

INTRODUCTION

In the year 2025, our programs focused on comprehensive sexual and reproductive health, rights, and empowerment initiatives, including:

- ♦ Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) prevention and advocacy
- ♦ Menstrual hygiene management and education
- ♦ Reproductive health and rights awareness
- ♦ Prevention of teenage pregnancy and child marriage
- ♦ Sexual consent, bodily autonomy, and protection from abuse
- ♦ Gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and reporting mechanisms
- ♦ Building self-esteem and confidence among girls
- ♦ Promoting girl-child education and retention in schools

By addressing these interconnected topics in schools, communities, markets, and faith-based gatherings, we empowered women, girls, and communities to challenge harmful traditions, make informed choices, and protect the health, dignity, and rights of girls and women. This holistic approach ensures that interventions go beyond awareness, fostering resilient, confident, and educated young women who can lead change in their communities.

Through the dedication of trained community volunteers, strong partnerships with traditional leaders and the community at large, we have made remarkable progress toward a vision of a society where every girl grows up safe, educated, confident and empowered.

ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED

a. Capacity Building: Empowering Women As Change Agents

Ninety-nine (99) female volunteers were trained across three project communities, with comprehensive knowledge on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls. The training emphasized stopping FGM and other harmful practices prevalent in rural areas.

These women became champions of change, actively reporting violations, teaching peers, and fostering dialogue in their communities, they've reported 14 FGM cases – 9 confirmed, 5 unconfirmed which were due to incomplete information or refusal of families to admit involvement.

All confirmed cases received medical attention, psychosocial support, and counseling to rebuild self-esteem and reduce stigma on the mutilated girls.

The two perpetrators of these FGM cases (discovered to be patent drug dealers) were taken to the Police Station. Other civil society organizations in the State were actively involved in addressing these violations. The case was deemed so serious that it was published in a national news outlet, highlighting the urgency of ending FGM.

One of the critical concerns highlighted by the trained women volunteers was that patent drug dealers in one of the communities often inject young girls with drugs to numb pain, preventing them from crying out during the genital mutilation process. This makes the practice harder to detect and prosecute.

The trained volunteers also recommended expanding the program to the neighbouring communities. They cited that awareness in their communities has made FGM socially unacceptable, but families may try to circumvent the ban by taking girls to the neighboring communities.



Review meeting with trained volunteers at Offia-iji



Women sensitization at Nduoketa Nkidenyi



FGM sensitization



Sensitization of women at Obia village

b. Engaging Traditional Rulers and Patent Drug Dealers

Community sensitization forum was held with 22 patent drug dealers in Ndiegu Okpoitumo community, alongside their traditional ruler, community chairpersons, village heads, and civil society partners.

Through video presentations and storytelling, participants were educated about the legal and health consequences of FGM. All participants signed public undertakings, committing to stop facilitating FGM, with the understanding that any violation will result in legal action.

Community stakeholders have been highly engaged and committed to ending FGM, although continued follow-up is essential to ensure accountability and sustained action.

c. Community Engagement and Stakeholders' Support

- 39 women's cohort meetings were held in various villages, sensitizing women on FGM's risks and legal implications.
- Elderly women who previously supported FGM as “cultural heritage” are being gradually persuaded through dialogue, emotional storytelling, and evidence-based advocacy.
- Stakeholders pledged support for AMURTEL initiatives, reinforcing community ownership of anti-FGM programs.

d. School-based Sensitization and Adolescent Empowerment

- We reached 24 primary and secondary schools, engaging 3,598 students and pupils.
- Teachings focused on FGM prevention, reproductive health rights, peer pressure, self-esteem etc.
- In St. Roberts College Ndidenyi, girls reported fear of being mutilated during childbirth by Traditional Birth Attendants in their villages, a deeply distressing driver of FGM compliance.
- During one of the visits to Ida Secondary Sch, some of the girls pleaded that the program be extended to their community, revealing ongoing genital mutilation even among their peers. Their voices reinforced the urgency of expanding our reach.

e. Menstrual Hygiene and Reproductive Health Education

Access to menstrual hygiene products remains a challenge for girls in rural areas. To bridge this gap, we organized Menstrual Hygiene Awareness Program, reaching 1,804 girls across nine project areas (Aguotu, Odeligbo, Ohagelode, Gmelina, Ephuenyim, Offia-oji, Elugwu-ettam, Uloanwu, and Mgbalukwu).

Girls in 15 selected schools in these rural areas received educational sessions and free disposable sanitary pads. This was to enable them manage their periods with dignity and stay in school. With increased funding, we can extend this initiative to several other rural schools that remain unreached.

f. Celebrating The International Day Of The Girl Child

This year's International Day of the Girl Child was a heartwarming celebration of courage and identity. Young girls showcased dramas, songs, dances reflecting their dreams of a life free of violence.

They learned to value their voices, know their rights, and stand tall against abuse. The event rekindled hope and pride in their heritage-without the scars of harmful tradition.

g. Market And Faith-based Outreaches

- Our trained volunteers conducted five market outreaches at Nworie, Ida, Nwedeoga and two evening markets, combining live dramas,



Advocacy visit to Ndiegu Okpoitumo traditional ruler



End FGM meeting with patent-drug dealers at Offia-Oji



Engaging the women of Nduruku Ohagelode



Educating pupils on the dangers of FGM



Excited girls who received free disposable sanitary pad



Menstrual hygiene outreach at Seat of Wisdom secondary school, Aguotu



Showcasing African heritage during 2025 International Day of the Girl-Child

songs, and local storytelling.

- ♦ Faith-based outreach sessions in local churches engaged congregations, linking moral and religious teachings to the protection of women and girls. These efforts strengthened community awareness.

h. August Meeting Sensitization: Mobilizing Mothers For Change

During the renowned August Women's Meeting at Okpoitumo Ikwo, we reached over 1500 women, including mothers. Their traditional rulers and other opinion leaders in the community participated in the event.

Discussions focused on reducing teenage pregnancies, encouraging girls' education, and promoting mother-daughter communication.

i. Supporting Young Mothers: Rebuilding Lives

Through mentorship and counselling sessions, young teenage mothers who faced early pregnancies and school dropout, are regaining self-worth and rebuilding their futures. Support was also provided for some who couldn't pay for the hospital bills of their babies.

USE OF VISUAL TOOLS

Throughout all activities, illustrative videos, pictures, and real-life stories were used to deepen understanding. Visual storytelling has proven one of the most powerful tools to drive behavioural change - especially among uneducated and rural audiences.

CHALLENGES

- ♦ Resistance from some elderly women defending FGM as tradition.
- ♦ Families sometimes hide unconfirmed cases.
- ♦ Limited resources to reach all neighboring communities.
- ♦ Persistent fear among girls and families.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- ♦ Scale up Community Outreach: Expand programs to neighboring communities (Ida, Igbeagu, Enyigba, Amachi) to prevent displacement of FGM practice.
- ♦ Continue monitoring and supporting trained volunteers to ensure boldness and consistent reporting.
- ♦ Engage Traditional Birth Attendants in Ndidenyi.
- ♦ Broaden school, market, and community outreach programs.
- ♦ Engage men and boys as allies in changing harmful gender norms.
- ♦ Sustain stakeholders' engagement to ensure accountability among traditional leaders and families.
- ♦ Intensify monitoring of patent drug dealers who may use drugs to evade detection during FGM.

CONCLUSION

We specially appreciate AMURTEL USA, AMURTEL Germany, Marlies Spiess from Switzerland, and everyone who funded our programs. In 2025, we witnessed great changes in the communities where these activities were done. With continued funding and partnerships every woman and girl will be reached in every corner of our society.



Drama by Pax-Domini Academy during the International Day of the Girl-Child at Ndidenyi



School-based sensitization at Uloanwu community primary/secondary school



Mentorship session for young mothers at Elugwu-ettam, Ikwo



Outreach at Nwedeoga market



Interactive session at community secondary school, Ohagelode



Engaging young adolescents in primary schools