

**GIRL CHILD CONCERNS**  
**BUILDING FOR FUTURE CHANGE**

Queen Amina College is among the oldest schools located at Kakuri along Kachia Road in Kaduna town. The colonial school houses the administrative building and some hostels with students preparing for their West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WSSCE). Due to its facilities and convenient location, registered students with Girl Child Concerns (GCC) from the 23 local government areas in Kaduna State were called to participate in the annual work shop on Life Skills Development put on by Girl Child Concerns, a Kaduna based non governmental Organization.

Girl Child Concerns (GCC) is a registered Non-governmental organization (NGO) in Nigeria dedicated to improving the lives of youth, particularly the girl child, through improved education opportunities, ensuring availability of qualitative broad based education for all young people regardless of class or gender. GCC also ensures active participation on building the future of young people through research, advocacy and implementation of strategic programs that further its objectives.

**DAY 1 (TUESDAY 14TH APRIL, 2009)**

On the kickoff day [Tuesday 14 of April, 2009] of the annual Life Skills Development Workshop, after the arrival of participants and the welcoming address by the chair person, Dr Mairo Mandara, a random selection of students were asked to speak on the homework assignment given from the previous workshop [last year]. Habiba B. Suleiman said she tried to see the children in her neighboring area who can not read nor write improve on that aspect. Khadijat Nuradeen said based on what she learned from the previous workshop, she narrated to her close friends that are out of school the importance of education and the educated people she met. Her friend was so excited after she shared her experience that she realized what her future could be if she went back to school. Hadiza Ubale said she told her friends who had the idea of getting married early about how she learned of the importance of education from the previous workshop. Ruth

Negedu availed herself by reading books related to her course and by practicing Mathematics. She helped friends with their question papers and round up her speech with encouraging words to the girls that they can do it too.

Further more, some important questions were asked by the chairperson of the students.

1. How can you convince a friend with strong thought of marriage to go back to secondary school?
2. How can you advise a married friend to continue her secondary school and further?
3. How can you help a friend who doesn't know how to read or write?
4. What advice can you tell a friend whose parents or guardian is ignorant of education to send them to school.

The knowledge, skill and exposure the students acquired from being educated allowed them to respond excellently to every question. Some conclusive advice from Miss Clare Marty, a VSO volunteer from the United States was that "You should marry a person who can get you through with your education because, with education you can sponsor you children, help your parents at home and the less privileged". An inspirational song was introduced by Sumaiya. B. Suleiman entitled "YES I CAN".

YES I CAN (2X)

I CAN DO ANYTHING IF I TRY

JUST TRY

YES I CAN

BUT I HAVE TO BELIEVE IT AND RELAX FORWARD

I HAVE IN SIGHT

I CAN MAKE IT, TO MY TRIAL

FOR MY TRIAL WHO JUST MAKE ME STRONG

I CAN DO ANYTHING

BUT I HAVE TO BELIEVE IT

YES I CAN

OH OH

YES I CAN

The inspirational song was practiced and sung by all participants which rounded up the fun and then the girls broke for lunch time.

Back from lunch, all the students moved to the hall and sat quietly while some rules and regulations were drafted for the students to obey in order to check their behavior and conduct during their stay at the workshop. The Open Space Technology (OST) session was then introduced by the coordinator where markers and pieces of carbon papers were kept in the middle of a board placed on the wall called the Market Place (MP), located at the right corner of the hall. Students with important issues picked a marker, wrote the issue she thought very important in the present society, and placed it on the Market Place. Those issues wrote by the students were;

1. Compulsory primary education should be encouraged in Nigeria.
2. Why do we need education?
3. Importance of education after marriage.
4. Bribery and corruption in our society.
5. The way we dress in the society.
6. Lesbianism we need to be advised.
7. Early marriage.
8. Drug abuse.
9. My issue is about how to choose a career.
10. How to overcome the challenges we encounter when working towards our goals and career.
11. Sexual harassment.
12. Exam malpractice.
13. Lack of teachers.
14. Self-confidence and being responsible.
15. Abstinence from sex.

After all the above issues were placed on the Market Place, each student picked a marker and made a dot on the issues she felt were most important to discuss and then the dots were counted. The issues with the highest number of dots were picked.

1. Drug abuse.
2. Early marriage.
3. Importance of education after marriage.
4. Sexual harassment.
5. Exam malpractice.
6. Inadequate teachers.

The students were put into groups to discuss each of the issues for the rest of the night.

## **DAY 2 (WEDNESDAY 15TH APRIL, 2009)**

The next day, each group did a presentation on the issue they had discussed the night before.

### GROUP 1.

They spoke on problems associate with early marriage, causes of it like;

- a. illiterate parents,
- b. unwanted pregnancy,
- c. poor performance in school,
- d. bad advice from friends
- e. Lack of finance to sponsor the girl child.

Solutions to prevent those causes are;

- I. abstinence from sex,
- II. moving in company of good friends,
- III. dedicate more time on your studies,
- IV. prepare well before the examination day,
- V. go for extra lesson,
- VI. you should avoid exam malpractices,

- VII. parents should not relent their effort for advising their children
- VIII. Parents should stop forcing their young daughters into early marriage.

Miss Mardiya, a lecturer with Federal Collage of Education Zaria, rounded up the presentation of the group by discussing the pains and difficulties (VDF) associated with childbirth as a result of early marriage. Our parents should stop the greed and selfishness of giving their daughters out earlier then necessary.

### GROUP 2

The students spoke on the education before and after marriage. They analyzed some importance of education before and after marriage, some of which are;

- a. women are the mother of the house so the need to be educated,
- b. education makes a woman self-reliant
- c. education add values to our children,
- d. Should be in the system, as it will give you the sense of making good decision.

Some tips on how to know the right person to get married to were also elaborate by the group and they are;

- I. The person should be educated,
- II. When discussing with him, observe his speech
- III. His attitude toward other woman's education
- IV. His attitude toward fulfilling promises made
- V. His appearance and characters matter a lot.

Miss Binta Mohammed, a businesswoman, round up the group presentation with words of advice and gave some tips on how to choose a career, i.e. becoming a successful business woman;

- Have a future ambition and pray for Allah's guidance.
- Education is very important so try to acquire it first.
- Examine yourself to know the potential in you and your weaknesses.

- Work hard to bring the best of you both in school and at home.
- Prepare to face any challenges that may come your way.
- Setup strategies to overcome such challenges.
- Cultivate the habit of saving money for future uncertainty.
- Always help the needy if you are in position to help.

### GROUP 3

This group spoke on the issues of sexual harassment. They were able to discuss and came up with a list of causes of sexual harassment like;

- a. Mode of our dressing
- b. Lack of patience among our girls
- c. Too much desire and love for money
- d. Lack money to meet our basic needs

The chairperson Dr. Mairo Mandara rounds up the group presentation with an address “Decency is not by your dressing or appearance but by your inner mind.

### GROUP 4

The group spoke on Exam Malpractice. They illustrated the causes of exam malpractice among students and why students often conceived the idea of cheating in the examination hall. Areas lamenting by the speaker are;

- a. Lack of adequate preparation for the examination
- b. Laziness on the part of the student

Miss Mariya Abass principal of Queen Amina College, Kaduna concluded group 4's presentation with a talk emphasizing Time Management. She gave some tips on how judiciously you spend your time in every thing you do and they are;

- I. Setup timetables after your school activities are over.

- II. Set aside time every day for your reading, sleeping and other private activities and make sure you follow it judiciously.
- III. Always move with your wristwatch.
- IV. Avoid discussing unimportant issues that is not academic or will not add value in your life.
- V. Remember that everything in life is programmed with time.
- VI. Always be on alert to expect an unannounced test.
- VII. Try to read ahead of your teacher and ask questions on areas you don't understand.
- VIII. When answering exam questions, allocate time to each question and follow it one after the other. If you are not through with a question and the time is over move to the next one.
- IX. Always start answering the question you know best and the others followed.

#### GROUP 5

The group spoke on the issue of Drug Abuse. They illustrated the danger of drug abuse and that young students should not become involved in that practice as the future of the of the country lies in their hands. The chairperson, Dr. Mairo Mandara, further advised the students on two things that are very difficult to stop after a young girl as already tried it, which are;

- a. Sex.
- b. Drugs.

After all the groups made their presentations, the chairperson asked all the students what their future ambitions were;

- Fatima Mohammad said she wants to be a teacher so that she can produce future lawyers, doctors, politicians and etc.
- Sumaiya B. Suleman wants to be a doctor in future and to discover a cure for HIV/AIDs.
- Jenifer Joseph wants to become a lawyer in future to stop bribery and corruption in the society.”

- Nafisa Abdulmalik said she wants to become a gynecologist to take care of females
- Marcy Simon would like to be an accountant to keep a proper record of all the money in an organization.”
- Hasiza Ubale said she wants to become a doctor so that she can take care of her female counterpart in her community and Nigeria as a whole."

### **DAY 3 (THURSDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2009).**

In the morning of the last day of the workshop, all the students assembled in the hall as usual. After saying the Morning Prayer, Dr. Mairo grouped the students according to the area that they lived and asked each group one of the questions below regarding their arrival home;

What will you tell your father learned at the workshop?

- **What will you tell your father learned at the workshop?**
- What will you tell your mother what you learned at the workshop?
- What will you tell your grandparents of your experience at the workshop?
- What will you tell your boyfriend or girlfriend to be what you learned at the workshop?
- What will you tell your husband if any about what you learned at the workshop?

Among the group speakers were;

- Fatima Mohammad said she will tell her mother the danger of early marriage among young girls and others problems they encounter in life.
- Umami Abdullahi said she will tell her father about the consequence of early marriage like VDF and that he should extend this information to other fathers at home and also at work.

Further more, each group was asked to choose a name for their group and what they will do as their home work assignment. The following are the group names and what they will do research on at home;

- GROUP 1. 'THE QUEENS GROUP' from Queen Amina College. They will teach JSS 1 in their school in their leisure time.
- GROUP 2. 'THE YOUNG SHALL GROW GROUP' from Government Day Secondary School, Kawo. They will teach JSS 1A-1E subjects to students that are finding it difficult.
- GROUP 3. 'THE SCIENCE GROUP' from Soba Secondary School. They will teach the junior students in their school how to improve on English Language.
- GROUP 4. 'THE HELPING GROUP' from Government Secondary School, Kwoi. They will teach SS1 Mathematics and Chemistry with the assistance of their teacher.
- GROUP 5. 'KCF FUTURE BUILDERS GROUP'. They will teach their neighbor's children on any primary class.
- GROUP 6. 'THE ENGINEERS GROUP'. They will teach nursery 3 to primary 6 on any subject.
- GROUP 7. 'UP LIFTING THE NATION GROUP' from Government Secondary School, Barnawa. They want to build the future through teaching their immediate younger siblings at home.
- GROUP 8. 'THE YOUNG SHALL GROW' from Government Secondary School. They will teach primary 1 English Language and Mathematics in their school.
- GROUP 9. 'THE MORAL TINY GROUP' She will teach her younger siblings at home English Language and Mathematics.
- GROUP 10. 'THE LEARNING GROUP' from USC Secondary School Markafi. They will teach the day students Islamic Language and English Language.

In conclusion, Dr. Mairo gave a vote of thanks and remarked on the excellent performance, conduct and active participation by the students during the workshop. She advised them to extend the benefits they achieved from the workshop and to make sure they do their assignment as it is through practice that they will improve their

knowledge. A closing prayer was made, every participant took her breakfast, and they set off for thier journey back home. The accountant gave all the students their transport fare to their destination except those that are selected to represent the organization in competition with other non-governmental organization organized by Communication for Change (CFC) at Lagos. Many farewell goodbyes were exchanged between the students.