

## BOSG Empowers women with loan facility

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From Dauda R. Pam, Maiduguri

Borno State Ministry of women Affairs has disbursed the sum of N65million as soft loan to about 8,000 women to alleviate their poverty status, as well as give them a sense of belonging.

Disclosing this in an exclusive interview with The Nigeria Standard in Maiduguri, the Commissioner of Women Affairs Hajja Maryam Bukar Petrol explained that the soft loan was disbursed in 2006 to the less-privileged women, mostly widows and the physically challenged in the state.

The commissioner who was full of praises for the governor and his wife, expressed satisfaction with the level of success so far recorded, as most beneficiaries were doing well in their small businesses across the state.

She said the beneficiaries got between N10,000 and N100,000 each and had been responding positively in servicing the loan which did not attract any interest and, or collateral.

Hajja Maryam Bukar Petrol hinted that the ministry had demonstrated sufficient zeal and commitment in conscientising the women folk to raise their level of awareness on their legal rights and education in collaboration with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) and donor agencies alike.

She remarked that the Borno woman today was better informed and educated on her rights as it affected psychological, physical and economic violence meted on women by their men counterpart in the society.

The ministry, she added, had been networking with organizations such as the National Council of women Society (NCWS), Federation of Muslim women Association of Nigeria (CAN), women wings among others to improve on empowerment of women.

Meanwhile, Governor Ali Modu Sheriff of Borno State has been commended for his zeal and determination to empower women by appointing them into key positions in his administration.

Commissioner, Ministry of Women Affairs, Hajja Maryam Bukar Petrol, made the commendation, while enumerating her achievements and challenges since she assumed office a couple of years ago.

According to her, the governor magnanimously appointed four women as commissioners the first in the history of Borno State; three Special Advisers, three Senior Special Assistants, three General Managers, two Permanent Secretaries and four ministerial secretaries, as well as three education secretaries and 88 appointed as councilors in the 27 Local Government Council Care-taker committees.

She said that the mandate of the ministry was to mobilize and enlighten the women folk to create public awareness and advocacy on girl child education enrolment, harmful traditional practices such as genital

mutilation, violence against mutilation, violence against women and poverty.

On harmful traditional practices, the commissioner told our correspondent that a section of women in the state staged a protest to reject the campaign against genital mutilation (women circumcision) in some societies, claiming that it was their culture and therefore did not see anything wrong in it, despite profuse loss of blood during the exercise and possibility of contracting HIV/AIDs.

Hajja Maryam Bukar Petrol argued that her major challenges had been how to penetrate the rural women folk who were deeply engrossed in their culture, despite its harmful implications and used the opportunity to appeal to parents to give the girls-child a chance to enable her compete favourably with the boy-child.

She equally expressed satisfaction with the prompt and timely release of funds to carry out assignments of the ministry and praised Hajja Fatima Ali Sheriff, for her support and commitment to the plight of women and children in the state.