



**REPORT OF THE HOUSEHOLD ECONOMIC STRENGTHENING EXCHANGE  
VISITS BETWEEN AND WITHIN COMMUNITIES IN DELTA STATE  
ON  
JUNE 25 & 26, 2013  
@  
DELTA STATE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AFFAIRS SKILL ACQUISITION  
CENTRE**

**Background:** The Community Based Support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CUBS) Project supported over 1,000 female heads of households across the project's 11 states with household economic skills and has already given seed grants to over 150 of these women in Delta and Gombe States to start up or expand small businesses. These beneficiaries have over time, recorded remarkable progress from their previous state.



*All Photographs: Emily Bunde,  
CUBS Gender Program Assistant*

The essence of this activity was to bring together these beneficiaries to exhibit products they sell and to share experiences among themselves. The activity sought to create awareness among stakeholders and enable access to further empowerment for the beneficiaries.

**Activity Report:** It was a day of joy at the State Ministry of Women Affairs Skill Acquisition Centre in Asaba, the Delta State capital, when 28 beneficiaries of the CUBS household economic strengthening support came together to share successes and challenges among themselves and other stakeholders and to exhibit the various businesses they established or expanded as a result of the project's intervention.

Stakeholders in attendance included the outgoing and incoming Directors of Child Development and the Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Desk Officer from the State Ministry of Women Affairs, the Director of



Small & Medium Scale Enterprises from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Principal Administration Officer from the Directorate of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), CPC Chairman of Otuogwu Local Government Area, IC-Global and Lift Above Poverty (LAPO) among others.



The Chief of Party of the CUBS Project, Dr Zipporah Kpamor, in her welcome address and overview of the CUBS project expressed excitement at having the beneficiaries take a widow's mite and turn it into a huge success. She encouraged all present to use this as a means of learning from people who had successful businesses and to use the knowledge to expand their businesses. Also, she applauded the Civil Society Organizations

(CSOs) through which this work has been done, as well as the staff from the Ministries of Women Affairs and Agriculture for their efforts in supporting the project, not forgetting to mention the presence of the representative of the MDGs agency.

From Rural Linkage Network (RULIN), Igwe Augustine Eseka, who represented the CEO, outlined the process of selecting beneficiaries; the content of the training; how business plans were done and reviewed; as well as the final selection and support processes. "RULIN has gone far in empowering other caregivers. We have 49 on list, but one is late - though before then, she was doing very well" said Igwe.



Gilbert Ojiakor, the CUBS Senior Program Officer (SPO), while sharing the Delta Income Generating Activities (IGA) experience, explained the training stages, including the curriculum used by Opportunities Industrialization Centers International (OICI) to train the beneficiaries before the support process; the processes of selection and support; as well as the CUBS methodology for such support. He explained that the beneficiaries were empowered with in-kind grants to start up or expand already existing businesses. He implored the National Directorate of Employment, the Delta State Skill Acquisition Centre, and the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation among others to provide reasonable sums of money as starter packs for vulnerable groups. "There are people who can start something good with very little. For very little, there are others who are ready to survive. Out of 100, there are about 75% of them who are ready to survive," said the CUBS SPO. He also talked about the successes and challenges of the CUBS IGA intervention.

Joseph Ozuah of IC-Global Microfinance Bank in Asaba was excited hearing of the successes recorded by the beneficiaries of the CUBS project. He said that the bank is interested in empowering the caregivers who have already been empowered by the project by giving them access to loans. “I have a passion in trying to see that these groups of people are really empowered,” he added. He encouraged the SPO to follow up with the bank with the list of beneficiaries who may need loans either as individuals or groups so the Microfinance Bank can facilitate the process of registering them with the Ministry of Commerce before giving them access to loans.

In his speech, the incoming Director of the OVC Department from the State Ministry of Women Affairs (SMWA), Sir Rapu, commended his predecessor, Mr. Collins Ogor, for giving him all the necessary information concerning the CUBS project and expressed his gratitude at having the opportunity to attend such a graceful event.

Giving his remarks, the outgoing Director, Mr. Collins Ogor, commended the project and his CSO partners on the great work they are already doing and encouraged them to keep up with the hard work. He said Delta State would not want to miss CUBS, so they are expecting that the project returns after the end of the first phase to continue so we can all have a better society.

**Experience Sharing by Beneficiaries:** During the gallery walk, the beneficiaries discussed the challenges and successes in their businesses and also shared experiences.



Bridget Egesi, one of the beneficiaries from the Nigeria AIDS Counseling Organization (NACO), received 10 bags of water and six crates of soft drinks after the training to start up a business. Later on, she had issues with her shop's land lord who didn't want her selling water and drinks in his compound. Being a nurse and with the experience from the training, she was able to access a loan to start up a chemist which has been paid back in full. "I learnt from them the savings culture, and I save about 200naira every day. My two children in Junior Secondary School are now staying in the hostel. I thank God who made CUBS and NACO come to my rescue because I feel it is because of me that they came," said Bridget.



Friday Favour, a caregiver registered under RULIN in Agbor explained how difficult things were for her and her children before the intervention. She expressed her delight when she was informed that she was enlisted for the IGA training, but she was disappointed with the in-kind grant she got from the project. Although, she said that with the training she was able to access a loan, which she has been able to pay without default, to start up an oil mill. "I had a vision to own an oil mill, and I took one week to plan after the CUBS

training. The token CUBS gave me was not enough, so I had to get a loan to establish this mill. I have six children, and the first is in final year at the College of Education," Friday said during a visit to her oil mill.

Love Joshua, a caregiver of four children, was delighted as she welcomed the CUBS team and her fellow caregivers to her provisions store. She said she is now a busy person and can feed her children, who are all in school now due to the intervention. She added that she also saves weekly or daily now and can also afford to buy clothes for her children. When asked why her business is successful, she said "when you are in business, the first challenge is money, then a good location. When you have both, you will have a successful business."



Field visits were also paid to other beneficiaries including Elizabeth Osesi. RULIN enrolled Elizabeth at age 15, when she was considered a child head of household, and supported her with vocational skills training and a tailoring machine. After the economic strengthening training, CUBS also empowered her with a generator.

It is worthy of note that the beneficiaries are delighted to be a part of this wonderful and amazing project. It is the intention of CUBS that the support for groups such as these will not fade away but strengthen with further support from stakeholders, because even with little, lives will become better.



Sonny Carrol said: *“The Empowered Woman, she moves through the world with a sense of confidence and grace; her once reckless spirit now tempered by wisdom; her needs and desires she has learned to express..... She has tasted the bitter and savoured the sweet fruits of life, overcome adversity and pushed past heartache and strife.”*