

Enabling Bodily Autonomy and Reproductive Choices in Humanitarian and Marginalized Settings



Women and girls, particularly in humanitarian and marginalized settings, are facing multiple limitations in the ability to make sexual and reproductive health decisions for their bodily autonomy and wellbeing. These limitations include misinformation about sexual health, community social norms that eliminate support in the access to abortion and contraception, stigmatized healthcare delivery of abortion services as well as non-existing policies that promote access to abortion care.

With support from Global Affairs Canada, under the multi country project – Improving Sexual and Reproductive Autonomy among Women and Girls in Nigeria, Ipas Nigeria Health Foundation has been working to remove these limitations at multiple levels in Benue, Borno and Oyo States.



From the Baseline Survey conducted, the overall score on the reproductive autonomy scale was **2.7** out of a maximum obtainable average score of **4**.



Abortion self-efficacy score among people who can get pregnant has increased from **40%** to **48%**.



Community Social Support score for abortion access increased from **57%** to **68.5%**.



28% of women and girls had increased knowledge in contraception, abortion and SGBV.



Policy Institutionalization for Abortion and Contraception Care Access



In Benue State, Ipas Nigeria worked intensely with the State to develop and institutionalize the Standards and Guidelines for the Medical Management of Survivors of Sexual and Gender Based Violence. With the rising Humanitarian crisis in Benue State, women and girls suffer from sexual violence, including rape in the effort to exchange sex for food, or

vacate their communities in search of safe camps, and shelter.

Beyond policy, the engagement with Benue State was eye opening on how the current crisis fuels sexual violence and requires live saving care when there is a case of rape.



Dr Onoja Matthew

Executive Secretary, Benue State Hospitals Management Board

“ If we are to handle this menace, then we need to treat suspected cases of rape as an emergency. We need to expand and make departments within the hospitals that deliver this type of care more effective. We also need to increase enlightenment, so people know such services are there



Also, humanitarian and health care workers were trained to ensure abortion and contraception care is offered to women and girls who have experienced sexual violence in humanitarian settings.

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I learnt about sexual violence and forced marriage, as these are prevalent in the camps. I got to understand the different types of violence during the training—physical, sexual and emotional. We always had the report of rape cases in the camp but based on what I learnt from the training, I did some sensitization in the camp,

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Deborah,
Humanitarian worker, Benue State.

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I learned the techniques for manual vacuum aspiration (MVA) and medical abortion for safely ending a pregnancy within our facilities. Recently, I was able to efficiently attend to a patient that had an incomplete abortion. Before, I would refer the case to the general hospital but now I can attend to this type of case. I was also able to provide safe abortion services in the facility with the training I had on using MVA and offer post-abortion family planning to the patient.

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Suzan,
Healthcare worker in Benue State



Increased knowledge of Abortion and Contraception

With Ipas Nigeria's peer to peer programming, women and girls are being empowered with accurate information about their sexual and reproductive health. This has ensured better decision making in accessing these services.



Hadiza

Peer Educator, Borno State

There was a woman who told me that she uses traditional medicine for family planning, but she was happy when she learned about the contraception options and that she can access them at the hospital. Some people don't believe in family planning, they believe nothing can stop pregnancy, but now most of our people are convinced about family planning because we engage their husbands too.

Ipas Nigeria Health Foundation works to empower women and girls to have bodily autonomy and exercise their sexual and reproductive health and rights. As partners for reproductive justice, we build collective action that transforms societies to enable women, girls, and vulnerable persons to manage their fertility and realize their full potential.