



**COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE
WORKSHOP ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN AND WOMEN
ORGANIZATIONS IN PROMOTING INTEGRITY AND SECURITY IN
NIGERIA HELD AT AJUJI GREENWICH HOTEL, ABUJA FROM
MARCH 23RD – 25TH, 2021**

1. INTRODUCTION

The Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace (COFP) in collaboration with Lux Terra Leadership Foundation, supported by MacArthur Foundation held a 3-day workshop on March 23 – 25, 2021. The theme of the workshop was **“The Role of Women and Women Organizations in Promoting Integrity and Security in Nigeria”**. It was aimed at promoting good governance and security in Nigeria, realizing the increasing wave of insecurity in the country. Endemic corruption, lack of transparency, abject poverty, absence of free and fair election, massive unemployment and lack of respect to the rule of law have become the order of the day in the country.

Millions of people, especially women and girls are denied basic human rights. Several efforts and measures have been made to improve the situation, yet successive failures were recorded. The larger society seems to be too complex to penetrate but a leap from the home/family can be a good starting point. Thus, women have power to initiate this spark of change from the corridors of their homes to reach the larger Society. It is therefore imperative to identify the root causes of these problems rather than just attribute it to religion.

2.The Workshop was attended by the leaders and representatives of twelve faith- based organizations in Nigeria including Federation of Muslim Women’s Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN), Women Wing of Christian Association of Nigeria (WOWICAN), Catholic Women Organization, Nigeria (CWON), Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Nigeria, NASRUL-LAHI-I-FATIH Society (NASFAT), Women Wing of Christian Council of Nigeria (WOWICCN), Rasulul A’Azam Foundation (RAAF), Women in Anglican Communion Mothers’ Union/Women’s Guild (MU/WG), Nigeria Conference of Women Religious

(NCWR), Women's Interfaith Council (WIC), Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) and Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC). The workshop brought together 68 participants from across the nation.

3. The Welcome address was delivered by the Executive Director, COFP, Rev. Sr. Agatha Chikelue, DMMM, the Opening Speech was delivered by the Chairman and Founder of COFP, His Eminence John Cardinal Onaiyekan, Remarks by Executive Director, Lux Terra Leadership Foundation (LTLF) Very Rev. Fr. George Ehusani, the Keynote Address was delivered by the Director of Centre for Democracy and Development (CCD), Dr. Dr Idayat Hassan, Goodwill Messages from: Deputy Director MacArthur Foundation, Mr. Dayo Olaide, the US Ambassador to Nigeria, Mary Beth Leonard, Representatives of the Director General, National Orientation Agency – Mr. Kennedy Onyejekwu and the Commissioner of Police, FCT, Abuja, SP Funmi B. Kolawole. Dame Paulin K. Tallen, Minister of Women Affairs flagged Off the event after a brief remark.

4. Presentations were made on pertinent issues that border around women, integrity, security and nation building. Erudite speakers made presentations on the following topics:

- I. Building Ethical Leadership Rooted in Integrity, Transparency and Accountability Amidst COVID 19 Challenges in Nigeria – Dr. Joseph Ochogwu Ph.D
- II. Corruption and insecurity in Nigeria: The Role of Women in Nation Building – Hajia Maryam Lemu
- III. Leveraging Religious and Cultural Norms in Advocating for Women's Rights and Inclusion – Amarachi Ogwuna (Human Rights Advocate)
- IV. Women Participation in Peace and Conflict Resolution in Nigeria: Obstacles and the Way Forward – Elder Amb. Justina Mike Ngwobia
- V. Gender Based Violence: A Human Rights Violation – Amaka Obi
- VI. Challenges of Nigerian Women in Politics: Lesson for All – Hajia Musleemah Olanike Abdulrahman

5. IDENTIFICATION & OBSERVATION OF PROBLEMS/CONCERNS

A) The Workshop reviewed the current security situation in Nigeria and vehemently condemned and reject any acts of terrorism, kidnapping,

banditry, child labor/abuse/trafficking, ritual killings, Boko-Haram insurgency, robbery and assassination for whatever reasons.

B). It was observed that women and girls are the worst hit and greatly affected by this terrible menace in Nigeria.

C). We realized that social justice, integrity and security are basic conditions for peace and prosperity.

D). We observed that the world is shifting towards gender balancing and equity, women empowerment and inclusion should not be left out of this paradigm shift.

E). We recognize the statement of fact that when a woman changes her life, she changes her world.

F). We viewed women's involvement in politics as a legitimate aspiration & obligation.

G). We understood that a new era of Nigerian politics with substantial women participation will bring about good governance and sustainable development to Nigeria.

H). We recognized the need for all children, especially the girl-child to have equal access to quality education, regardless of geographical location, religion, inadequate resources, ethnicity and ability, in order to equip them to interact effectively in a global community.

I). We confirmed that the causes of these problems in the country is as a result of corruption, injustice, bad governance and marginalization of women in all decision-making processes.

J). We affirmed that culture; customs and social behaviors in the country like female genital mutilation and widowhood practices are most of the time barbaric.

K). We are aware that Gender Based Violence (GBV) is a violation of the universal declaration on human rights. It is a violation of either a girl or boy's right owing to his gender status. It leaves the victim with psychological trauma, emotional torture, fear, hysteric behaviours and other forms of abnormal disorder that characterize the victim. The effect of this is that the victims are forced into moods of silence, depression and isolation or even committing suicide.

6. In order to address the problems & concerns identified above, the participants with one voice call on all especially, the Nigerian Government to:

- a. Intensify actions, cooperate and synergize on restoration of true peace and security in the country and stop favoring the perpetrators of this heinous crimes at the expense of victims through amnesty and monetary bargains that government gives to them.
- b. We are convinced that it is time for women to move to the forefront therefore, we call on women, women organizations, faith based societies, civil society organizations and government at all levels to sponsor and support financially, morally and spiritually women in politics.
- c. We encourage each group to organize enlightenment programme, creating awareness for women to be more involved in politics with the fear of God.
- d. We call for greater commitment from the government, religious bodies and other organizations to work towards this as a priority.
- e. We resolved to enhance Adult Literacy Programme to reduce illiteracy among women and enhance their business management skills, self-confidence and participation in leadership.
- f. We call on all women to be part of the advancement and should therefore get involved in pursuing lawful and purposeful ventures that expresses the totality of our beauties as well as develop our full potentials as women. To this end, we solicit for support, cooperation and understanding of all religious leaders, men, youths, government and non-governmental organizations for inclusion and participation of women in governance and politics.
- g. We resolved to advance advocacy for girl child education and discourage child abuse as well as pre-mature marriages.
- h. We appeal to Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) and other stakeholders to play greater role by mobilizing their resources to dialogue and fight corrupt practices in the country.
- i. We demand that any of the practices that are repugnant to Natural law and Human Rights should be removed both from the Constitution and culture.
- j. We are determined to place the interests of the Nigerian people at the heart of our actions.
- k. We are convinced that the use of religious platforms to advocate for women's right is essential in ending the culture of silence i.e. when you see something speak out;
- l. We solicit for the actualization of the 30% Affirmative Action on women inclusion in decision-making and leadership positions.
- m. We recommend that government should further:
 - Provide GBV victims with enabling environment for justice

- Develop the culture of shaming the perpetrators, not the victims
 - Have a list of perpetrators for tracking, prosecution and punishment according to the law
 - Build more sexual abuse referral centers
 - Provide contacts of the first respondents such as, police, health-responders, human rights organizations and other relevant agencies.
 - Government should prioritize economic empowerment of women for self-reliance
 - Design questionnaires on sexual abuse to help define the adequate strategy to curb the menace.
 - Mothers (women) should prioritize advocating for character and sex education to the young ones.
- n. We urge citizens to be security conscious and pray always for peace, prosperity and progress for our dear nation, Nigeria.

7. CONCLUSION


The participants at the workshop concluded that Nigeria is at a critical moment in the history of her existence as a nation and thus, critically needs urgent but in-depth multidimensional approaches in overhauling our value system in order to positively change the narrative. Hence, the emergency state of the nation calls for nothing less than a grand alliance of all persons of good will for justice and peace. The time is now to take Action! Peace is the only value that can promote holistic transformation and development of any nation.

Women have every right to vie for political offices and to be actively engaged in political activities. Societies can only appreciate the importance & benefits of women participation if they are given the space to maximize their untapped capacities and abilities. With a more conscious and supportive polity, we can build a truly democratic, equal and inclusive society. Therefore, the need for the rising of different advocacy for women's role in promoting integrity and security in Nigeria will give a green-light to the hope for a true democracy in our country.


Endorsed by the Leaders of the Following Women Organizations in

Nigeria:

Dame Mary Asibi Gonsum - (CWON)

 25/03/2021


Hajia Taofeeqah Fagbolade - Ahmadiyya Muslim

 25/3/2021

Mrs. Michelle Dajur - (MU/WG)

 25/3/2021


Bola Aduke Kupolati - (NASFAT)

 25/3/2021

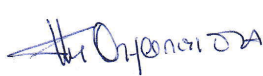
Mother Mary Claude Oguh IHM - (NCWR)

 25/3/2021

Halimah Tijjani Idris - (RAAF)

 25/3/2021


Sr. Veronica Onyeansi, OLA - (WIC)

 25/3/2021


Mrs. Julia Akerele- (OAIC)

 25/03/2021


Mrs. Grace Osofodunrin (JDPC)

 25/3/2021


Hajia Halima Jibril - (FOMWAN)

 25/3/2020

Deaconess Victoria Bola Ihesiulor - (WOWICAN)

 25/03/2021

Sr. Agatha Chikelue, DMMM - (COFP)

 25-03-2021