

## ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Eliminating Gender-Based Violence: Learning from the Widowhood Practices Elimination Initiative of a Women Organisation in Ozubulu, Anambra State of Nigeria

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## Abstract

Gender-based violence has received increased international focus since after the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo 1994 and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. This paper reports the activities and outcome of a Christian women group initiative to eliminate dehumanising widowhood practices, a prevalent type of gender-based violence among the Igbos in Eastern Nigeria. Through in-depth interviews, group discussions, participant observations and membership records, information was elicited on the processes and outcome of the women group initiative. Evaluation was done using the community action cycle framework model for community mobilisation. The women group was able to identify and eliminate major dehumanising widowhood practices. Though women were the victims of violence, they were surprisingly also the perpetrators and astute enforcers of the practice, as well as those who vehemently opposed any form of change. Superstitious beliefs and associated fears were major reasons for opposition to change. Women can play key and effective roles in eliminating gender-based violence and in initiating and implementing programmes that guarantee their reproductive and human rights. They should, therefore, be strengthened and encouraged to champion issues that affect their well-being. (*Afr J Reprod Health* 2005; 9[2]: 65-75)

**Keywords:** Widow, practices, violence, women, mobilisation

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