



NIGERIAN GOVERNORS' WIVES FORUM (NGWF)

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY STATEMENT MARCH 8 2021

March 8th is a day set aside to celebrate women around the world. Throughout the month of March, activities are organized to showcase the contributions of women and draw attention to the challenges they face. In Nigeria, even though many attempts have been made at Federal and State levels to raise the status of women, there is still a long way to go. Millions of Nigerian women, most of them in rural areas, struggle with poverty, lack of access to education, qualitative healthcare and basic resources such as food, water and shelter. One in three women is at risk of one form of gender-based violence or the other, and insecurity in many communities has placed women and girls in particular in grave danger. As Wives of Governors, we support our husbands by complementing their efforts, and drawing attention to the plight of vulnerable citizens in our midst, most of them women and children. Through our various projects as First Ladies, we engage in advocacy, awareness raising and coordination of empowerment programs. We work with Ministries, Departments and Agencies as well as with civil society organisations and development partners to promote the well-being of women and girls.

The theme for International Women's Day 2021 is ***Women in Leadership: Achieving an equal future in a Covid-19 world***. In spite of the many obstacles in their way, Nigerian women have demonstrated that they are knowledgeable, capable and experienced leaders at all levels in the political, professional, business, public and academic sectors. However systemic and structural barriers still prevent the vast majority of women from achieving their full potential. Cultural beliefs, mindsets and attitudes which disempower women do not augur well for the growth and development of any society. The COVID19 pandemic has stretched the capacities of many countries around the world and has widened the gender gap. Nigerian women are now more likely to be poorer, more likely to be excluded from employment and business opportunities and more vulnerable to various forms of violence. A post COVID19 world cannot be one that leaves women behind. That would be a disaster for any emerging economy because of the immeasurable contributions that women are capable of making.

We therefore call on the Federal and State governments to:

- Demonstrate political will to ensure that the needs and concerns of Nigerian women are addressed
- Enact laws and policies for inclusion and non-discrimination to safeguard the interests of women, and where they exist, we call for full and adequate implementation
- Involve more women in policy and decision-making at all levels
- Provide adequate resources for the empowerment, education and training of women and girls
- Strengthen the National and State machineries responsible for women's empowerment so that they can function optimally
- Support civil society organisations to work in partnership with the government and local communities for effective reach and impact

As Governors' Wives, we will continue to support our husbands and remind them of their obligations towards the security, protection and empowerment of citizens, especially women. We will also engage with local communities and various stakeholders to ensure that no woman is left behind. We will continue our joint flagship project as Governors' Wives which is addressing sexual and gender-based violence, as well as our individual projects which address women's health, education of children, mental health, economic empowerment, literacy and many other issues. As we manage the fall out from the COVID19 pandemic during these difficult times, we call on all the authorities concerned to make the COVID19 vaccine widely available, and ensure there is equity in access. The vaccine should not be yet another resource that women do not have easy access to in Nigeria. We also urge all women to take the vaccine when it is available, we ourselves will be taking the vaccine to demonstrate that it is safe.

To commemorate International Women's Day, **Nigerian Governors' Wives Against Gender Based Violence** is releasing an advocacy video which will be disseminated widely. We will also be providing financial support to survivors of GBV drawn from States across the country.

We firmly believe that if women are encouraged as leaders, there will be solutions to many of our intractable problems. The future of our country belongs to both men and women. We can no longer afford to leave one side behind by accident or design.

HAPPY INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

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

**HE DR AMINA ABUBAKAR BELLO, FIRST LADY NIGER STATE,
CHAIR, NORTHERN GOVERNORS' WIVES FORUM**

**HE MRS BETSY OBASEKI, FIRST LADY EDO STATE, CHAIR,
SOUTHERN GOVERNORS' WIVES FORUM**

**ON BEHALF OF
NIGERIAN GOVERNORS' WIVES**