



NIGERIAN GOVERNORS' WIVES FORUM (NGWF)

COMMUNIQUE FROM NIGERIAN GOVERNORS' WIVES FORUM TO COMMEMORATE THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE DECLARATION OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE, JUNE 10 2021.

In June 2020, at the height of the COVID19 pandemic, Nigerian Governors' Wives came together to establish a forum known as **Nigerian Governors Wives against Gender Based Violence (NGWA-GBV)**. What started as a small working group for interested Governors' Wives has now become a flagship program of the **Nigerian Governors' Wives Forum**, with all Governors' Wives fully involved. One of the first things we did as NGWA-GBV was to approach the **Nigerian Governors' Forum (NGF)** and request that they declare a **State of Emergency against Sexual and Gender Based Violence** in Nigeria, which was done on June 10th 2020. HE President Muhammadu Buhari also supported the calls for urgent action through the establishment of an inter-ministerial **Presidential Task Force on Sexual and Gender Based Violence**.

As we mark the first anniversary of the declaration of the **State of Emergency against Gender Based Violence** in Nigeria, the **Nigerian Governors' Wives Forum** is pleased to note that the expedited action promised by the Governors and the advocacy efforts of Governors' Wives, has yielded significant results. In June 2020, only fourteen States had domesticated the VAPP Act. As of June 2021, 27 States (including the FCT) have passed the law. There are several other States where their legislation is at advanced stages and we are assured that more States will join before the end of 2021.

As Governors' Wives, we have also been able to achieve the following over the past one year:

- Development of a GBV Mitigation Action Plan for use by all State First Ladies.
- Several First Ladies have provided leadership for State GBV Coordinating Mechanisms, hereby facilitating the implementation of the VAPP Act.
- The number of Sexual Assault Referral Centers (SARCs) as well as shelters for women and their children has increased across the country, mostly due to the efforts of Governors' Wives.
- Provision of economic empowerment opportunities for women in grassroots communities to reduce their vulnerability, and advocacy for Girl-Child education.
- Collaboration and partnerships with women's rights and civil society organisations.
- Production and dissemination of advocacy videos and radio programs in various languages.
- Capacity building and learning Webinars for Governors' Wives and their Staff teams, and the production of a GBV Resource Manual.
- Collectively marking international observances for advocacy and awareness raising. Examples include FGM Day, Cancer Awareness, Day of the Girl Child, 16 Days of Activism against GBV, International Women's Day and Menstrual Hygiene Day.
- Convening a High-Level Policy Forum with State Governors on December 2nd 2020, to assess progress made in the implementation of the State of Emergency on GBV.

- A GBV Survivors' Fund that enables Governors' Wives respond to GBV cases as a way of providing solidarity and raising awareness. So far 44 GBV survivors have been supported.
- Work with grassroots communities and local stakeholders such as traditional rulers and religious leaders to seek their active support
- Partnerships with corporate bodies and private foundations to support our initiatives. NGWA-GBV programs have so far been supported by The Ford Foundation, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, Access Bank, Proctor and Gamble and members' dues.

While we are thankful that we have been able to work successfully to bring about the above results, we are mindful that the crisis of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence continues to ravage our communities and country as a whole. We all need to do more. As mothers, we are also deeply concerned about rising tensions and insecurity in the country.

We therefore commit to the following:

- Vigilance to ensure that we can still count on the political will promised by the State Governors when the State of Emergency on GBV was declared in June 2020
- Facilities and resources for survivors of GBV to receive the care and support that they need without judgement
- Working with political, religious, traditional and community leaders for effective community engagement and ownership
- Support for civil society organisations and women's rights groups who provide critical support for GBV survivors
- Partnerships with relevant government stakeholders such as the Presidential Task Force on Sexual and Gender Based Violence and the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs

- Advocacy for financial, material and human resources required for effective GBV responses across the country
- Ceaseless prayers for our husbands, political leaders and security chiefs, as we urge them to find a lasting solution to the current security challenges in the country.

We thank HE Dr Aisha Buhari, First Lady of Nigeria for her encouragement and support at all times. During a recent visit to her, she charged us to stay focused and determined in our efforts to mitigate GBV and provide succour to women and children. We accept this charge and we will not relent in our endeavours. We thank the **Nigerian Governors Forum** and all the Governors for their efforts in dealing with the menace of Gender Based Violence. We appreciate the role that the Minister for Women Affairs, Dame Pauline Tallen has played in ensuring that GBV remains a critical national issue. We are grateful to all our partners who have made our work possible. To mark the first anniversary of the GBV State of Emergency, the **Nigerian Governors' Wives Forum**, with the support of the **Ford Foundation**, is releasing eight video clips on various GBV issues. Let us continue to do all we can to make our country a safer place for women and girls.

**HE ERELU BISI FAYEMI, FIRST LADY EKITI STATE
CHAIR, NIGERIAN GOVERNORS' WIVES FORUM**