Ekklesia Foundation for Gender Education (EFOGE) End Year Report for 2016

Introduction

As we end this year and prepare for 2017, our vision and passion still remains the same, to advocate for a JUST and a PEACFUL world devoid of SEXUAL & GENDER BASED VIOLENCE. We remain committed and focused in our Belief that Men and Women, Boys and Girls are Equal and reflect the perfect image of God.

In our work since 2013, we identify Patriarchy (male dominance culture) as the Root Cause of Poverty and Gender Based Violence across many families and communities around the world. Because of patriarchy, women and girls are seen and perceived as lesser human being and treated with less dignity as compared to males who are treated with absolute dignity and respect. Ideas have consequences, the way we perceive others is likely the way we are driven to treat them. Many women and girls around the world are deeply under poverty, oppression, and are being violated because they are perceived as inferior and lesser human beings. This patriarchal worldview is being perpetuated by Cultural and Religious beliefs that teaches and justifies male dominance as the Norm and God’s ideal for human beings. This belief system negatively impact human dignity, relationships, identity, and influence our society in a negative way, both in politics, religion, education, and economics, etc., to isolate women from leadership, resource mobilization/ownership, power, and in decision making platforms both in the family, church and in the wider society.

In Kenya and many African countries, cultural practices like Female Genital Cutting (FGM) are still rampant and are used to control female sexuality and presume promiscuity. Early marriages of young underage girls for dowry payment are normal and celebrated as a way of life and continue to deny many girls opportunities for education and basic human rights. Polygamous marriages that give men right to multiple sexual partners/wives but robs women of sole sexual intimacy and privacy are seen as a normal cultural practice but risk the spread HIV/Aids in which women and young girls are always most vulnerable. Such practices normally robs women and girls their God given human dignity putting them under circles of poverty and a system of oppression and abuse just because they are females.

From a Religious point of view, many faith groups and denominations sees women as lesser human beings. Male identity is seen as primary and divine while female identity is seen as secondary and depends on male. Authority and leadership is male preserve. Men are regarded as the ideal leaders in politics, churches, communities, as head of their families, sole provider and protector of their wives and children, and as pillars through which everything revolves. Sacred texts like the Bible and Quran are always used and misinterpreted to justify this male dominance culture as God’s design and ideal.
It is from this background that we/Ekklesia Foundation for Gender Education (EFOGE) exists to advocate for a JUST and a PEACFUL world devoid of SEXUAL & GENDER BASED VIOLENCE.

2016 PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

i) LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR FAITH & COMMUNITY LEADERS

a) 2016 International Conference in Kenya

In order to fulfill our vision, EFOGE currently conduct annual conferences and public lectures on Gender Equality. This year 2016, we partnered with Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) to conduct international conference with faith and community leaders.

The conference theme was; “Truth Be Told – Engaging Faith Leaders, Understanding the Bible for Justice and Equality”. This conference was successfully held between September 21 – 23, 2016 at Zebra Resort and Spa hotel in Bondo, Kenya. It was attended by both local and international delegates including Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, DR Congo, and USA. Renown scholars and speakers that presented keynote lectures and papers included; Dr. Mimi Haddad of CBE International, Fr. Prof. Charles Oduke, Senior lecturer at Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University, Prof. Esther Mombo of St. Paul’s University, Fr. Evangelos Thiani of Side By Side Global Faith Movement, Rev. Dr. Emily Onyango of St. Paul’s University and Pastor Wayne Pelly of Empower International Ministry.
Main Objective and Impact

This gathering/conference was very important for faith and community leaders in understanding the Bible for its correct interpretation and application in regard to gender justice and equality for women and men, especially for understanding difficult biblical passages that are widely misinterpreted to justify male dominance that continue fueling violence against women and girls.

The event attracted many faith and community leaders from different denominations, organizations, and countries. It facilitated and helped delegates to understand the Theological and Biblical basis of equality and gender based violence. The aim was to end circles of violence against women and equip faith leaders with knowledge and skills in order to advocate for correct interpretation of the bible, influence mindset and attitude change towards women and girls for justice and equality in the church, home and society. Basically, this event affirmed Equality and Dignity of both men and women as made in God’s image.

In conclusion, this event had positive impact on delegates, majority who were faith leaders. During Q/A sessions, leaders had opportunity to interact with every speaker to cultivate deeper understanding on their presentations for questions and clarifications on their papers and views concerning equality between males and females.

Way Forward

It is within EFOGE’s Strategic Plan to conduct annual conferences and public lectures with faith and community leaders on Gender Equality and therefore planning another international conference in 2017 which will be held in Tanzania. More details will be available on our website soon.

b) Family/Domestic Violence Discipleship Classes

In partnership with Stronger Than Espresso (STE) and the Anglican Diocese of Bondo, EFOGE piloted two classes with Christians on Family/Domestic Violence. Targeting victims, we conducted four weeks bible study classes with 60 participants who were equipped with knowledge and skills on causes and effects of domestic violence.

As a Christian Response, these classes gave participants rare opportunity to talk and discuss causes and effects of Family/Domestic Violence, equality and justice issues. Victims were able to build their own voices against violence and abuse in safe place and learned how to build bridges and continue sharing stories for healing, reconciliation and justice. While we pray and wait for the day that God’s people will treat each other with mutual respect and equality, it is important that faith leaders and faith communities address barriers to disclosure, prevention and justice for victims of domestic violence and make it clear that churches cannot be used to
condone or excuse abusive behaviors. Many faith leaders have good intentions to help with family violence but don’t know what it looks like, what causes it, and how to help.

c) Equality and Gender Based Violence training for Christian Leaders

Male-dominance, male-identification, male-centeredness, and male obsession with control are the main aspects of the system of patriarchy that we/EFOGE exist to challenge through the Bible. Because of patriarchy, women are constantly, whether subtly or out rightly, shown inferior positions to men.

Ekklesia Foundation for Gender Education (EFOGE) adopted training manuals from three sources/organizations; World Vision (CoH Gender), CBE International, and Tearfund’s Positive Masculinity, and developed a Contextualized Training Manual for Christian Leaders. This manual targets faith leaders, theologians, scholars, MA/PhD students, policy implementers, project coordinators, etc. in Africa and explores basic and deeper Theological and Biblical understanding of Equality and Gender Based Violence. In August 2016, EFOGE partnered with Samaritan Purse, a charitable Christian relief organization based/operating in DR Congo, a conflict zones to conduct “ToT Faith Leaders Training on Gender Equality” based on this manual.
d) Faith Leaders workshop on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Ekklesia Foundation for Gender Education (EFOGE) in partnership with Tearfund UK also conducted a 3 days follow-up workshop in Nairobi, Kenya with faith leaders from pro-FGM regions. This follow-up workshop was to monitor and evaluate what is working on the ground, response from the communities, new ideas and opinion, challenges being encountered, and how best faith leaders can be equipped to influence community mindsets on FGM practice.

According to World Health Organization (WHO), female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The practice has no health benefits for girls and women and can cause severe bleeding and problems urinating, can alter cysts, cause infections, as well as complications in childbirth and increased risk of newborn deaths. According to recent statistics (WHO), more than 200 million girls and women alive today have been cut in 30 countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia where FGM is concentrated. FGM is most carried out on young girls between infancy and the age of 15.

The practice is mostly carried out by traditional circumcisers, who often play other central roles in communities, such as attending childbirths. In many settings, health care providers perform FGM due to the erroneous belief that the procedure is safer when medicalized. WHO strongly urges health professionals not to perform such procedures.

FGM is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women. It reflects deep-rooted inequality between the sexes, and constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women. It is nearly always carried out on minors and is a violation of the rights of children. The practice also violates a person's rights to health, security and physical integrity, the right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and the right to life when the procedure results in death.
ii) SANITARY PADS AND SCHOOL FEES SUPPORT TO VULNERABLE GIRLS

a) Provision of School Fees
This year through friends’ support (St. Luke’s Church and Global Horizon Inc. from USA), we/EFOGE managed to support a small number of female students to go/continue with their education. Life for many girls living in a patriarchal society like ours (sub-Saharan Africa) can be hopeless and unbearable. Poverty bites deep for women in such environment. Some women and girls find it next to impossible to get basic education as preferences are given to men/boys who are seen as potential leaders in the society.

More particularly, women and girls living alone in AIDS-ravaged communities around here have no one to turn to, no one to help them go to school, protect them from abuse and AIDS or tell them they are precious children of God. They are alone, scared and unable to lift themselves out of poverty unless we come to their aid. In order to support and protect them from sexual exploitation, rape, and abuse, we initiated scholarship support to encourage them to go to school.

b) Provision of Sanitary Towels

In 2016, we also provided 3,800 sanitary towels to some girls’ schools in Bondo, Kenya in partnership with two organizations from USA, Days For Girls Minneapolis Chapter and Stronger Than Espresso (STE) from Texas. Statistics show that, one out of ten girls in sub-Sahara Africa misses three (3) to five (5) days of school a month or drops out of school altogether because menstrual products are neither accessible nor affordable. During the days when they have their period, these girls and adult women stay home because of the fear of being exposed with blood on their clothes.

Most vulnerable girls and women do not possess underwear and utilize used clothes from worn clothes that they place between their legs and tie on their waist with a straw. Menstrual bleeding is still a taboo subject and no one discusses it. The teenage girls, because of their shyness and reluctance to discuss their menstruation with their elders, coupled with their lack of education, utilize pieces that are most of the time not clean. These unclean pieces expose them to infections generally not treated on time, and may end up causing more health problems for them.
iii) Sustainable Building Project

We are currently constructing a building project that would generate income to sustain EFOGE future projects and activities. This project when completed will be self-sustaining in terms of financial capability for EFOGE to carry its work constantly without necessarily relying on external grants and donations.
This building project is half way done and when completed will comprise of office space where all EFOGE projects and activities (secretariat) will be coordinated. It will also provide family unit/room for EFOGE executive Director and his family to stay as the do the work of EFOGE.

iv) EFOGE Participation in other Global Gathering

a) Lausanne Global Young Leaders Gathering

In August, the Reverend Domnic Misolo, co-founder and Executive Director of EFOGE attended Lausanne Global Gathering in Jakarta Indonesia for immerging young leaders. The meeting was meant to inspire young leaders in their unique and respective calling to continue impacting the world with the love of Christ. During this occasion, the Rev. Domnic shared his vision about EFOGE ministry with over 2,000 young leaders from across the world. Currently, Lausanne Global Movement has grouped Rev. Misolo together with other local and regional leaders for networking, partnership, fellowship, mentorship and inspiration. This is a 10 years Lausanne follow-up program to stand beside immerging young leaders with potential ideas able to inspire and transform societies positively with the Gospel of Christ. Funds pertaining to this event were contributed by individual friends through GOFUNDME online donation and online Global Horizon Inc. (GHI)

b) 2016 CBE International Conference in South Africa

In September 2016, Rev. Misolo also attended CBE International Conference in South Africa in which he participated both as a guest speaker, in leadership training, and as panelists.

Thank you so much for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Reverend Domnic Misolo
Co-Founder & Executive Director