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Workshop on Gender and Leadership

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This is a report on the training workshop on gender and leadership for women in the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU), in collaboration with BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights. It was held at Grendhill Hotel, Abuja, 14th-18thApril, 2010.

The 26 female academicians who participated in the workshop were drawn from both federal and state universities in Nigeria. The purpose of the workshop was to promote a gender-sensitive culture within academia, to share the principles of horizontal communication, to understand consensus building and participatory leadership, and to bridge the gap in ICT skills that may cause women to lag behind in Nigeria. It also emphasized empowering women in academia to have a shared vision that will transform the leadership agenda towards achieving social justice and gender equality.

The keynote address was given by Chibogu Obinwa on behalf of the executive Director, Sindi Medar-Govid. In her address, she echoed the aim sand objectives of the training:

- Promote a gender-sensitive culture in academia
- Share principles of horizontal consensus-building and participatory leadership and a learning approach in academic institutions.
- Empower women within academia to have a shared vision that will transform the leadership agenda towards achieving social justice and gender equality.
- Enable participants to identify and develop strategies for promoting women's viability and involvement in strategic decision making positions within academia and their communities.
- Build the self-esteem and confidence of participants to take up leadership challenges even in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds
- For women to be fully technically inclined.

Papers which were mainly on interactive discussions were presented by BAOBAB staff on the following major topics.

- Gender and division of Labour
- Can gender roles make difference in academia?
- Developing self leadership
- How women can empower each other
- How women can serve diverse interests

- How women can cultivate skills and talents
- How women can mobilize others for action
- How women can share responsibilities and results and
- Gender and ICT skills

Each of these topics was discussed extensively by the presenters and participants.

At the end of the training, participants should embrace a new form of transformative and gender-sensitive leadership, enhanced knowledge, and capacity in applying transformational, horizontal, and participatory leadership, and model skills within academia and their respective constituencies. It is also expected that participants should have strategic plan for sharing the gains of the leadership institute with their organizations. At the end of the workshop, participants should be able to initiate discussions on gender awareness/sensitive policy and practice change on their campuses and also to identify potential trainers from among the beneficiaries to participate in a training of trainers (TOT) Leadership institute for the purpose of co-facilitating leadership training on their campuses. Lastly, participants should be able to formulate gender policy on all campuses.

Although the programme was very educational, there were still some lapses, especially in the ICT section of the training. The ICT interactive forum was not practically-oriented. It was completely verbal, like all the other sections. It was expected that ICT facilities should be made available and technology experts invited to teach that section. Although the BAOBAB staff, who were all women, were very technologically-inclined, their skills in presentation were a challenge to the female academicians who were participants in the workshop.

Conclusion

At the closing section of the training workshop, participants were divided into four groups to formulate a vision statement. A final vision statement emerged from the four separate statements, which states that “All Nigerian females become educated, empowered, and occupy leadership positions in an atmosphere free of injustice”. At the end of the workshop, certificates were issued to every participant by the Executive Director, Sindi Medar-Gould.