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## **Gender Based Violence on Women and Children: The Way Forward**

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### **Abstract**

This paper argues that violence against women and children is prevalent. Issues of GBV against women and children has already eaten deeper into the fabrics of the church and society. The church is expected to guard against GBV. Unfortunately, proper attention in curbing GBV is not given by the church as a custodian to the marginalised. The paper using historical methods of research proffers ways of addressing GBV by the church, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), and the United Nations. Focus on women and children is important as they are bedrocks of societal development and growth.

### **The Contributions of Churches in Fighting GBV**

The church is the conscience of society, and today society needs a conscience. Unfortunately, the church is not the conscience we need to liberate society, as she is often seen to be allowing some

forms of violence against women and children. The church's teachings and practices about keeping women in submission encourage men's feeling of supremacy over women. This exacerbates the church's poor recognition and acceptance of women's gifts and potential.

Violence has affected both pastors' families and laity. The severity of the various forms of violence against women and the dangers inherent in women has making an idol out of self-sacrifice and passivity. There are cases where women endure violence in order to maintain economic and family stability. Within the church a clergy's spouse would continue being silent in the face of violence to uphold the image of being her family's 'living sacrifice' to God.

Often the first point of contact for women who encounter violence is the church, and for many, the response is that they are to forgive and forget and that it is part of married life. "Given that the churches play such a crucial role in the lives of the people, it is important that theological institutions prepare the priests, pastors and other religious persons with skills to deal effectively with members of the congregation should the need arise".

Even though the existence of violence is now publicly acknowledged, still there is much denial from the church. A culture of silence is maintained in order to protect the sanctity of the body of Christ at the expense of women and children who are continuously affected by violence.<sup>1</sup> Even though the church has her problems, she is supposed to fight against GBV. Some ways have been presented in which the church could involve in the fight.

In exploring what religious communities especially the church in Borno State can do to address violence, there is need to create multi-church support groups for victims of violence. It is important to train religious leaders on GBV issues and how to

respond to diverse situations. It is seen from the research that women and children are highly vulnerable in Borno State to GBV. The church should advocate for enactment and enforcement of laws to protect community members. There are many Christians in Borno State, contrary to propaganda that it is only Islam available. In making the way forward, create centres where people can receive help/legal assistance. There is need for the church to train paralegals to give free advice to victims of GBV. It is church's responsibility to sensitize communities on GBV and related issues. It is highly significant to conduct seminars, specifically targeting men from different religions and including topics such as the effects and consequences of GBV. In doing that, provision of shelter and counseling services to victims of violence at existing religious structures is needed as well as Provision of information on GBV issues, based on religious scriptures and teachings.<sup>2</sup>

The church is to express in public statements that all forms of violence are sin because it disregard the image of God both in the perpetrator as well as in the victim, and that this should never be tolerated or excused. Congregations should be inform about the reality of the various forms of violence against women in church and society particular to their contexts. The church should develop policies and practices for holding perpetrators of abuse accountable in church and society. Set up a specific focus on the issue at a prescribed time each year, e.g., observe a 'Solidarity Sunday' with women and children.

It will be helpful for the church to appoint staff to address, redress and monitor violence against women, e.g., open up a full-time, well-funded women's cell in the church and create vigil groups in congregations that enquire into reports of violence in communities. Include the issue of violence against women in sermons, catechetical instruction and theological curricula.

Consequently, the church is to initiate discussion on this issue in churches' educational and vocational institutions. Make the church a safe place to which victims of violence can turn for safety, support and healing. Offer possibilities of healing to both the victim and perpetrator of violence. Ensure supportive and collaborative action from local governing bodies.<sup>3</sup>

The church could establish and maintain short-term shelters for violated women in collaboration with congregations and specialized NGOs. This is being done but the shelters are inadequate to cater for the number of displaced victims. Because of the congestion in the IDP camps, GBV is gaining ground. If it is possible, the church should offer or initiate special training for the judiciary, medical personnel and police ensuring that victims are not treated as a disgrace and have the right to seek justice and opportunities for rehabilitation. Open a 'hot line' to respond to reports of violence. Create policies and rules that would give directives to the clergy and laity for stringent disciplinary action against the perpetrator. Plan and allocate resources for training in counseling for lay as well as ordained women and men.

The church has a lot to do to women. The psychological process they might go through—finding excuses for the violator, withdrawal of their complaint, or returning to the abusive situation. The church should encourage women and girls violated to find ways in which to effectively communicate their situations in legal proceedings. There is need to initiate discussion in church institutions using gender as an analytical tool to understand the issues of role stereotyping, establishment of hierarchy and patriarchy, undervaluation of women and the issue of power in gender relationships.

Hold discussions on the concept of power and authority as a vehicle for change and renewal, not for control over others as we do today. Jesus' model of power sharing, power giving,

relinquishing of power and authority for salvific action on the cross is a model of power for and within community. Understanding this would empower women and girls generate shared wisdom and action. It is good to train women to be released from concepts of self-sacrifice, to own power and use it responsibly. Put gender on all planning and activities' agenda and revise constitutions, laws, regulations and directives to be 'gender just.'<sup>4</sup> Make policy resolutions that enable women to study theology with the same provisions offered to male students be it scholarships or opportunities for higher study. Intentionally promote educational opportunities for women and allocate jobs equal to men's with equal remuneration.<sup>5</sup>

Men in the church could assist in ending male violence against Women." Provide fair and equal chances for upward mobility in the leadership of church institutions. This will definitely help reduce GBV. Offer gender-training sessions for youth groups in the church to deal with issues of violence, reflect on and re-evaluate social and traditional norms.

It will be good for the church to create men's networks for discussion of new models of male image to deconstruct the 'macho' image and emphasize the need for accepting the expressions of emotions such as love, pain and tears.<sup>6</sup> Share in nurturing roles as something that men should be proud of. Deconstruct the 'feminine' image from a humble, obedient, self-giving, mother model to that which accepts and seeks self-hood, dignity, self actualization and clear articulate thinking. Facilitate learning processes to deal with male anger through non-violent means.<sup>7</sup>

The seminaries in the area should create discussion groups to analyze and prepare for the challenges of new life and faith experiences. Reflect critically on cultures, traditions, assumptions and modes of behavior. Revisit the concept of family as a

collection of individuals who belong to one another in loving and mutually responsible relationships.<sup>8</sup>

### **Government Intervention on Gender Base Violence on Women and Children**

The State has primary responsibility for preventing and responding to gender-based violence. This includes taking all necessary legislative, administrative, judicial and other measures to prevent, investigate and punish acts of gender-based violence, whether in the home, the workplace, the community, while in custody, or in situations of armed conflict, and provide adequate care, treatment and support to victims or survivors. States should, criminalize all acts of gender-based violence and ensure that national law, policies and practices adequately respect and protect human rights without discrimination of any kind, including on grounds of gender.

Investigate allegations of GBV thoroughly and effectively, prosecute and punish those responsible, and provide adequate protection, care, treatment and support to victims or survivors, including access to legal counseling, health care, psycho-social support, rehabilitation and compensation for the harm suffered. Take measures to eliminate all beliefs and practices that discriminate against women or sanction violence and abuse, including any cultural, social, religious, economic and legal practices. Take action to empower women and strengthen their personal, legal, social and economic independence.

The role of human rights and humanitarian actors while primary responsibility lies with the national authorities, human rights and humanitarian actors also in the State plays an important role in preventing and responding to gender-based violence. In addition to ensuring an effective GBV response from the outset of an emergency, this entails ensuring that gender concerns are adequately integrated into and mainstreamed at all levels of the

humanitarian response.

Leaders should not allow human rights and humanitarian actors, as well as peace-keepers, under any circumstances, encourage or engage in any form of sexual exploitation or abuse. They must at all times ensure that such acts do not take place by the staff or partners or as a result of interventions. This includes any act or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, as well as any actual or threatened sexual act, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. Such acts include, but are not limited to, all forms of rape and sexual assault, forced prostitution, trafficking and various forms of transactional or survival sex in exchange for money, food, access to shelter, education and other services.<sup>9</sup>

Ensure that protection assessments are based on participatory methods and identify the major causes and consequences of GBV: the individuals and groups most at risk; and existing coping mechanisms. In many cases, specific GBV assessments must be undertaken by trained staff with expertise in the area of gender-based violence.<sup>10</sup>

Ensure that GBV is addressed by the protection working group and other relevant coordination structures. This may include appointing a focal point or a working group on GBV. Standard operating procedures, outlining roles and responsibilities of relevant actors, should be agreed upon and implemented. Work with other cluster or sectors to ensure that gender concerns are taken into account and integrated in planning and programming activities at all levels, including in areas such as shelter and physical planning, health, food and nutrition, and safety/security.<sup>11</sup>

Ensure that humanitarian staff and partners, including peace-keepers, are familiar with relevant codes of conduct and the

prohibition against engaging in sexual exploitation and abuse of any kind. Adequate and confidential complaints mechanisms should be established and complaints promptly investigated and followed up. Advocate with relevant actors, including national and local authorities, traditional, cultural or religious bodies, armed forces and security forces, law enforcement officials, civil society groups, and others, to ensure effective prevention and response. This may also include advocacy with non-state actors.

Support or undertake information activities that aim to raise awareness of GBV and that combat discrimination and other underlying causes of gender-based violence. The State to ensure that information about GBV prevention and response, including how and where to access relevant assistance and services, is readily available for all survivors of GBV.<sup>12</sup>

Ensure that adequate referral and response mechanisms are put in place, including clear and acceptable referral and reporting mechanisms that respect confidentiality and the rights of the victim/survivor, and that these are known and available to the community.<sup>13</sup> Take action to improve safety and security in and around camps, settlements, villages and other areas, paying particular attention to locations where acts of GBV have or are likely to occur. This includes food distribution sites, water points, areas for firewood collection, schools, public spaces, etc. Ensure that mechanisms are in place to guarantee the security of victims or survivors and witnesses in order to protect them against further harm. These can include traditional protective mechanisms, establishments of shelters for victims/survivors, foster care arrangements for children, or, exceptionally, assistance to relocate to another place. In some cases, measures may need to be taken to protect the perpetrator from violence, such as at the hands of the victim's family or clan.

It is to ensure that adequate and confidential basic health care, including physical, reproductive and psycho-social health care, is available and fully accessible to all women and girls, particularly victims/survivors of GBV. Build the capacity of individuals to protect themselves and recover from acts of GBV, for instance by encouraging and promoting equal participation of men and women in all community activities and supporting education and vocational training programmes, income-generating activities and literacy programmes that empower women and girls. Build the capacity of the local community by re-building family and community support systems, particularly women's or youth groups and organizations in the State, including by encouraging and supporting social and recreational programmes and encouraging resumption of cultural and spiritual activities.

Support self-reliance and sustainable livelihood programmes and ensure that these are available to victims or survivors of GBV. Such programmes can reduce the risk of GBV and mitigate its effects by facilitating rehabilitation and reintegration of victims or survivors.

It should try to ensure that victims or survivors of GBV and their families, as well as those most at risk of GBV, have full and equal access to needed material and other support. This can, for instance, include safe shelter, livelihood support, modest financial grants to access education or training, or micro-financing opportunities. Provide training or technical advice and assistance on human rights, including on GBV prevention and response, to relevant actors, including, for instance, community leaders, civil society and NGOs, the police and armed forces, judges and lawyers, health workers, social workers and others. Ensure that peacekeepers, humanitarian workers and others working with displaced individuals and communities receive training and sensitization on GBV, including their responsibility to prevent and respond to such

acts. Provide or advocate for the establishment of safe shelter for victims of GBV, in particular single women and unaccompanied children. Where individuals or families are provided with shelter material, ensure that gender concerns are considered. As an example, women or girls should not have to travel long distances to collect the material and should have the ability to erect the shelter themselves or receive adequate assistance to do so, without being exposed to pressures for transactional sex.<sup>14</sup>

Ensure that gender concerns are taken into account in physical planning of camps and in the design and implementation of services, such as health care, education, water, sanitation and food distribution.

Ensure that victims or survivors have access to free and confidential counseling about legal or other avenues for redress. Provide modest material and other support to victims or survivors and their families where needed to facilitate their access to justice (whether formal or informal). This can, for instance, include assistance with legal fees, translation, travel to and from court, or measures to ensure the safety and security of the victim or survivor.

The State is to monitor and follow up on cases of GBV to ensure that these are investigated, prosecuted and resolved in accordance with established laws and procedures. Help build the capacity of the justice sector, including police, prosecutors, lawyers and judges, to deal with issues related to GBV.

Review national laws, regulations, policies, procedures and practices, including traditional and cultural practices, and, based on the result, advocate with relevant stakeholders to ensure they provide adequate protection against gender-based violence. Where key human rights instruments, including the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, have not been ratified by the State or where their adoption has been

accompanied by reservations, advocate for the adoption and implementation of these instruments or the lifting of reservations.

Promote or provide full and equal access for IDPs and other affected individuals to safe education, and vocational and skills training, that can strengthen self-reliance and economic independence. Promote a safe learning environment both within and around schools and other educational facilities. This may include awareness raising among children, parents, teachers and other educational staff, and relevant local authorities.<sup>15</sup>

Ensure that child victims or survivors are provided with special care and assistance as appropriate. Such interventions should be guided by the key principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, namely the best interests of the child and the child's right to life, survival and development, non-discrimination, and participation.

Advocate with relevant actors to encourage attention to GBV in all return, relocation and reintegration frameworks, developmental action plans, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. Such frameworks and action plans should contain measures to prevent and respond to GBV and provide adequate care, treatment and support to victims or survivors.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Contributions of Christian Association of Nigeria in Fighting GBV**

Article 5 presents the objectives of CAN. Though the objectives do not strictly talk about GBV, but it talks about peace and unity among people. When there is peace and unity GBV will not arise.

The objectives of Christian Association of Nigeria shall include the following:

(a.) To serve as a basis of response to the unity of the Church,

especially as contained in our Lord's pastoral prayer:

"That they all may be one". (John 17:21)

(b.) To promote understanding, peace and unity among the various people and strata of society in Nigeria, through the propagation of the Gospel.

(c.) To act as a liaison committee, by means of which its member-churches can consult together and when necessary, make common statement and take common actions.

(d.) To act as watch-man of the spiritual and moral welfare of the nation.

The primary work of the institutional church is not to promote social justice; it is to warn people of divine justice. Its primary business is not to call society to be more righteous but to tell persons of the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. Its primary work is not to tell us who to elect to public office, it is to tell those in every nation of the One who elected many for eternal life. The primary work of the institutional church is to open and close the kingdom of God and to nurture the Christian faith. This it does primarily through the pure preaching of the gospel, the pure administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of church discipline.

The institutional church should speak out against preventable poverty but, in most cases, must not recommend exactly which social policies will best reduce poverty. First, individual Christians are called to be responsible, compassionate, law abiding citizens. The institutional church should speak out on the general goals that a society should pursue. It should speak out when the social goals being pursued are evil, as with so-called ethnic cleansing. It should speak out against clearly immoral policies even when they are intended to achieve morally acceptable ends.<sup>17</sup>

The glaring and undeniable need for socio-political and economic liberation in Nigeria. It centred primarily on the prominent role

religion, particularly the Christian religion, can play in achieving this noble project and pursuit of socio-political and economic liberation.

This was based on the radical potency and capacity of the Church for confronting and transforming the unjust social order. CAN should focus on prophetic denunciation of the oppressive mechanism; promoting programmes of raising social consciousness among the masses; practical alleviation of the conditions of the oppressed masses; peace building through positive reconciliation of the oppressed and oppressive members; and personal conversion of the ordinary man.<sup>18</sup>

As the various government continues to introduce various programmes to alleviate poverty, Christian Churches seem not doing enough in consolidating the various government efforts to solve the problem of poverty. Despite the numerical growth of Christianity in Nigeria, the adverse effect of poverty in the nation has undermined the significance of this numerical growth.<sup>19</sup>

The issue of overcoming violence involves collaborative action and work among members of societies and churches. In fact, there are religious and contextual approaches to overcome violence. These models depend on the willingness and cooperation of those involved in the process. Approaches must be holistic in nature and in essence so that they reflect God's life-giving purpose for all of creation. The Church must live out the prophetic and shepherding role of the church which includes counseling, healing, nurturing, caring, fellowship, peace and reconciliation, etc. The main focus is to restore life and bring about justice.<sup>20</sup>

### **United Nations Intervention on Gender-Based Violence on Women and Children**

The security situation in North-East Nigeria remains volatile due to incessant attacks by Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) and

counter-insurgency operations by the Nigerian Armed Forces, leading to continued displacements. Humanitarian access in some conflict-affected Local Government Areas (LGAs), particularly in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states, continues to be constrained by ongoing hostilities and violent attacks, now in the tenth year.

The North-East situation is largely an IDP operation even though humanitarian agencies are also supporting refugee returnees who eventually end up in secondary displacement situation. Majority of IDPs reside in host communities (about 60%) while the rest are hosted in formal camps and informal camp-like settlements. As a result, local communities continue to bear the brunt of the conflict and SGBV remains one of the most visible manifestations of the crisis on women, men, boys and girls.

According to the 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), about 3 million people are in need of GBV prevention and response services in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) states. From January to December 2019, UNHCR and its partners received 1,666 reported incidents of SGBV from IDPs and returnees in the 3 BAY states through community-based protection monitoring. The analysis of data showed that women and children under 18 continued to bear the brunt of this crisis. Child and forced marriage, physical assault, rape, survival sex, sexual assault and denial of resources were the major incidents reported. Additionally, a considerable number of individual abductions of men, boys, women and girls were also reported.

Women and girls abducted by armed groups endured rape, forced marriages and other forms of human rights violations during captivity. They are also compelled to deal with stigmatization and rejection from the community upon their release. IDP returnees from the recently liberated areas continue to suffer due to fresh attacks in their LGAs particularly in Borno State. The situation

continues to worsen for new arrivals in many camps across the north-east region – majority of whom are women and children; they are confronted with inadequate food and non-food Items, shelter, insufficient psychosocial support, medical supplies and lack of critical protection materials, exposing them to risks of survival sex and sexual exploitation.

Denial of resources is being more reported as the most widespread form of SGBV in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states, and represents 32% of identified SGBV incidents in 2019.<sup>21</sup> The crisis has greatly affected the dignity of women, men, boys and girls. This has further entrenched preexisting gender disparities and continues to prevent especially women and girls from achieving their maximum potentials and compromises their physical and psychological integrity.

Women, especially heads of households and girls, are at particular risk within the current environment due to inadequate access to livelihood and socio-economic support as part of the multi-sectoral response. Thus, they are more prone to survival sex as a coping mechanism usually in exchange for food, money and other necessities. The population has been exposed to increasing incidences of sexually transmitted infections including HIV, unplanned pregnancies, and obstetric fistula caused by sexual violence. Overall, this has led to poor sexual and reproductive health outcomes. Sexual abuse and other violations against women and children are widespread inside and outside of IDP camps, and a culture of impunity for perpetrators contributes to the continued violations.

The absence of civilian authorities in some LGAs continues to drive the culture of impunity for perpetrators of SGBV. However, UNHCR is maintaining its advocacy with government for the return of civil administration in areas where it is feasible.<sup>22</sup>

There is need to advocate for Strengthening of civil registration systems in Nigeria especially in the North east to protect boys and girls from sexual and physical violence that lead to or arise from child marriage. The unprecedented gender and protection implications of the NE Nigeria insurgency prompted CARE International to undertake a Rapid Gender and Gender-based violence (GBV) Assessment especially in Borno State. Rapid Gender and GBV assessments provide information about the different GBV risks, needs, capacities and coping strategies of women, men, boys and girls during crisis. The analysis is built up progressively using a range of primary and secondary information to understand gender roles and power relations and implied GBV risks and how they may change during a crisis. The analysis provides practical, programming and operational recommendations to meet the different needs of women, men, boys and girls, to ensure that humanitarian actors 'do no harm' in their operations.<sup>23</sup>

Understand gender roles, power dynamics and social norms and practices with regard to food security and livelihoods, sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and GBV among women and men of all ages within IDP and host communities. Understand the main risks of GBV for women, men, boys and girls of IDP and host communities and map GBV services providers and their capacity, including community-based GBV prevention and response systems. Provide practical recommendations to CARE and other humanitarian actors to improve gender integration and quality of GBV prevention and services in the response.<sup>24</sup>

The conflict has expanded the role and responsibilities of many women from the status of domestic and reproductive worker to the status of head of and main decision maker of the family. Men and women both control resources in the family but, since the conflict, an increasing number of women have become head of their family

or are recipients of humanitarian assistance, while men have lost control over assets. IDP men in camps are much more open to taking on domestic tasks including washing clothes, the collection of firewood and even cooking. The traditional role of women as care givers has been challenged as many have become suicide bombers engaged in the conflict (often against their will); women are subjected to mistrust and fear.

The conflict has maintained a vicious cycle of GBV: breakdown of livelihoods, restriction of movement, insecurity and risk of abduction and sexual slavery, have led women, men, girls and boys to resort to negative coping mechanisms. These include sex for survival, domestic violence, exploitation and abuse, increase of child marriage as a means to protect girls, etc.<sup>25</sup>

Scale up comprehensive GBV prevention and responses and ensure strong linkages and coordination between Protection and other sectors.

Strengthen livelihoods supports to vulnerable and at risk women, girls, boys and men.

Develop innovative GBV risk mitigation measures through economic empowerment and innovative cooking set with alternative solution for firewood.

Conduct training for staff (UN, INGO, NNGOs, State and LGA levels civil servants on Gender and GBV including operational guidance's and tools (IASC revised gender handbook, GBV guidelines, Gender Marker, etc.).

Develop and implement a robust and coordinated Capacity Building Program for Nigerian Security forces and legal service providers on Gender and Protection – in line with Nigeria Security Forces Gender Policy.

Reflect on good practices and lessons to addressing stigma and under reporting of GBV Cases.

Strengthen community-based mechanisms for GBV prevention

and response by conducting an in-depth gap analysis and develop and implement a capacity building plan.

Address issues around masculinity, gender stereotypes and GBV through community- based mechanisms of self-reflection and action.<sup>26</sup>

Child and forced marriage are embedded in the culture and religious beliefs of communities in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) state. There is need to tackle the socio-cultural determinants of child and forced marriage through engagement of traditional and religious leaders, mass and continuous community awareness and sensitization while strengthening the community-based systems to identify and report incidents.

Need to facilitate and support the establishment of adolescents' groups which offer safe spaces for girls and boys to talk about sensitive issues. Also, through safe space arrangement, capacities for girls and boys in life skills and agency including self-esteem self-defense and confidence could be built to end Child marriage. It is recommendable to increase Coverage of girls' safe spaces more so in deep field locations in BAY states in terms of number and other resources.

Through community empowerment approach, UNHCR and its partners alongside other humanitarian actors should develop strategies of engaging both families and girls to envisage alternative roles for girls. This comes along with awareness creation on implications of child and forced marriage.

There is need to engage young girls in programmes with economic empowerment components, such as conditional cash transfers, or the provision of a goat or chicken, which have proven successful in increasing the age of marriage.

Strengthen advocacy and coordination with all stake holders at state and national level to stop child marriage through signing of a law on child and forced marriage, establishment or strengthening

of an information management system at state level and monitoring and evaluation.

Inside the camps for new arrival cases up to dozens of families live together in un-partitioned houses or in the open in this case, Men, women, boys and girls sleep together, sometimes without any privacy. Some-times latrines cannot be locked or lit. Often the camp borders are not guarded.”

These are all recipes for Sexual violence including for new arrival women and girls. There is need to pay attention to screen new arrival population for SGBV. Proper planning for new arrival needs to be done on the onset to ensure conducive arrival environment to avoid exposing them to risk of harassment and impunity.

Promote economic empowerment programmes alongside skills acquisition for women and girls to empower them economically and reduce risk of exposure to sexual exploitation and abuse/survival sex. Recent evidence from focused group discussions in IDPs camps in N.E show that economically empowered women are less prone to sexual exploitation and abuse/survival sex and are able to make informed choices and decisions.

Work with stake holders to promote collaborative approaches to strengthen risk assessments for women and girls and develop key mitigation measures to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and other forms of Sexual Violence.

Conduct continuous awareness raising awareness at community level to pass critical information on sexual violence and SGBV. There is needed to develop a robust Information, Education and Communication strategy on Sexual Violence and SEA along with strengthening community -based mechanisms to prevent and respond to SGBV.

At state level throughout the BAY states especially in Borno, promote joint advocacy for adoption and signing of a law on sexual

Violence act. Perpetuators should be punished and not escape with impunity.<sup>27</sup>

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