

SECOND CHANCE EDUCATION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS PROGRAMME, SOKOTO

providing a second chance for
survivors of gender-based violence

Photo: UN Women/



IN
SUPPORT
OF



**Spotlight
Initiative**
*To eliminate violence
against women and girls*



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GIVING SURVIVORS OF GBV A SECOND CHANCE

Comfort Abah, Lead Second Chance Educator, speaking to Intermediary Class participants at the Sokoto North Learning Centre. Photo: UN Women/Anthony Abu

The Second Chance Education for Women and Girls, Sokoto, was established to ensure GBV survivors in Sokoto get a second chance at economic prosperity and basic education. The Sokoto centre is currently managed by NEEM Foundation, with support from UN Women through the EU-UN joint Spotlight Initiative. The project is now in its second phase, and most participants are survivors and those most at risk of gender-based violence.

Development partners and civil society organisations are working to prevent violence against women and girls and also ensure GBV survivors receive psycho-social support and medical services. However, when the dust settles, how these survivors will fend for themselves and their children becomes a concern.

Often, violence against women and girls is traced to high poverty. This societal ill truncates women's participation in education, employment, and civic life and, consequently, their economic leverages. In the aftermath of GBV cases, most GBV survivors lose their livelihood, financial support, and the chance to go to school.

The Second Chance Education for Women and Girls program is being implemented in two local govern-

ments – Sokoto North and Binji local government areas. There are over 1000 beneficiaries of the second phase. 709 of these beneficiaries are women, while 291 are girls.

“The main participants in the second chance education are women and girls who have experienced gender-based violence of different forms and those who have dropped out of school and now want to continue their education and have some form of economic support so they can be self-reliant”, said Kabiru Mohammed, Neem Foundation State Coordinator, Second Chance Education for Women and Girls, Sokoto.

The Second Chance Education for Women and Girls Education thrives on partnership with other EU-UN joint Spotlight Initiative partners. This includes the State Ministry of Women's Affairs, which has provided office accommodation for the project. Other partners include the Nana Khadija Centre and the State Ministry of Budget and Planning.

One of the highlights of our work is the commendation from the State Police Command. Over 50 wives of police officers in the State were enrolled in the Second Chance Education project.

Speaking on all beneficiaries of the programme, Comfort Abah, Lead

Second Chance Educator for the program said: “Our goal is to give them a sense of belonging and helping them to express themselves through education.... For those who have no form of education, this is a preparatory ground for them”.

The project has eight Second Chance Educators and two psycho-social support staff. There are volunteer educators drawn from beneficiaries who have performed well and have now volunteered to support the staff.

After participants complete their programme, they can generate funds to support themselves and their families with the skills they have learnt. Some of them who decide to further their studies are re-integrated into formal learning institutions with support from the project. The project does this through a partnership with the State Agency for Vast Education and State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB). Reports show that those who were integrated into formal learning institutions are doing well.

The project also provides psycho-social support to participants because most are survivors of gender-based violence. Therefore, it is a blend of education and counselling.

A SECOND CHANCE TO ACQUIRE LITERACY AND NUMERACY SKILLS



1

There are three levels for the literary and numeracy classes – the Beginners Class, the Intermediary, and Advanced Classes. The goal is to enhance the ability of participants to be able to read and communicate in English and able to solve different arithmetic problems. This is intended to help them in their business and communication with customers and clients.

Participants in the Beginners Class are women who have not been to school before their enrolment. Here, they are introduced to the basics of numbers and common English. The Intermediary Class consists of women who already have some basic knowledge of English and arithmetic related to logistics and financial transactions. In the Advanced Classes, participants comprised of persons who have had the privilege of being in a school but had to drop out because of difficulties, including gender-based violence.

“Now I can communicate easily with others, and I can write letters”, said Sakina Abubakar, a participant at the Sokoto North learning centre.



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1: Participants in class at Sokoto North learning centre

2: Comfort Abah, Lead Second Chance Educator, during a numeracy class

3 & 4: Participants answer questions in class



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5: Girls in one of the entrepreneurship class
6: Kabiru Mohammed, State Coordinator, Second Chance Education for Women and Girls, Sokoto.

Photos: UN Women/Anthony Abu

PARTICIPANTS LEARN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS

The Second Chance Education for Women and Girls goes beyond learning basic literacy and numeracy skills. At the learning centres, women and girls also learn entrepreneurship and vocational skills that would enable them to earn some income. The aim is to support the participants to be economically empowered and financially independent.

At the learning centre, there are different vocational skills to be learnt. They include catering, tailoring, cosmetics and craft. Women and girls learn to bake different pastries in the catering unit. Apart from selling these pastries to earn income, the women can also make them as food for their children, enhancing childhood nutrition which is the bedrock of child survival.

Several women are enrolled in the tailoring unit, where the women are taught how to make marketable dresses. During a monitoring visit by UN Women's team, the women displayed beautiful dresses that showed advanced tailoring skills. These women can also make clothes for their children and other family members.

“With the handbags and pastries I make and sell, I am able to support my husband, who is not doing too well financially right now”, said one of the participants at the Sokoto North learning centre.

At the cosmetics unit, participants learn to make detergents, dishwashers, washing and bathing soaps, perfume and other similar products. The women can sell these in the market and to wholesalers. One of the benefits of producing these items is that women can use them at home, which would reduce their cost of living.

At the craft unit, women and girls are taught how to make different kinds of clothing accessories. Materials produced at this unit include women's handbags, neck beads, embroidered head ties, etc.

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The Second Chance Education for Women and Girls encourages women and girls to learn and master all the vocational skills available so they can diversify in their business endeavours.



Participants at the Sokoto North learning centre. Photos: UN Women/Anthony Abu

ENDING THE CULTURE OF SILENCE

Before the inception of the programme and other similar interventions, there was a conservative disposition and a culture of silence in communities in the state. This relates to religious tenets and traditional beliefs, suggesting that women should avoid public life. However, with the practical and consistent behaviour change communications campaign and advocacies, women who have experienced abuse are now speaking out and not only speaking but wanting help.

Sensitisation and community outreaches for Second Chance Education for Women and Girls has helped to break the culture of silence in the state. In addition to the behavioural change campaigns and advocacies, women are encouraged to come out because the project created a safe space

that makes it comfortable for women to speak, learn and integrate.

Reports from Binji Local Government Area show that spouses and male relatives provide transport or convey their wives themselves to the learning centres and sometimes wait for them to finish learning so they can return home together. Men are now supportive of women being educated.

According to Mr Abubakar, Director, Planning, State Ministry of Women Affairs, “The EU-UN joint Spotlight Initiative has had a great impact on the state. Women have come to know about their rights; they now know what is important to them”.

Women who have experienced abuse are now speaking out and not only speaking but wanting help.

One of the participants speak during a numeracy class at Sokoto North learning Centre.

Photo: UN Women/Anthony Abu

FARIDA GETS A SECOND CHANCE AT A BETTER LIFE

Marriage was not a bed of roses for Farida. It was days of hunger and physical and verbal abuse. When she became pregnant, she was elated. She looked forward to having a baby she would love. But Farida's joy was cut short the day she went for antenatal at the hospital. The doctor informed her that she tested positive for HIV. The physical and verbal abuse continued, aggravating her condition. With help from Nana Khadija Centre, Sokoto, she was rescued from this situation. After the intervention, she continued to go for antenatal and took ARV drugs regularly; her health was stable.

After having her baby, with support from the centre, she enrolled on the advanced class at the Sokoto learning centre of the Second Chance Education for Women and Girls.

"The learning centre welcomed me with open arms and made me feel safe", said Farida.

The learning centre has helped Farida to overcome the trauma of her horrible experience of being physically and verbally abused by her spouse. Her self-esteem has been restored, and she is optimistic about the future.

"When I complete my programme here, I plan to further my studies", said Farida.

"The learning centre welcomed me with open arms and made me feel safe", said Farida.

Farida is one of the participants at the Second Chance Education for Women and Girls' Sokoto North Learning Centre.

Photo: UN Women/Anthony Abu



**Spotlight
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