

## **Sure Smiles Women and Children Advocacy Initiative Federal Capital Territory Abuja Nigeria**

National Parallel Reports on the Twenty Fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE PAPER**

Sure Smile: A Parallel Report on Nigeria's Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action has been prepared by Sure Smiles Women and Children Advocacy Initiative Abuja Nigeria to mark the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women. Women's rights and gender equality this organizations(NGO) have been working to reviews Nigeria's progress in meeting the goals set out in the Beijing Plat-form every five years since 1995. The aim purpose of this Organization this year is to produce a report that highlights her activities inline with the Beijing conference and the diverse realities of women who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and incorporates with an assessment of Nigeria federal government policies and programs supporting women and gender equality in Nigeria. Leaders of the world have deliberated on women and girl child and the best way to strategize women into various sectors of world development. Sure Smiles Women and Children Advocacy Initiative is a Non-Governmental Organization with Headquarter in Abuja, Nigeria. The organization has contributed in enlightening Nigerians to stop the spate of molestation, rejection, discrimination of widows, orphans and vulnerable child in the society. The essence of this, is to encourage Nigeria government on how to make positive achievement in relating with major relevant stakeholders like recognize Non-Governmental Organization such as (Sure Smile Women and Children Initiative) toward the better implementation of (BPFA) objects. The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, was one of the largest-ever gatherings of the United Nations, and a critical turning point in the world's focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women. 2020 is a pivotal year for the accelerated realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. As the global community marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and five years of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, the moment is right to achieve irreversible and measurable progress towards this universal commitment to all women and girls, everywhere. However, Sure Smile Women and Children Initiative Abuja Nigeria as an Organization also focuses on the promotion of the rights of women, children and widows in general, eradication of harmful widowhood practices. We put smiles on the faces of orphans and vulnerable children; promotion of peace, unity, progress, equality and mutual understanding among women and children in general. Since the establishment of the UN Women, the United Nations Agency for gender equality in 2010, efforts have continued to gear

towards repositioning of women to their ideal place for sustainable world. With the era of 2030 Development Agenda and clarion call on gender equality, Sure Smiles Women and Children Advocacy Initiative launched the “Gender World” to step-up action to plant the seed of gender equality in positioning women for the 2030 Agenda. Since its establishment, SSWCAI has been working assiduously towards entrenching and implementing gender equality with a view to giving social, moral, economic and political empowerment to women (especially widows) and children in an egalitarian society. Sure, Smile Women and Children Initiative have different platforms which include; Gender world institute, Sure Smiles Women Empowerment and Business Forum International, Sure Smiles Gender World Multipurpose Cooperative and Sure Girls you can (SGYC) This work tries to examine the important efforts made five years ago by governments and partner organizations in Nigeria. In the lead-up to the anniversary, States have agreed to undertake comprehensive national-level reviews of the progress made and challenges encountered in implementation. Governments are called upon to collaborate with relevant stakeholders at all levels on the preparations for the 2020 review so as to benefit from their experience and expertise. The United Nations regional commissions are invited to undertake regional reviews so that the outcomes of intergovernmental processes at the regional level can feed into the Commission’s 2020 review. The national and regional review processes will culminate in March 2020, when the Commission on the Status of Women will undertake the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. This new review cycle should take full advantage of, and consistently link up and align with the ongoing process of follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDGs, at all levels. Synergies between the two processes are critical for progress in implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and for galvanizing the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

*This is in line with the critical areas of concern of the Beijing platform for action, Articles 11, 7, 10, 3, 4 and 2 of the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and also, Goal 5 on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment of the SDGs which cuts across all SDGs.*

The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) marked a global watershed in the trajectory of gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) worldwide. Twenty years after it was conceptualized and subsequently adopted, the BPFA has continued to provide a comprehensive policy and programmatic guide for achieving the goals of gender equality and human development in Nigeria.

### **Sure smiles education and training for women**

The Beijing declaration on women's education stated that Education is a human right and an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace. Non-discriminatory education benefits both girls and boys and thus ultimately contributes to more equal relationships between women and men. Equality of access to and attainment of educational qualifications is necessary if more women are to become agents of change. Literacy of women is an important key to improving health, nutrition and education in the family and to empowering women to participate in decision-making in society. Investing in formal and non-formal education and training for girls and women, with its exceptionally high social and economic return, has proved to be one of the best means of achieving sustainable development and economic growth that is both sustained and sustainable. Sure Smiles Women and Children Initiative Advocacy in Nigeria has contributed in the area of educating the women and the girl child in four communities of the FCT (Abaji, Gwagwalada, Kwali and Kuje) for over a period of five months in collaboration with Federal Capital Territory Administration also the organization took the campaign for girl child education to National Assembly to discuss Gender disparity education of children with disabilities, which revealed that only 37% of disabled females are literate compared to 57% for males. A reason for this situation is the cultural notion that the male will carry the family name while the female will marry in eight Northern States over 80% of women are unable to read compared with 54% for men 70.8% of young women aged 20-29 in the North-West are unable to read and write and only 3% of females' complete secondary school in the northern area. Also the option of street begging by young disabled girls in order to earn income was discussed in her campaign to the house of representatives in Nigeria so that knowledge about the 2030 Agenda and the mandate of the BDP can be achieved.

### **Inadequate Funding**

Lack of finance remains a major impediment to the implementation of interventions, which target the closure of gender gaps. Low budgetary allocations and short term donor support have consistently limited the capacity of state and national gender machineries to meet up with their annual targets. This has limited the success rate for achieving agreed gender equality targets.

In order to address this challenge, concerted efforts are being made by the FMOWASD to encourage private sector support for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

### **Gender World Institute**

An memorandum of understanding was sign by Sure Smiles Women and Children Advocacy Initiative with the Nasarawa State University in Nigeria, speaking, the Vice Chancellor of the University encourage conferences for Gender because Gender goes beyond religion but also culture to provide Executive for National Development, he said we most include women and children in our society. On a personal note, Vice chancellor appreciated the meeting and promise that the partnership with the university will succeed. Area of achievement for both partners Nasarawa state university and Sure Smile Women and Children Advocacy Initiative include:

- Organizing Conferences
- Researcher Collaboration on Gender issues
- Educational Programmes should be enlightening to the members of the public on Gender. for a certificate program These will give women the opportunity to participate and acquire a certificate education. The school will provides knowledge about the 2030 Agenda and the mandate of the BDPA to reach about 90% of women in the state and across Nigeria.

### **Sure smiles women empowerment and business forum international**

Sure Smiles Women and Children Advocacy Initiative has educated women on the autonomy of women and the improvement of their political, social, economic status in the society to achieve the sustainable development. The full participation and partnership of both women and men is required in productive and reproductive life, including shared responsibilities for the care and nurturing of children and maintenance of the household. Women are facing threats to their lives, health and well-being as a result of being overburdened with work and of their lack of power and influence. SureSmile Women and Children Advocacy Initiative has been working on this, where women receive less formal education than men, and at the same time, women's own knowledge, abilities and coping mechanisms often go unrecognized. Sure Smiles Women Empowerment and business Forum International also encourage.

Education which is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. Due to our advocate for women and girl child Education, Sure Smiles Women and Children Advocacy Initiatives flagged up its girl child Education campaign in November 2014. We do hold different kinds of women empowerment programmes where we training and educate the less privilege children and orphans.

In line with the Beijing conference of 1995 meanwhile, Establishment of women's political empowerment offices in the six geo-political zones of the nation by federal government since 2007, this office is administered and coordinated by non-partisan organizations to ensure objectivity and efficiency. The establishment of the empowerment offices was borne out of a need to enhance the political participation of women in public life. The offices have served as training and mentoring ground as well as a rallying point for women. Nigeria government played a lip service to this empowerment through her implementing process.

**Sure Smile Women and Children Advocacy Initiatives** in its bid to adequately touch the lives of indigent women at the grass root put together a cooperative society named Sure cplogo Smiles Gender World Multipurpose Cooperative Society Ltd.

The cooperative society took place on Monday 24th June, 2019 in commemoration of International Widows Day Celebration. To this end, over 200 widows were gathered together at Kuje Town Hall in Kuje Area Council of the FCT. And Sure Smile provided the widows with assorted food items which were shared to them amidst cheers and joy. In addition to this, free medical test was provided to the widows in attendance. here had been overriding interest across the world to ignite machinery of action on women roles. Successes had been made relevant deriving from the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, yet more is needed in refocusing the mind set of women and girls for sustainability and positively helping women and girls to reimagine themselves in such roles that could support the move of the global agenda successfully.

**Sure Smiles Women and Children Advocacy Initiative on Health**

**Beijing declaration under Health** started that, Women have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The enjoyment of this right is vital to their life and well-being and their ability to participate in all areas of public and private life. Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Women's health involves their emotional, social and physical well-being and is determined by the social, political and economic context of their lives, as well as by biology. However, health and well-being elude the majority of women. A major barrier for women to the achievement of the highest attainable standard of health is inequality, both between men and women and among women in different geographical regions, social classes and indigenous and ethnic groups. In national and international forums, women have emphasized that to attain optimal health throughout the life cycle, equality, including the sharing of family responsibilities, development and peace are necessary conditions.

Sure Smile Women and Children Advocacy Initiative has provided drugs to different hospital in Abuja Nigeria, to treat malnutrition, anaemia, diarrhoeal disease, malaria and other tropical diseases and tuberculosis, among others to the Women and the girl Child.

Nigeria has one of the worst maternal mortality rates in the world with one woman dying every 10 minutes during delivering. That is 545 deaths per every 100,000 successful deliveries. Nearly 50% of Nigerian women are mothers before they turn There in inability to access quality health care services, poor access to safe childbirth services and lack of adequate and affordable emergency obstetric care. In some part of my country, religion does not allow women to deliver in the hospital. This is a taboo as the husbands will not be happy to see their wives opening up to a doctor for any form of virginal examinations. So, from young age, the girl child is taught how to deliver her baby unassisted. This leads to infections and death.

Early marriage of female children is encouraged, even though the practice truncates or postpones girls' education, thereby reducing their economic empowerment. Three forms of marriage are recognized in the country: monogamous marriage registered under the civil marriage law, marriages performed under customary law, and marriages performed under Islamic law. The Child Rights Act of 2003 amended the Constitution to set the minimum age of marriage at 18 years of age, but only 16 of Nigeria's 36 states have adopted the Act. As a result, states laws on the minimum age of marriage vary: in southern Nigeria, the minimum legal age for marriage is between 18 and 21 years of age, in the north it ranges from 12 to 15 years (Islamic religion). The



2003 Demographic and Health Survey estimated that 33.2 % of girls between 15 and 19 years of age were married, separated, divorced or widowed. Additionally, the DHS found that nearly 22 % of married Nigeria women were betrothed by age 15, a figure that rises to 46 % by age 18. As of 2008, a process of reviewing existing family laws was being undertaken by the Nigerian Law Reform Commission, with a view to eventually proposing a new, comprehensive family law.

**SURE SMILES WOMEN AND CHILDREN ADVOCACY**

## **Women and Health**

Nigeria has an impressive policy framework for health and there is growing awareness of the need for gendered spending in the health sector. Concern of government over the years has been on ensuring a reduction in the country's high maternal mortality rates. The 2013 Country MDG Acceleration Strategy report indicates that there has been a decline in maternal mortality between 1999 and 2012: from 1,100 per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 350 in 2012. In spite of the notable decrease, there is still room for a lot of improvement. This need for accelerated action led in 2013 to the development of a National '*MDG acceleration framework, in maternal health*'. This framework recognizes the underlying factors behind these figures including: ignorance and apathy by women and the society; inadequate preparation for any emergency before, during and after delivery; as well as poor or delayed access to adequate emergency obstetric care (EMOC) and the absence of sufficient facilities that are free at the point of delivery. Other factors are tied to the individual tendencies of the mothers themselves including maternal age, educational attainment, socio-economic status and antenatal attendance. Poor socio-economic development, weak health care system and socio-cultural barriers to care utilization are also contributory. Where family resources are scarce and women lack autonomy and mobility, young women may feel unable to make the decision to seek costly treatment. 34% of women cited this as a reason for delaying treatment (FMH, 2011).

In recognition of the need for a more holistic approach to addressing gender disparities in health sector access and opportunities, the Nigerian government, in 2012 also launched the '*Saving One Million Lives by 2015 Programme*', which aims to expand access to essential primary health care services for women and children (Country CEDAW report, 2013/2014). It's expected that this initiative will become the new yardstick for measuring health sector performance in Nigeria. The initiative is focused on evidence-based, cost effective interventions that are proven and address the leading causes of morbidity and mortality.

**Sure Smiles Women and Children Advocacy Initiative** has acquired a land for health centers and clinic and the organization is committed to render its services soon, counseling and Health Support Scheme will be part of the activities which is necessary in addressing BDPA on women and health and the SDG 3 of the 2030 Agenda.

## **Major achievements of Nigeria Government on BPF**

The Country's major achievements in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women since the adoption of the BPFPA include:

Institutional arrangements on gender entrenched in Public Administration systems and processes increased participation of women in public and political life integration of gender and social inclusion targets in economic policies, budgets and development frameworks initiatives to partner with men and boys in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Sure, Smile Women and Children Advocacy Initiative is an NGO that is set and also has achieved the following:

The ambitions and potentialities of widows and vulnerable children are fully realized through confident building, empowerment and enlightenment programmes

Restoring the confident of the widows, orphans and less privileged and convincing them that the society is committed to extricating and divorcing itself from any unpleasant apathy towards them.

The canvass and also mobilize overwhelming support for social, economic and political empowerment of widows and orphans Nigeria.

We institutionalize forum and platform where the voices of women, widows, orphans and children are heard.

Sure, Smile bring women to full participation in the mainstream of Nigeria society and beyond.

## **Gender Discrimination and Inequality.**

The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria prohibits discrimination on the grounds of gender, but customary and religious laws continue to restrict women's rights. As Nigeria is a federal republic, each state has the authority to draft its own legislation. However, any law which is contradictory to Federal Law or the Constitution can be challenged in a Federal Court and cannot subsist. The combination of federation and a tripartite system of civil, customary and religious law makes it very difficult to harmonize legislation and remove discriminatory measures. Moreover, certain states in the north follow Islamic (Sharia) law, although not exclusively and only in instances where Muslims make use of Islamic courts. Adherence to Islamic law reinforces customs that are unfavorable to women, including those relating to freedom of movement, and to marriage and inheritance. As of 2006, the 'Abolition of all Forms of Discrimination against Women in Nigeria and other Related Matters Bill' was under consideration; it is unclear whether this has been promulgated into law. Nigeria ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1985. Many of our societies, in spite of great leaps and strides of global community which have rightly buried such conceptions of the second fiddle place of the woman, have not succeeded in rising from this perception. They still see women from the prism of commodity of use. Today, there are still societies which see a woman as subservient to man, in mental and biological capacity, this is why in spite of glaring monumental achievements of women in the globe and phenomenal rise of the role women play in the world, gender sensitivity or perception of women having mental equality to man has remained unappreciated. The 2012 Gender in Nigeria Report shows the gender imbalance in the following areas:

### **Nigerian Women's Trust Fund**

Before the 2007 and 2011 general elections, the Ministries of Women Affairs and Social Development, NGOs and other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working on women's political advancement organized a range of activities with financial and technical support of Development Partners including UN -Women, and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at the national, state and local government levels. The target was to improve and shift the electoral performance of Nigerian women from being voters to also being contestants and political office holders. Measures put in place include, capacity building and trainings for female aspirants, advocacy to traditional, religious leaders to support female candidates, and awareness creation among political party leadership on the need to support Affirmative Action in fielding candidates. The issues of electoral violence and lack of finance that have precluded women from actively participating in active politics became matters of serious concern that resulted in the adoption of specific measures for overcoming such obstacles. For example, in 2011, the FMWASD launched the Nigerian Women's Trust Fund with the sum of N100 Million (\$600,000) to assist women that are interested in active politics. The focus of the fund is to make grants to female aspirants towards financing specific campaign activities, enabling leadership skills development, conducting research, generating information and carrying out gender equality related advocacy activities. The Trust Fund created room for more women's participation in the 2011 general elections and although majority of them did not win the elections, many took the bold step of contesting.

## **Violence/Crimes Against Women**

**Beijing declaration Violence against women** is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The long-standing failure to protect and promote those rights and freedoms in the case of violence against women is a matter of concern to all States and should be addressed. Knowledge about its causes and consequences, as well as its incidence and measures to combat it, have been greatly expanded since the Nairobi Conference. In all societies, to a greater or lesser degree, women and girls are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse that cuts across lines of income, class and culture. The low social and economic status of women can be both a cause and a consequence of violence against women. Sure Smile Children Advocacy Initiative has organized a Sensitization programme to educate the women on how to protect their selves from attack.

According to data received from the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) and the Ministry of Justice, rape cases in Nigeria have been on the rise. The percentage of rape incidence for girls was 63.04 per cent in 2015, which increased to 72.13 per cent in 2016 but decreased to 69.33 per cent in 2017. Over 90 per cent of suspects arrested for drug related offences in 2015, 2016 and 2017 (92.7, 93.5 and 93.8 per cent) respectively were men, while women made up 7.3, 6.5 and 6.2 per cent of the arrests for the same years respectively. Women aged 45-49 had the highest percentage (27.6 per cent) of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) compared to other age groups, while women aged 15-19 had the lowest at 12.3 per cent (MICS5). The available data from the Nigerian Prisons Service (NPS) indicated that about 2 per cent of prisoners/inmates between 2012 and 2016 were female. During the same period, prison admission for stealing was 95 per cent male and 5 per cent female; while the percentage of women admitted into prison because of trafficking was 14.6 and 14.5 per cent (for 2015 and 2016 respectively) compared to 4.5 per cent and 2.9 per cent in 2013 and 2014. In addition, the offence of trafficking in persons occurred mostly in the 16-25 age group, where women constituted about 76.63 per cent of convicted persons for that crime for the years between 2013-2015 (NAPTIP).

The factors and issues of women marginalisation and low participation in political leadership and decision making have been attracting a lot of attention from scholars. Although women and men have different biological and physiological make-up, women may share common features with men in terms of educational qualifications, socio-economic status and occupation, among others.

Yet, they are marginalised in virtually all spheres of public life. In emerging democracies, there are several factors that prevent women from participating fully in political leadership and governance in all forms of government and political positions/offices. Some of the factors include but are not limited to the following:

1. Obnoxious socio-cultural practices such as widowhood practices, female genital mutilation (FGM), restrictive religious practices (as observed in the Northern geo-political zone), and purdah system (observed in the northern part of the country). Many of these socio-cultural practices create barriers to women empowerment and gender equality, thereby placing a clearly greater burden on women. The shrouding different exclusions and deprivations faced by women in cultural and traditional beliefs often deprive them access to information, education and wealth-creating assets, such as land, capital (including credit facilities), labour, and entrepreneurial skills (Aina, 2012). These restrictions created by socio-cultural practices can be blamed for the poor participation of women in politics and organisational decision-making processes.
2. Dehumanizing treatment of widows, wife-battering and other subjugating tendencies that can eventually make a woman to lose self-confidence. Such practices keep women 'silent' in the public sphere and also private domain (Aina, 2012).

SURE SMILES WOMEN AND CHILDREN ADVOCACY

**Sure, Smiles Women and Children Advocacy Initiative is set out to achieve the following mandate:**

To eradicate all forms of destructive criticism, rejection, and discrimination against women (especially widows), orphans, and less privileged children.

To institutionalize forums and platforms through which the voices of women, widows, orphans, and children will be heard.

To ensure that ambitions and potentialities of widows and vulnerable and children are fully realized through confidence building, empowerment and enlightenment programmes. Including true cultural values and self-reliance. In the lives of widows, orphans and less privileged children

To propagate and uphold principles of equality, understanding, openness, selfless service, commitment, excellence, and good conduct among the citizenry to the widows, orphans and vulnerable children.

To harness all lawful resources to canvass and mobilize overwhelming support for social, economic, and political empowerment of widows, orphans, and less privileged children in the society.

To restore the confidence of the widows, orphans, and less privileged and convincing them that the society is committed to extricating and divorcing itself from any unpleasant apathy towards them.

To collaborate and working with other organizations at home and abroad, given vast networks both in Nigeria and abroad.

To deploy all-encompassing strategies to the advantage and success of the course.



### **National budgets invested in gender equality and women empowerment**

The percentage of the national budgets awarded to the national gender machinery has remained consistently below 10% of the total federal budget within the period under review. However, there have also been several allocations per sector for interventions that were designed to address gender specific issues. These include: support for the reduction of maternal mortality in the health sector budget; funding for the training and input support to women farmers in the agriculture sector.

As part of the process of boosting government spending on gender equality and women's empowerment, the GWIN initiative was established in 2013 with 3 billion Naira startup funds to support 5 pilot Ministries (see 1.3. above). In order to ensure transparency and ease of access to budgetary information to the general public, quarterly budget implementation reports as well as the actual budget documents are regularly published on the website of the Federal Ministry of Finance.

### **Government/Civil Society Interface**

The interface between the Government of Nigeria and Civil Society has improved over the past decade and has grown noticeably robust within the past five years. The National Gender Policy (NGP) identifies interaction between government and civil society as one of its four key principles. The Policy provides in section 3.1.1. That: 'strategic partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including civil society shall form part of the government's broad delivery strategies'. Following the return to civilian rule in 1999, civil society and government began to interface more constructively. The former is recognized in overarching national development frameworks as a constituency that should form part of every national dialogue, policy formulation or review process. They have provided technical support to government led processes on gender equality and are regularly invited to participate in the monitoring and evaluation of gender equality programmes.

**SURE SMILES WOMEN AND CHILDREN ADVOCACY**

## **The Major Challenges in Implementing the BPfA, CEDAW & the SDGs and the Violation of Rights Encountered by Nigerian Women.**

The major challenges to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in Nigeria since the adoption of the BPfA include:

Socio cultural barriers

Inadequate funding

Insecurity, Gender violence (GBV) and conflict

Non implementation of some of the gender specific laws and policies

Low literacy rate in Nigeria has consistently slowed the pace of progress in promoting the rights of women and impacted the enjoyment of rights negatively.

Patriarchy also constitutes a very big hurdle in this pursuit and is reflected in the slow pace of legislative reforms with respect to laws affecting women, poor enforcement mechanism, trivialization of corresponding laws due to lack of understanding especially among the legislators.

Ingrained customary practices, acceptance of discrimination as a measure of divide and rule, usage of violence to maintain patriarchal hegemony, the influence of religion as the opium of the masses, illiteracy, poverty and selective acceptance.

To conform to international bench mark, constitute great hurdles to the achievement of gender equality.

Poor budgetary allocation.

**SURE SMILES WOMEN AND CHILDREN ADVOCACY**

### **Socio cultural barriers**

In spite of the fact that gender awareness is increasing, progress towards attaining gender equality is still hindered by deeply entrenched social constructs and cultural beliefs, which sometimes perpetuate gender bias and limit women's access and opportunities. These are particularly challenging because they lead to systemic, pervasive and deeply entrenched discrimination, which influence social institutions as well as the formal and informal rules that regulate kinship patterns, inheritance norms, legal Sharia, and also constitutional laws and policies. (Country Gender Report, 2012) As part of the process of addressing the above challenge, law reforms have deliberately targeted the passage of gender equality laws at national and state levels respectively. As a compliment to this, there is ongoing legislative advocacy by civil society to ensure that gender equality related bills are passed into law. The National Gender Machinery also periodically engages in high level advocacy and awareness raising amongst gatekeepers of custom in an attempt to renegotiate some of the more restrictive socio-cultural limitations.

**SURE SMILES WOMEN AND CHILDREN ADVOCACY**

**SURE SMILE FAIR.** Also showcase Christmas and Sallah sales on all items, clothing, weaves, accessories, bags, name City park Wuse 2.

### **Violence against women**

‘Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women. Violence against women had been defined as any act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or in private life The definition connotes that violence against women is a form of social injustice by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared to men. Domestic violence against women Domestic violence is a form of violence that occurs in a situation of intimate or family relationship. Females usually are often victims of this form of violence. Therefore, domestic violence can be defined as physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional and verbal abuse between people who have at some time had an intimate or family relationship. This article is concerned with domestic violence against women in an intimate or family relationship. This would exclude childhood abuse which could also be seen as a form of domestic violence in the context of above definition. What constitutes physical, sexual, emotional and verbal abuses against women often times would be influenced by the socio-cultural norms of a particular society. The question arises of whether ‘Marrying a woman exclusively as a house wife and preventing her from any form of vocation outside the domestic responsibilities even if the woman in question has the necessary skills and qualifications as often occurred in various ethnic groups in Nigeria constitutes domestic violence or not?’. Just as some controversies would be raised on the definition of domestic violence as related to cultural practices of different societies, gender based domestic violence against women is often maintained or perpetrated by unhealthy societal and cultural practices. As earlier highlighted, domestic violence against women could include physical violence, sexual violence, emotional and verbal abuses:

1. Physical violence based on WHO study; definition include the women being;

- Slapped or thrown something at that could hurt her
- Pushed or shoved
- Hit with a fist or something else that could hurt.

- Kicked, dragged or beaten up
- Choked or burnt on purpose
- Threatened with or actually used a gun, knife or other weapon against her.

2. Sexual violence as defined based include;

- Being physically forced to have sexual intercourse against her will
- Having sexual intercourse because she was afraid of what her partner.

**SURE SMILES WOMEN AND CHILDREN ADVOCACY**

## **Discrimination and gender-based violence**

Nigeria has the National Gender Policy of 2006 focusing on women's empowerment and commitments to eliminate discriminatory practices. The Child Rights Act of 2003 amended the Constitution to set the minimum age of marriage at 18 for both sexes, but only 24 of Nigeria's 36 States have adopted the Act.<sup>13</sup> As a result, State laws on the minimum age for getting married vary: in Southern Nigeria, the minimum legal age of marriage is between 18 and 21 years of age, depending on the region; in the North, it ranges from 12 to 15 years. There is no comprehensive national law on violence against women. Various legal instruments are being used to address violence against women and seek justice for victims of gender-based violence; these include the Violence against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPP), 2015, Gender-Based Violence (Prohibition) Law, 2007, the Child's Right Law, 2003, Prevention Against Domestic Violence Law, 2007, National Gender Policy, 2014, Criminal Law of Lagos state, 2011, the NAP on UNSCR 1325 (2017-2020), CEDAW and the Maputo protocol. Poor or no implementation of these instruments and measures continue.

The VAPP Act came to existence in Nigeria after 14 years of activism by civil society activists who have consistently pushed for national legislation prohibiting violence against women. The content of the VAPP Act reflects the current realities of violence in Nigeria and incorporates provisions based on Nigeria's international human rights obligations. To present, the VAPP Act is only justiciable in the Federal Capital Territory while other states are yet to implement it into their state law. Despite it being justiciable in the Federal Capital Territory, its implementation is poor. Moreover, there is a very low level awareness of VAPP as most institutions and organizations are not aware of it. Only 11 states, including Anambra, Bauchi, Cross Rivers, Ebonyi, Edo, Ekiti, Imo, Lagos, Enugu, Bayelsa and Rivers states, have laws with provisions of legal terms to counter gender-based violence.

Government's efforts to combat discrimination include the previous administration's decision to give 38% of its quota in political offices to women and to promote more women into its administration. Women were also empowered by being granted financial assistance. This involved small scale business funding, micro finance bank loans, agricultural empowerment, and long-term loans with little interest. Initiatives taken to combat gender discrimination and gender-based violence have been compromised by the fact that many harmful practices are grounded in widely accepted cultural and religious norms.

Earlier this year, ex-Central Bank of Nigeria governor, Emir of Kano, Muhammadu Sanusi 11, announced the proposal for a revised family law covering the matters of marriage, divorce, maintenance of children and inheritance. The proposed law would outlaw forced marriages, make domestic violence illegal, indicate the various responsibilities of the father beyond fathering a child and would require stricter conditions for men to marry a second wife. This proposal builds on a speech from 25 June 2016 in which he stated that violence against women is a violation of human rights and also a form of discrimination against women. “It is a mental sickness that needs to be rectified and there is a need to act on gender equality against domestic violence.” He further explained that “people should be recognized first as people and be treated equally regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, race and disability”.<sup>16</sup> A public hearing of a Gender and Equal Opportunity (GEO) Bill, presented by senator Biodun Olujimi (Ekiti South Senatorial District) was scheduled to take place on 9 December 2016 at the National Assembly. However, the public hearing committee failed to meet the necessary quorum, as only two senators were present. The senator faced fierce resistance from her male counterparts from the Northern part of the country. The major challenge to the hearing was the misconception of most Islamic clerics on some contents of the bill, in particular the inheritance and marriage section, which they saw in contradiction with the laws and beliefs of the Holy Qur’an. In particular, the Sultan of Sokoto Muhammadu Sa’ad Abubakar III indicated that the GEO Bill was not in line with Islamic beliefs<sup>17</sup> and, therefore, not suitable and appropriate for Northern political zones. Due to religious and societal pressure and fear of being labeled or humiliated, many politicians ended up opting out of the hearing. Since then, the GEO Bill has successfully passed its second reading in both houses, and currently awaits the third reading, scheduled for September this year. Subject to a successful third reading and passage, the bill would be made an Act. In May 2015, the New President Muhammadu Buhari was sworn in and pledged to tackle Boko Haram “head-on.”<sup>6</sup> The 276 schoolgirls kidnapped from Chibok in 2014 are among thousands of people abducted by Boko Haram over the years and in October 2016, 21 girls were released and recently in May 2017, another 82 of the abducted girls were released after negotiations between the Federal Government and the terrorist group (Boko Haram). In addition to the remaining Chibok girls who are yet to be released, many others abducted by Boko Haram over the years remain in their control. Support institution and other agencies to embrace gender mainstreaming and gender responsive policies.

### **Insecurity, Gender Violence and conflict**



One in three of all women and girls aged 15-24 has been a victim of violence. Women who have never married are more likely to have been attacked than married women. (Country Gender Report, 2012). Research has suggested disturbingly, that violence is endemic in some public institutions, including the police and certain educational bodies, where an “entrenched culture of impunity” protects perpetrators of rape and other violence. These crimes are under-reported and very few cases are brought to court. Fear of violence hinders Nigeria’s development. It not only deters girls from going to school but impacts on almost every aspect of women’s lives as productive and active citizens.

More recently there has been an upsurge of insurgency in parts of Northern Nigeria. Not only will this hinder the realization of national development targets generally, it has the tendency to exacerbate already existing disparate levels of gender equality at regional levels. Already human development outcomes for girls and women are worse in the North, where poverty levels are sometimes twice as high as parts of the South (72% in the North- East compared with 26% in the South-East and a national average of 54%). (Country Gender Report, 2012) Nearly half of all children under five are malnourished in the North-East, compared to 22% in the South-East. Hausa girls, for example, are 35% less likely to go to school than Yoruba boys. The impact of inequality on the lives of girls and women is reflected starkly in health and education outcomes, nationally and between North and South.

### **Non implementation of some gender specific laws and policies**

Implementation of some of the gender specific laws and policies has been slower than anticipated in some cases. For instance, the implementation of the Child Rights Act and the National Gender Policy. Reasons for this include insufficient funding and gender capacity deficits at state and local government levels. Some of the more challenging setbacks to the attainment of the commitments of the BPFA have been in the following areas:

Women's political representation in elective positions

Non - ratification of some critical Gender Equality Bills

Non-inclusion of proposed gender specific provisions in constitutional amendments

**SURE SMILES WOMEN AND CHILDREN ADVOCACY**

## **Conclusion**

Nigeria's commitment to the broad principles of the BDPFA is clear from the various efforts being made to translate policy rhetoric to action. The country's size and population spread make it more challenging to fast track some critical policy interventions and reinforces the contest of diverse priorities within a context of limited resources. However, Nigeria should continue to explore emerging entry points for collaboration, for instance within the private sector, in order to ensure that her national, regional and international policy commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women are upheld.

**SURE SMILES WOMEN AND CHILDREN ADVOCACY**

## **Recommendation**

The Sure Smile Women and Children Advocacy Initiative recommend that the next 25 years of BDPA and the remaining 11 years of the 2030 Agenda. Nigeria government should Sustain social protection and active participation of women in decision making (National Assembly)

- Government should ensure that policies and laws are put in place for child right act to be implemented in other to protect the girl child. Also, there should be inclusion of proposed gender specific provisions in constitutional amendments by Nigeria government.
- Government should provide sufficient funding and gender capacity at the state and local government levels in order to achieve BPFA goal. However, holistic approach by government in dealing with the insurgency problem in parts of Northern Nigeria will go a long way since most of the victims involved are women and children.
- Government should create an awareness by educating the citizen on effect of socio-cultural barriers on women girl child inclusive on the need to know that there is an ongoing legislative advocacy by civil society NGOs e.g. sure smile, to ensure that gender equality related bills are passed into law.
- It is critical that a national mechanism for tracking gender results across sectors should be well effective and also put in place to complement and regularly upgrade the gender data bank. . This effort will be driven by the FMWASD, working with the National Bureau for Statistics and the National Center for Women Development; civil society groups, NGOs international partners like UN Women; and representatives from a range of MDAs. As a complement to this, collaboration between academic institutions, should also be encourage and the FMWASD for purposes of carrying out gender specific research around emerging contextualities. These will be used as a basis for influencing policy and practice changes at national, state and local government levels respectively.
- Inclusive development and shared prosperity for sustainable future of women and girls sustain gender recognition and acceptance in all ramification and spheres of development address inclusive support and empowerment of all women irrespective of social and health status encourage NGOS groups and working groups to design a holistic approach to bring into the success of Beijing agenda of 2030.

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GWiN Growing Girls and Women in Nigeria  
NEMA National Emergency Management Agency  
NHRC National Human Rights' Commission  
NIS National Immigration Service  
NPF Nigerian Police Force  
WORDOC Women's Research and Documentation Centre,  
FMOWASD Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development  
FMOWASD Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development  
FMWASD Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development  
WHO World Health Organisation  
WOTCLEF Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation  
WACOL Women's Aid Collective  
YOU WIN Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria