbands if we are not educated or if we are not rich.”

— *Rabi Abdullahi of Filin-Sanji Kan Tudu Cooperative (involved in sewing, groundnut oil processing, preparation and sale of bean cakes, and hand crafts). The cooperative is based in Katsina and is a CBO of Women in Nigeria (WIN), Katsina, currently carrying out a CEDPA-sponsored DG program.*



“The problems youth face in this country include, amongst others, drug abuse, unwanted pregnancies, prostitution, lack of enough education, lack of jobs. Many are in confused situations . . . many of them think they don’t have any rights.”

— **Fatima Sani**, who represents the youth wing within the MSO executive committee



“I have the problem of lack of water, no light. . . . I need income-generating activities—soap and pomade making. This will help me to be self-reliant.”

— **H. Binta Auwal**, woman in purdah, Kuruna Asabe, Yammata community. This is one of the five communities where the Grassroots Health Organization of Nigeria (GHON) is currently implementing a CEDPA-funded project focusing on the training of traditional birth attendants (TBAs) and other health workers.

“We sent consent forms to the husbands/guardians to sign. If they didn’t allow them, we would not have the camp. Some did not sign. One husband wanted to see the aims and objectives of the camp and wanted to know why we wanted to teach the women about democracy and governance.”

— **Jamila Ibrahim Yahaya**, President, Muslim Sisters Organization



Women participate in a Democracy and Governance Camp run by the Muslim Sisters Organization (MSO), Kano State.

PATHS TO WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

FORMING PARTNERSHIPS



Some of CEDPA's partners from northern Nigeria at a July 1997 workshop on networking and coalition building, Katsina

Partnerships Among Organizations: Linkages

CEDPA family planning projects have been integrated in several areas with other types of development programs. Country Women of Nigeria (COWAN) in Ondo State is currently implementing CEDPA family planning and democracy and governance subprojects, both of which are also integrated with income-generation activities and a number of other women's development projects. Community Women and Development (COWAD) in Osun State is also implementing family planning and democracy and governance subprojects. Many other organizations involved in the Democracy and Governance (DG) Initiative had various types of women's programs in place, such as health or adult-education activities, before being awarded small grants to promote women's political participation. The women who manage these integrated development programs have found that the programs complement each other in a number of ways and lead to improved outcomes in different sectors.

“We organize the women to start small-scale industries . . . they deposit some money. So, if a woman wants to do groundnut oil processing for 500 naira, with the aid of UWA, she can start with an additional 1,500 naira so that her business can be bigger.”

— **Halima Muhammed**, *Office Secretary, UWA*



“Economic empowerment . . . women will not be able to have it if they keep on having babies year after year. Family planning gave the women the opportunity to know about family planning methods available for their use. But if women have all these commodities and do not have the money to buy them, they will still have to go to their husbands. If they have economic empowerment . . . no husband will be able to say no to family planning.”

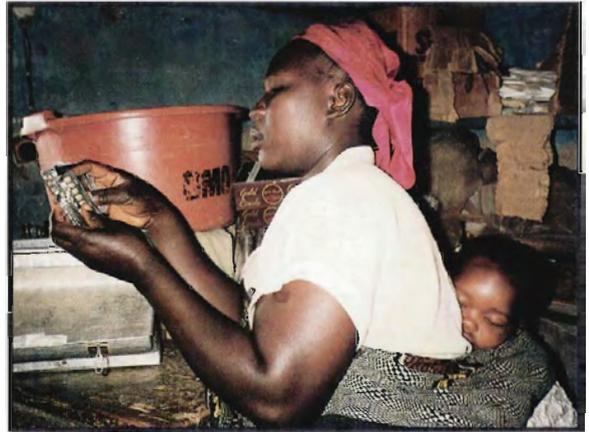
— **Chief Bisi Ogunleye**, *Executive Director, COWAN*



“Family planning cannot stand alone, especially in the rural areas. Without empowerment, the women cannot do anything. If there is no money in her pocket, she cannot make decisions. For example, we had a COWAN member who had five children, and the woman’s husband did not allow her to go on family planning. We empowered her economically and she bought her first set of pills from this money.”

— **Joseph O. Ogunrotimi**, *Senior Project Coordinator, COWAN, Ondo*

NCWS-trained CBD agent in Plateau State checks her pill stock.



“From this outcome of the first phase of the program, we discovered that to empower Nigerian women politically, we will need to empower our women economically, especially the poorest of the poor. To do this, therefore, we have to integrate the Democracy and Governance with our poverty eradication campaign.”

— **Olori Olanrenwaju Ajoke Adesida**, *wife of traditional king in Akureland, Ondo State*

Partnerships Among Women: Networks and Coalitions

Women in CEDPA projects are finding strength in numbers. As members of groups—community-based distributors, women’s associations, economic cooperatives, or groups formed through Democracy and Governance activities—they find they can become vocal about issues and problems of women that they cannot address as individuals. Individual women also find that gaining community support for changed behavior and roles for women is easier as part of a group of women all making the same change.

“When projects like this are run, after that particular project has terminated . . . there’s no continuity, there’s no ownership. That is one of the reasons why this network had to come into being; to make sure there’s ownership; to make sure there’s continuity, so that we’ll all work toward sustainable development. . . . One of the major issues that came up during the DG trainings we had was the issue of poverty. Women saw poverty as a major constraint that made them not participate . . . some of them said they were economically dependent on their husbands, and if their husbands say no, they cannot move. So, we want to also use this network to look into other issues like economic empowerment, strictly because that is one of the things that will empower women to look into other areas and other problems of society like the issue of school enrollment . . . and reproductive health for women. At the moment, because it is the period of transition to civil rule, we want to catch on to the transition timetable, especially the revised one, and see how we can carry our women along. But after that, we have other things waiting. For instance, we want to set up a trust fund where women can . . . get assistance to vie for political positions. They have spoken to us about this and we listen to them a lot. This is one of the things they have said we can do for them. So far, we’ve not been able to get such funding, but we are making efforts; even if it means taxing members of our group or having people meet and all that, just to encourage women to participate.

The Voice of Women (VOW) was initiated as a direct result of the DG subproject implemented by the NCRWA. DG participants felt that they should reach out more to grassroots women and that they needed to establish a network in order to do so. A pilot project was launched that began with training for women on networking and visits to rural areas in a number of LGAs. An interim executive committee is establishing a secretariat, and elections for an executive committee are to be held within six months. Three chapters had been inaugurated by August 1, 1997. The VOW is financed entirely by dues from chapters (N500, approximately US\$6.00), foundation members (N100), and individual members (N20 monthly).

“This project has turned me into a celebrity! All over the state, you see me on TV, I talk on radio, I’m signing one powerful protest or another, just to empower women. It’s been very, very rewarding. I now have cause to appreciate women more and

know that they are worth depending on if we have to move forward from where we are now. The project has given me so much more confidence in myself as somebody, who for the first time, is contributing to social development; bringing about the desired change. I feel very proud of everybody I'm working with, because they have been very, very cooperative. Before, I thought that you can hardly organize women, but I saw a different setup and I've been very impressed."

— **Anne Oden**, *Coordinator, Voice of Women*

"When COWAN started, we all came together to give our support. We had meetings. Everything we are told at meetings, we then tell the grassroots women and they are enlightened. There is a lot of poverty among the women, but when COWAN started, they helped a lot of people, for example, giving capital for trading, giving money, and the women are progressing."

— **Olori Adejuyigbe**, *Ado Ekiti*



"The main objective of the 100 Women Group is to build a critical mass. When you create a critical mass without base, it is nothing. The 100 Women Group will be the critical mass for the training. We select the poorest of the poor—they are like beggars. We told our members, 'Go to your own backyard and take one poor woman and give her N500.' We have covered about 18 local governments already. We are not doing this 100 Women Group in Ondo alone. It is a nationwide thing. We have shared this money with four local governments—we have given to two local governments in Oyo State. In Ekiti and Ondo States they have covered 28 local governments. It is a lot of money because we are talking N50,000 to each local government.

"I am very happy that this DG has helped COWAN. We have given out over N2 million. By the middle of August [1997] we are going to get to 100 local governments in the whole of the nation, if this is how we can get a political sit for the Nigerian woman. A woman who is now able to get that N500 will start to trade; by the end of each year, each woman will have more than N500. This helps to take care of the poorest of the poor so that they will not (because of poverty) sell their votes to the men . . . in order not to destroy this country. We are hoping that through this base we will be able to get people to vote rightly in this country."

— **Chief Bisi Ogunleye**, *Executive Director, COWAN*

The 100 Women Group has been developed to test methods of organizing women's groups into coalitions in order to stimulate participatory dialogs within their community to identify and address women's development issues. The model will eventually result in the formation of 100 Women Groups at the state and ultimately the national level.

“After training these mobilizers for one week here in Enugu on how to conscientize their base, and on the tenets and philosophy of DG, they went back and identified already existing and viable women’s organizations in their communities that can stand the test of time. These mobilizers taught the communities the tenets and philosophy of DG. They wondered if they would make an impact in view of the already existing native customs; most of these women have been denied these opportunities for so long, all in the name of custom. The mobilizers started first with groups already existing and sold them the idea. We then asked the mobilizers to invite these women group leaders for training at DEC Enugu and this took us one week involving 300 group facilitators from both states. Each community with one mobilizer has five CBOs and each of these CBOs has 100 members, therefore we expect 500 conscientized women in a community. If these women have anything worrying them and all the 500 women come out at a time and speak to the government or the Chief, it will have an impact because these women are now sensitized and can drive their point home. Therefore, we need to empower these women.

“You will discover that these women whom we are now sensitizing were not hitherto sensitized because when you asked them then, who the decision-makers in the community were, they mentioned the Chiefs, the titled men, and so on. You discover that it is the men who make all the decisions—widowhood rights, etc. This is the tradition in the society. And who are the custodians of the society? The men are. We have now discovered that a lot has to be done to change this pattern. The DG has to start from the base, the grassroots, because if you do not participate at the base, how can you then participate at the top?”

— Cecilia Asogwa, Executive Director, DEC, Enugu

The Development Education Center carries out a Democracy and Governance project in Enugu on behalf of CEDPA Nigeria and USAID. . . . Their approach is to ensure greater participation of women in the LGAs by using women mobilizers as members of the Project Implementation Committee (PIC). Instead of 10 members of the PIC as planned in the budget, they use 50 women mobilizers. The project presently works in 50 communities with 50 mobilizers. Each LGA has identified 10 communities to work with five LGAs in Abia and Enugu States.



Participants sing YWCA songs at an April 1997 democratic participation workshop held in Awka by the YWCA Anambra State Chapter.

Partnerships With Men

Women who are CEDPA partners in Nigeria often enjoy the support of the men they are close to as they participate in family planning and other activities. Some of these men are themselves active participants in CEDPA subprojects and are looking for ways to advance the position of women in society. A few of them indicated that women were their hope for improved governance because they see them as less corrupt and more concerned about families.

“Men think that we want to antagonize them, but when we discuss these issues with them, they understand. For example, I am a supervisor in the local government office, and it is with my husband’s help that I can cope. I left my seven month old child in his care, because of the understanding between us. Men also know that women should be given a chance to take part in the Democracy and Governance program.”

— **S.O. Laoye**, *Confederation of Osun NGOs (CONWOG)*



“We also invite the men [to training]. Some of the men do come to see exactly what is happening. So when they go back, they now have the zeal that their wives should be part of us. They feel the women are really doing something.”

— **Rosemary Ofem**, *committee member of the Northern Cross River State Women’s Association, commenting on Democracy and Governance subproject*



“My wife is a trader and CBD agent. . . . When one of the children falls ill, she knows the type of medicine to give the child. Islam embraces family planning. . . . It gives women and children sound health—the only reason given by Islam. I support it because of what I have seen in the Qu’ran.”

— **Alhaji Abdulwahab Olaboopo**, *teacher, whose wife is involved in the Osun State NCWS FP/RH program sponsored by CEDPA*

“In my area, initially, people told my husband not to allow me to go to the camp. But my husband said, ‘No, I will let her go and see for herself, then she will come back and tell us.’ So, when I came back, I told my neighbors what we achieved there. Right now, though they are all married women, they are ready to go next time. They are also ready to go and vote.”

— *Amina Garuba, Muslim Sisters Organization, Democracy and Governance subproject participant*



“I have seen a great difference in our lives . . . we have a lot of confidence now and there is friendship and love between us. . . . [If she attends a three-week training], it does not disturb me, though sometimes I have to prepare my own food and sometimes the children come in to help when they return from school. . . . There has been a change in my wife’s attitude. She does not have to lie to me again and whatever she tells me now, I believe.”

— *O. Adebisi, husband to a CBD agent, Ondo*



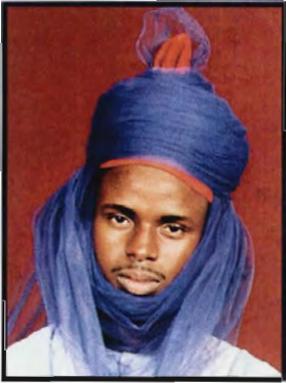
Female and male CBD agents in Abia State participate together to advocate for family planning.

Partnerships With Traditional Rulers

CEDPA-sponsored projects seek to find ways to promote women's development in a traditional environment that is not always favorable to advances in women's status. Because traditional rulers in Nigeria are the custodians of tradition, subproject managers usually involve them from the outset in projects.

"If I need to refer a case, I go to meet the village head and together with others, he will assist in getting the person to a place for treatment."

— **Kaltume Danabdu**, *traditional birth attendant trained by GHON*



"My people are very happy. The women [traditional birth attendants] come here to inform me about what is happening to my people. Before, we did not have that type of information . . . about births."

— **Muhammadu Auwulu Abdulkarim**, *village head, Kurama Asabe (Yammata community), Kano, GHON project*

"The traditional rulers have been very interested in the whole thing to the extent that they allow their wives, who before now never had permission, never free to move out, to join us."

— **Anne Oden**, *VOW Coordinator, NCRWA*

"The reason why I support them [COWAN] is that I see a benefit in what they are doing . . . the most important is family planning and since family planning has been brought in, we are very happy. . . . Before COWAN, whenever we had meetings at the palace, it used to be for men only, but now COWAN has made it possible for women to attend these meetings. Recently, at the last elections, women were more involved in politics."

— **Oba Ibrahim Akindoju** (at Bamikemo), *Ondo*



Regarding the role of a traditional ruler in Ikom: “He sent people to represent him at the meeting, but he said he would not come. He said, he wanted us to come and meet him. So we went to him as a group and he was so happy he encouraged us with so many big words and entertained us lavishly and said anytime we called on him he would be ready to answer.”

— **Rosaline U. Okoi**, Project Coordinator, NCRWA

“One example of the impact of this process is the involvement of *oloris*, wives of traditional kings, or *obas*, in Yoruba land (the Southwest), in family-planning and democracy and governance projects. Traditionally, *oloris* are prohibited from interacting with people outside the household, but there are many who are now active in CEDPA-sponsored subprojects. Several in Ondo State told us that they were able to move about more because other *oloris* were also doing so. *Oloris* with different educational backgrounds and economic status found that they used common strategies for changing their husbands’ minds about their activities outside the home.”

— **CEDPA Nigeria Field Office**



The Confederation of Osun NGOs (CONWAD) makes a courtesy and advocacy visit to a traditional ruler.

Partnerships With Government

CEDPA works with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) rather than government. However, government is involved in a number of ways with CEDPA-sponsored subprojects. Some Local Government Areas (LGAs) are particularly supportive of the Democracy and Governance Initiative. Women involved in the Initiative also have sought increased representation of women in government.

“Before we started this [immunization] project, we informed the Ministry of Health. We got the go-ahead from the Ministry of Health, and the vaccines and personnel to do the immunization.”

— **Asamau Lawal**, field coordinator of a CEDPA-sponsored project at Kuruna Asabe (Yammata community) implemented by the Grassroots Health Organization of Nigeria (GHON), Kano. GHON trains TBAs and other health educators; the organization recently carried out an immunization exercise in Kuruna.



“To know your civic responsibility is to be the eyes and ears of government. For example, in Ijapo . . . the second road leading to Ijapo was very bad and women from COWAN got money and paid a trailer driver to provide sand. Then our 100 Women Group went to their local government chairman and told him that the people were dying on the bad road. ‘We do not have so much money but we have got sand,’ the women said. The local government chairman got a contractor to spread the sand properly. He also provided coal tar and everything was finished in three days. The military administrator came to see it. This is part of what the 100 Women Group has achieved.”

— **Chief Bisi Ogunleye**, Executive Director, COWAN



“We went to the Family Support Programme, we went to government for funding. When we saw the enthusiasm of the patients to enroll in the program, we decided to launch the program officially, and that was when we invited the wife of the Military Administrator. When she came and saw what was happening, she was moved and asked us to write a proposal for an extension of the building.”

— **Fatima K. Ahmed**, State Secretary of NCWS, Katsina. NCWS needed more classroom space for Recto/Vesico Vaginal Fistula (RVF/ VVF) patients being taught hand crafts, etc. in a CEDPA-sponsored project. The program was relaunched in order to bring it to the attention of others likely to make meaningful contributions.

IMPACTS

Impact on Women's Lives

“The project has really opened my eyes. . . . I didn't know I would ever be able to stand in front of so many women and speak to them . . . in fact, it took me to the courtroom for the first time since I was born. When I got there I was asking them, ‘Do you have to sit or do you stand or squat or something?’ Even in the NCWS [National Council of Women's Societies], I was picked as the secretary of the steering committee, which I didn't expect. I had thought to myself, ‘If they pick me, how will I manage?’ But I just used my experience from the project. At least I did my best. . . . I was able to teach the solidarity songs to the women. In fact, I stood in front of women and taught. It was surprising to me, but I did it.”

— **Mary Esuku**, *Executive Committee, NCRWA, Democracy and Governance subproject*



“The training I received has brought about a lot of improvement in my home. I have introduced a timetable for adequate diet. Because of this, I have more respect in my home.”

— **Alhaja Saidat Agboola**, *teacher and CBD agent, NCWS, Osum State*

“And right now there is nothing that you will ask the women about politics that they will not tell you; and not only politics. They have now learnt that they have every right to defend their rights wherever they go. In those days we used to say, ‘We have our customs.’ But in our custom, women have no say, and our place is in the kitchen. Now, women are aware that they can go out anywhere and they can join politics and do other things. Some of them are now contractors. They have learnt to compete for some petty contracts to help themselves in their homes. And they have also known that when you are married in court and anything happens to your husband, that at least your children have the right to some of his property.”

— **Hannah Gosinde**, *regarding NCRWA Democracy and Governance subproject*

“When one of our members, a lawyer, came to tell me that I had to be there [in court] . . . I said I’ve never been to court before; but eventually I got there—and while everybody was nodding, I curtsied, I didn’t know I had to nod too, and when I looked, I could see smiles on the faces of the persons already there.”

— **Rosaline Irek**, Chairperson, *National Association of Women Journalists*

“MSO announced on television and radio and sent out letters. I saw one of the letters and decided to go because I saw ‘Youth Camp.’ The paper said they were going to talk about democracy, civic responsibility, and problems of youth in the society. . . . That was where I learnt to know all the human rights. . . . For example, they said youth have every right to vote so long as they are of age. I am in my early twenties; so after that, I voted for the first time in the last local government election. We talked about youth problems and that was the one I really enjoyed very much. I am a student so we talked about some of the problems I encounter in school; for example, student-teacher relationships –how some things affect one because there are things one cannot just go straight to the lecturer and discuss. Sometimes, when you find yourself in difficulties, you do not know who to turn to. So, they really talked to us about these problems and how to solve the problems.



“Normally, here in the northern part of the country, when a woman is in politics, they kind of frown at you. This was discouraging, before the youth camp, because we felt that the women themselves spoilt things. You will see some women in the buses with the guys, shouting at the top of their voices. So, by merely seeing them, you will say, how can you join this because you won’t be respected. At the youth camp, they explained that you don’t have to be in the buses or shout around before you can be in politics.

“It was there that I learnt that it is not only our parents who must talk to us; that if we have problems, our parents have to listen to us and also respect our views. Now, I know everything, almost everything, about participating in politics; that is, the people I will meet and the advisers I can go to.

“It was after I attended the camp that I joined the Liberty Chambers Club, which is part of the Law Students Society. You know, when you are reading law, there are some chambers you can join, to learn more about the law and how you can go about practicing it in the future. Before [the camp], I was reluctant to join . . . but after the camp, when I heard all about my rights, I said, why am I sitting back relaxing. So, when I went back, I joined one of the associations.”

— **Amina Usman**, law student, *Bayero University, Kano*. *Muslim Sisters Organization (MSO) organizes DG camps and public lectures with funding from CEDPA. So far, six lectures and three youth camps have been organized. Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials and jingles have also been produced. MSO is the only CEDPA partner that targets youth in implementing the DG program. The target group includes young women in the Islamic schools and higher institutions of learning in the age bracket 16-22.*

Community-Level Impact

“We chose only 10 communities in the Local Government Areas (LGAs). Many more LGAs are coming here complaining that we have forgotten them. They say they want to be involved in the DG program, even if no money is being spent on them. In Abia and some parts of Enugu, some traditional rulers have told me that this is a project that has brought all their women together. I recall a community in Asa in Abia State saying, because of traditional rulers’ tussle, they have not been able to come together for the past 20 years, but when the DG program started there, the women came together. The same thing happened in Afaranta last week. The community took some of the women to court because the secretary of the women’s group belongs to one of the feuding groups (that fought for chieftaincy title about 10 years ago) while the mobilizer, who is in the same women’s group, belongs to the other. So, the men are saying, ‘It is the women’s fault. There has been a 20-year quarrel in this community and women are now being used to cover it up and dismiss the whole thing.’ When their leader came out of the cell, the women continued their work. Some came here and told me that they would continue with the rally. I told them to go ahead. I said I would call the government and they will not do . . . anything [to stop it]. The rally was successful and the men are now happy. That is what is happening and more people are getting excited about the whole thing.”

— **Cecilia Asogwa**, Executive Director, Development Education Center (DEC), commenting on the 100 Women Group Democracy and Governance subproject



“Before our training, when government wants to carry out immunization on children, sometimes, the women would refuse to bring their children out. But now, they hear the message from members of the community. There was a recent immunization conducted here, a lot of women and their children came out. . . . In our culture, it is the man who gives the woman permission to move out. So coming from the men, calling on other men to allow their women to bring their

children for immunization, the men accept it more. They also accept it coming from the older women [*dillalai*—women itinerant traders].”

— **Muhammadu Usman**, a wanzamai (traditional male barber) trained in health education (like the *dillalai*) under a CEDPA-sponsored project implemented by the Grassroots Health Organization of Nigeria (GHON) in Kano State. Picture depicts wanzamai receiving GHON training on sterilization of equipment.

“In Enugu State, the Development Education Center is coordinating a Democracy and Governance subproject. Women in one of the rural communities involved in the subproject effectively challenged a traditional practice that requires women to stay indoors during the masquerade festival observed by men. The women approached their traditional king, who agreed to designate a certain period of time each day during which the women could go outside. In the same community, a widow who was required, according to tradition, to stay in for one year defied tradition by attending a meeting held on DG. She also wore a white T-shirt with a DG slogan in defiance of the tradition that she wear black for one year.”

— Cecilia Asogwa, Executive Director, DEC

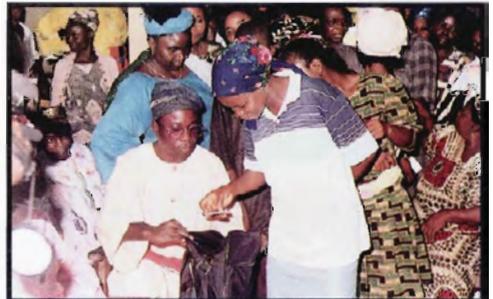


Immunization exercise at Yammata community in Kuruna Asabe, Kano State, conducted by the Grassroots Health Organization of Nigeria (GHON) in July 1997. Local health educators trained by GHON, with CEDPA funding, helped sensitize the community on the importance of the exercise.

“Just last month, during the rainy season, I was away, and when I came back, I found garbage dumped behind my house. The refuse was used to fill up some potholes that were developing. I went to the ward head and told him I wanted to discuss the issue with him. I told him it was not proper to dump the garbage there. The ward leader said the garbage was used to fill the potholes that may become breeding ground for mosquitoes. I insisted that the garbage would breed even more mosquitoes. I said, rather than use refuse, small stones should be used. So, he went with me to the site and agreed that it was really not a good idea. He apologized and advised that they would see to it the following day. The next day, he saw that the garbage was cleared and bits of rocks and bricks were used to fill the potholes. . . . I may have thought of doing this before the Muslim Sisters Organization (MSO) camps were organized, but then, I would have been too scared to act because of the fear that people would say that I am too forward. But now, I have the strength to do this.”

— Mariam Abdullahi, participant in a Democracy and Governance youth camp organized by the Muslim Sisters Organization

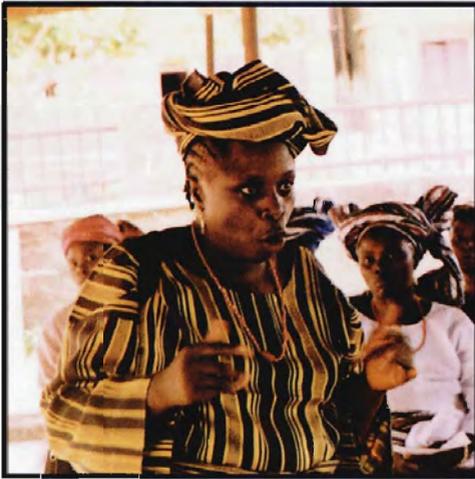
A community-based development agent in Ondo State, Mr. Akindoju, passes on information about family planning to a young woman.



Political Impact

“A woman councilor of Abi LGA did not belong to the party that produced the chairperson and majority of the EXCO members. . . . They put her aside and did not give her a position that would expose her and give her more challenges. . . . They sent a word to the Voice of Women and we took up the matter. She was taken to the Tribunal. We were there, and based on our efforts, the matter was struck off. She’s now allowed to work freely in the Abi council.”

— **Anne Oden**, *Coordinator, VOW, NCRWA Democracy and Governance subproject*



A participant at a Democracy and Governance workshop emphasizes a point. The DG Initiative encourages women to speak out and be involved.

“The women involved in the Northern Cross River State Women’s Association (many of whom reside in the state capital, Calabar, but all of whom are from the northern part of the state or married to someone from there) decided to take action on an issue that provided an immediate practical application for the training on political participation conducted by their DG subproject. They were frustrated that their state was consistently represented in the National Council of Women’s Societies by a dominant ethnic group in the southern part of the state, so they supported a candidate from the North. Their candidate did not win in an election they considered unfair, and as a result, the women took the issue to court to contest that the election was unfair. For many of the women involved in the project, this was the first time they had entered a courtroom.”

— **Rosaline Irek**, *Chairperson, National Association of Women Journalists, and Cross River State Chapter/PIC Member, NCRWA*

THE CAPABILITY OF WOMEN

As women are finding their voices and becoming more empowered, they are gaining confidence in their abilities. Many men involved in CEDPA subprojects also voice their confidence in the ability of women to participate in the life of their communities beyond the household level. They often say that women are better able than men to make a contribution to society.

“If I put a woman leader in the government house, it is only because I feel the woman can correct certain problems that might affect me and my family.”

— **Halima Isa**, *member of a community-based organization of the United Women's Association*

“I won't mind a woman president because I have seen men handle the affairs of the country, but I have not seen any positive change. Maybe this time around, a woman can do it better.”

— **Mariam Sule**, *Grain Sellers Association, a community-based organization of the United Women's Association*

“Democracy and Governance starts from the home. In Nigeria, they do not like a wife to have female children. After the third female child in succession, the man may not go to the hospital to see his wife if she delivers another female child. In fact, he may go and find another wife. We now let the men know that girls take care of their families more than men. For instance, in Nigeria, if a man marries and his mother falls ill, it is his sisters (whether married or not) who will care for her. Women are even more useful than men. There is nothing that a man can do that a woman cannot do.”

— **V.A. Bedu**, *Coordinator, COWAD, Osun*



MOVING ON . . .

Women on the Move opens the door to the thoughts, experiences, aspirations, and hopes of Nigerian women (and men) who are initiators, coordinators, participants, and/or beneficiaries of CEDPA-sponsored projects. It also reveals the thoughts and feelings of those closest to these partners—their spouses—as well as the impact of these projects on the lives of the women and their communities.

Their tones of voice, the looks on their faces, the enthusiasm expressed (which, unfortunately, cannot be adequately captured in print) underline the excitement generated by these activities. The fulfillment derived from the women's involvement, as well as their great commitment to their work, form the basis for their continuous engagement.

Indeed, the women are excited about their new roles. Ripple effects are already spreading beyond the three cluster areas (southwest, southeast, and north) where projects are currently located. Across the length and breadth of the nation, women are learning to work closely with counterparts from different regions, in many cases for the first time, forging bonds across ethnic, class, and geographic divides.

Within the socio-economic and political context of Nigeria, this cross-cultural bonding has far-reaching advantages. A women's group in one of the southeast cluster states brought an end to a community feud that had existed for twenty years. While this accomplishment helped to heal a festering and long-standing wound, it also brought the women's work into public focus and gave them greater self-confidence and the impetus to work even harder.

From working together and sharing, women have become more aware of common problems and are organizing to seek solutions to these problems—for instance, the problem of widespread poverty. CEDPA partners are also becoming increasingly aware of the linkages among poverty-alleviation programs, family planning, and the increased participation of women in decision-making, both within the household and in public spheres.

Offshoot projects of the Democracy and Governance Initiative are rapidly developing. A group in the southeast cluster is concentrating on networking, to reach out even more effectively to poor women at the grassroots level—and this time, they are not depending on donor funding to achieve their goals. Another group in the northern cluster is targeting younger women as the leaders of tomorrow. Many organizations have identified lack of education as a major barrier to women's progress and have expressed the desire to work in this area in the future.

It was not possible to record all the success stories in this book; many remain in manuscript form in the field notes. New stories are already in the making: some are seeds yet to be sown; some, having taken root, are germinating; and some are full-fledged, inspiring, and thought-provoking. As Nigerian women MOVE ON, forging new identities, breaking long-standing stereotypes, contributing to socio-economic and political development, there are many more stories still to be told. . . .



The Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) is a women-focused international organization founded in 1975. Its mission is to empower women at all levels of society to be full partners in development.



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