

#AsharamiSpeaks: Stimulating Conversations, Collaborations for Sustainable Development

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LAGOS, LAGOS, NIGERIA, January 23, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- It was an emotive gathering that gave a resounding voice to the cause of girl child empowerment. The thoughts expressed were passionate; the discussions in depth. The speakers were distinguished media, entrepreneurship and film experts. The event was the maiden edition of #AsaharamiSpeaks, a Sahara Group thought leadership platform created to stimulate collaborative action towards global sustainable development. The panel discussion event featured appearances by A-list screen actors and public figures including, Rita Dominic, Ramsey Nouah, Dakore Akande, Jadesola Osiberu, Bodunrin Sasore and Toyosi Akerele-Ogunsiji. They were joined by young filmmaker and girl education advocate Zuriel Oduwole and award winning broadcasting journalist and CNN Africa producer Stephanie Busari. The panelists deliberated on: "Enhancing girl child empowerment through the medium of film."

The audience had some of the beneficiaries of Sahara Group's 'Grooming Film Extrapreneurs' project which saw Zuriel coordinate filmmaking classes for 90 young ladies in Nigeria, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire - in line with the leading African energy conglomerate's passion for empowering and transforming lives.

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*Akerele-Ogunsiji, Founder
Rise Network*

Ogunsiji riposted “Men must not feel emasculated by the presence of a strong woman. The power of a woman shouldn't make you feel any less adequate as a man.”

Another subject which livened the conversation was, the current climate of gender equity illustrated by



the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements occurring across the Atlantic. The movement has caused tectonic shifts not only in terms of gender dynamics but also in terms of the power play that exists in established institutions like Hollywood and the British Houses of Parliament. Ramsey Nouah's opinion on the subject indicated the need for boys all over the world to treat girls with respect. "It is so important to train our boys from an early age to respect the girls and women in their lives. How we raise our children really does set the tone for future gender dynamics."



The panel discussion also gave the participants a chance to show their more vulnerable side, much to the appreciation of the audience. Stephanie Busari revealed that she had suffered from nervousness and anxiety in her student days which prompted her to take a break. "It's perfectly okay to pause, reflect, take a step back and recalibrate. Just remember every knock is a boost" she stressed to the audience.

Education, which is perhaps most fundamental to the success of gender parity advancement was also robustly discussed. Sasore said "Children no longer need to learn all they need to know about life from the confines of brick and mortar classrooms. What they need is a laptop or a smart phone and internet connectivity. The web provides them with a plethora of learning opportunities. The society just needs to arm them with the tools."

CEO, Asharami Synergy Mrs. Moroti Adedoyin-Adeyinka set a thought-provoking tone to the event when she declared that the omens point towards urgent action for empowering young African women "at a time when we are being so forcefully reminded of the power of women to make great societal changes when we speak with one loud and unmistakable voice."

Bethel Obioma, Sahara Group-Head of Corporate Communications said the maiden edition of #AsharamiSpeaks lends credence to the place of continuing conversations and collaboration in the quest for sustainable development. "It was quite exciting to witness the enthusiasm of the panelists and the quality of conversation #AsharamiSpeaks has sparked off regarding amplifying a global voice for girl child empowerment and creating opportunities for girls as well as boys to pursue and realise their ambition."

Akerele-Ogunsiji, who also founded Rise Network stressed the need for a change in the perception that drives our society today. She said "We need to move on from a society that is male, pale and stale. Girls are raised to be more responsible and ready for the real world. In the corporate world there has been a recent paradigm shift. Most of the highest managerial positions are occupied by women."

Dakore who interpreted Jadesola's 'Isoken' with aplomb noted that girls and boys should be treated equally. "The responsibility of ensuring this rests with parents and I believe we can use the medium of film to shape the narrative we desire for girls and boys alike," she added. Jadesola, an engineer turned movie producer urged girls not to be cowed by challenges and glass ceilings. "You can achieve anything as long as you are passionate and work hard. Achievements are for people who stay the course. Don't be distracted by challenges, they are temporary."

Zuriel Oduwale who had spent some time sharing her film making experience with 90 girls in three West African cities urged the beneficiaries of the project "never give up on their dreams and use their film making skills to share stories that will enhance girl empowerment."

Busari who earned the Gracie Award for her coverage of the 2014 Chibok kidnappings urged girls on the continent to imbibe the power of resilience in pursuit of their goals. She said 'Try and try again. I had to keep at my dream and today I am happy I did not give up. Do not give up, no matter what.'

One of the students from the Extrapreneurs Filmmaking explained that her ambitions in professional film making were greeted with some cynicism at home. "My father doesn't believe in film making but I want to prove him wrong by having a successful career" said Oyelami Azeezat a eighteen year old student and resident of Surulere."

Celebrated Screen Actor and Producer, Rita Dominic urged girls across the continent to hold on to their dreams. Speaking directly to girls desirous of seeking careers in film making, she said: "Believe in yourself. Belief in your ability in your chosen field and believe in your talent to get you through the hard times and bad times. Movies and the media have the power to tell stories and effect change in order to project the Nigeria and the world we want to see tomorrow."

Obioma, closed the event by reiterating "We are determined to stimulate conversations which provide a solid foundation for policy formulation, good governance, agenda setting, peaceful co-existence, global partnerships and sustainable development. This has been a very auspicious start and we greatly anticipate the next one."

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