

Palladium helped inspire 2.4 million people in Nigeria to take action for gender justice by using safe spaces. We implemented the DFID-funded **Voices for Change (V4C)** project from October 2013-November 2017, which used physical separate safe spaces to engage with youth ages 16-25 in 16 institutions across four states.

**V4C definition of safe spaces**

*“A place where anyone can relax and be fully self-expressed, without fear of being made to feel uncomfortable, unwelcome, or unsafe on account of biological sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, cultural background, age, or physical or mental ability; a place where the rules guard each person’s self-respect and dignity and strongly encourage everyone to respect others”.*

In these safe spaces, twelve rounds of young men and women received a six-week course on necessary life and leadership skills, facilitated by teachers and NGOs trained by our project. The youth selected to participate were seen as influential, with large social networks who could pass on the training to their peers, and indeed survey evidence suggested that each young person who participated in the safe space program positively influenced the attitudes and behaviors of up to six others.

In our course young women learned and practiced self-esteem and self-awareness, assertiveness, leadership, decision-making, negotiation and influencing, social norms and social change, as well as financial literacy. Young men were provided a safe space that encouraged dialogue and promoted alternative norms and alternative masculinities, including male caregiving.

Palladium also created a branded virtual safe space called the Purple Academy with mobile web-based interactive community. The online course was accessed by nearly 50,000 young people over the four years of the project.

The project was successful in activating more than two million youth to speak out against discriminatory social norms related to violence against women and girls and women in decision-making and leadership. More than 1.5 million young people showed improved attitudes towards women taking leadership roles and increased decision-making in the household, and 1.2 million youth reported women in their household being more involved in decision-making at project close than in 2014.

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