

## **COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE SIDE BY SIDE FAITH MOVEMENT FOR GENDER JUSTICE IN NIGERIA HELD IN ABUJA, NIGERIA FROM 27<sup>TH</sup> -28<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2018 ORGANISED BY CHRISTIAN AID NIGERIA AND AFRICAN CENTRE FOR LEADERSHIP, STRATEGY & DEVELOPMENT (CENTRE LSD)**

### **PREAMBLE**

We the delegates, representing various faiths and traditional leaders in Nigeria from Muslim, Traditional African Religion and Christian beliefs; representatives of Christian Association of Nigeria, Jama'atu Nasril Islam and other Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) from the six geo political zones in Nigeria, gathered in Abuja Nigeria from 27<sup>th</sup> -28<sup>th</sup> of November 2018. The aim of the meeting was to launch the Side By Side Faith Movement for Gender Justice, Nigeria Chapter and to deliberate on a shared vision, commitment and plan of action with support from Christian Aid.

The meeting, which had the theme was "Gender Justice –working side by side with faith and traditional leaders" was organised with the view of promoting greater participation of the Christian, Muslim and Traditional African Religious leaders in the fight for gender justice, particularly for women, vulnerable children and girls.

**We Acknowledge** on-going efforts by the government of Nigeria, civil society and faith and traditional leaders in the country to promote gender justice;

**We Recognise** the centrality of both the Christian, Muslim and Traditional African Religious institutions in addressing gender injustice which has hindered human, social, political, economic and spiritual developments, not just for women and girls, but for men and boys as well.

**We Note**, with great concern that gender inequality remains a challenge for faith institutions and communities across Africa, Nigeria inclusive:

**We Commit** to journeying with other faith and traditional leaders and institutions in search of equality and dignity for all, promoting positive gender values and working together to truly become inclusive societies of hope, reconciliation, peace and healing. The faith and traditional community value gender justice and are convinced that this can enhance progress with greater harmony and effectiveness across a range of community development efforts.

### **OBSERVATIONS**

The delegates observed the following:

1. In Nigeria, women and girls suffer systematic and systemic disadvantage and discrimination that are magnified for those in the poorest states and sectors of society.
2. Nigeria's 80.2 million women and girls have significantly worse life chances than men and also their sisters in comparable societies.
3. In Nigeria, 60-79 percent of the rural work force is women but men are five times more likely to own land.
4. Women with dependents pay more tax than men. Women in formal employment are paid less than men.
5. Nearly five times as many judges and permanent secretaries in Nigeria are men rather than women.
6. As at 2012 statistics, only 4 percent of local government councillors are women.

7. Up to one third of Nigerian women have been subjected to violence.
8. In many states of the federation of Nigeria, there is no single female legislator in the State Houses of the Assembly.
9. There are a lot of barriers to gender justice in Nigeria including exclusion from the political process, harmful traditional practices and feminisation of poverty.
10. Irrespective of the religious differences, whether Christianity, Islam or Traditional Religion, there is a profound agreement that gender discrimination and inequality is man-made.
11. The Sacred texts (The Bible and Holy Quran) do not encourage gender discrimination, inequality and injustice. Gender injustice is promoted by man through ignorance or misconceptions based on patriarchal interpretation of scriptures.
12. Nigeria is the first country chapter of the Side by Side Movement to be launched and established in the West African sub-region. Therefore, it must set the pace for others to follow.

## DISCUSSION

### **Acknowledging from our discussions that the faith and traditional institutions:**

- a. Have done a lot to promote the spirituality of human beings but have not done enough to promote gender justice.
- b. Have great influence on their followers and have the potential to use this influence and power to promote gender justice.
- c. Need to have a common understanding of gender justice to include tackling inequalities and discrimination between men and women.
- d. Can promote gender justice by expanding women friendly public spaces; guaranteeing land and jobs for women; applying special measures to increase women's voice in decision making and ending violence against women and girls.

## COMMITMENTS

Members unanimously agreed to establish and the Side by Side faith movement for Gender Justice in Nigeria as a platform for faith and traditional leaders in Nigeria to promote gender justice:

**Awareness raising:** Members resolved to build awareness and commitment for gender justice in Nigeria. Faith leaders will be encouraged to interpret scriptures to promote gender justice as recorded in the sacred texts without discrimination against women.

**Partnership:** Members committed to build, strengthen and share information about existing work by faith leaders on development issues to address gender justice.

**Capacity Building:** Members agreed to engage in capacity building of faith leaders to address development and gender justice issues.

**Advocacy and Campaign:** Members resolved to advocate and campaign for gender justice issues at the local, national and global levels. Members recognise that the National Gender Policy can be a good tool for advocacy.

**Platform for Engagement:** Members agreed that the Side by Side Movement, Nigeria chapter will provide space for people of faith and tradition to engage in open debate on gender justice issues.

**Research and Evidence:** Members resolved to engage in research to build evidence base for gender justice issues. The reports of the research will be adequately disseminated to faith and traditional leaders to use in promoting gender justice.

**Voice and Accountability:** Members resolved to build synergy and amplify the voice of faith leaders and faith-based organisations in Nigeria for gender justice. Members will hold elected leaders accountable to gender issues.

**Champions for Gender Justice:** Members resolved to build and promote champions of gender justice from faith-based organisations.

**Action for Gender Justice:** Members agreed to develop principles, priorities and action plans for addressing gender justice in Nigeria.

## **CONCLUSION**

The conference ended with a recognition by all members that promoting gender justice in Nigeria will involve programmes and activities to change laws, policies and practices that have been mediated by patriarchy over the years requiring a long term or marathon approach.

The conference unanimously commended Christian Aid Nigeria for the mentoring role and support in the establishment of Side by Side Movement for Gender Justice in Nigeria and the African Centre for Leadership, Strategy & Development (Centre LSD) for the dynamic secretariat services.

### **Signed:**

**Prof. Mustapha Ismail Hussein**

Co-Chair, Side by Side Movement

**Dr. Khalid Abubakar Aliyu**

Secretary General, JN1

**Amb. Ahmed Umar**

Rep of HRH Muhammadu Sanusi II, CON

**Pastor (Dr/Mrs) Mabel O. Sowoolu**

Chairperson, WOWICAN

**Mr. Charles Usie**

Country Manager, Christian Aid Nigeria

**Rev Dr Israel Akanji**

Co-Chair, Side by Side Movement

**Archbishop Oche Job**

Representative of the CAN President

**Bishop Kingsley Enakirerhi**

Member, Steering Committee

**Hajia Halima Jibril**

National Amira, FOMWAN

**Dr. Otive Igbuzor**

Founding Executive Director, Centre LSD