

# VAWG PREVENTION

*Evolving Trends:  
‘New Wine in Old Wineskins’*

## CASE STUDIES

2025



Supported by: **Ford Foundation**

# Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Prevention

**Evolving Trends:**  
*'New Wine in Old Wineskins.'*

**Case Studies**



## ACKNOWLEDGMNT

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We assure them that the growing number of dedicated persons, institutions and groups involved in preventing violence against women and girls will be there to meet them in their hours of need.

Saudatu Mahdi(MFR)  
***Secretary General WRAPA***



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## **VAWG PREVENTION CASE STUDIES**

Evolving Trends:

'New Wine in Old Wineskins'

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## ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRA	Child Rights Act
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CSO / CSOs	Civil Society Organization(s)
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FOMWAN	Federation of Muslim Women's Association of Nigeria
GAT	Gender Awareness Trust
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HISBAH	Islamic Moral Enforcement Institution
IDP / IDPs	Internally Displaced Person (s)
IFL	Islamic Family Law
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
Ipas	Ipas Nigeria
LGA / LGAs	Local Government Area (s)
MDA / MDAs	Ministry / Ministries, Department(s), and Agency(ies)
MOWASD	Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development
NDHS	National Demographic and Health Survey
NGO / NGOs	Non-Governmental Organization(s)
SARC / SARCs	Sexual Assault Referral Centre(s)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
ToC	Theory of Change
VAPP Act / VAPP Law	Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act
VAW	Violence Against Women
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
VILDEV	Village Development Initiative
WHO	World Health Organization
WISH	Women Integrated Sexual Health Project
WRAPA	Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) remains one of the most pervasive human rights challenges in Nigeria, particularly in the northern states where harmful social norms, weak enforcement of protective laws, and entrenched gender inequalities continue to limit justice for survivors. Yet across these same contexts, communities are also generating powerful, locally grounded solutions that challenge violence, restore dignity, and shift norms from within.

*Evolving Trends: New Wine in Old Wineskins* documents these emerging pathways through a series of case studies drawn from three out of the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The compendium highlights how faith leaders, traditional authorities, male allies, survivors, civil society organizations, and state institutions are adapting existing cultural and religious structures to advance prevention, accountability, and survivor-centred justice.

The case studies demonstrate that meaningful change in preventing violence against women and girls does not require abandoning tradition, but rather reinterpreting it in ways that uphold dignity, protection, and the rights of women and girls. From survivor-led recovery and faith-based mediation to community-driven male ally networks and state-level policy advocacy that enabled the passage and implementation of the VAPP Law, these examples illustrate practical, scalable models for prevention and response.

The baseline study and the accompanying VAWG prevention case studies are companion publications that analyse persistent and emerging trends of Violence Against Women and Girls in Nigeria. While the baseline study provides a data-driven snapshot of VAWG patterns, drivers, and response gaps across ten Nigerian states, the Compendium showcases proven strategies and inspiring successes from interventions on the ground. Together, they form a powerful toolkit: one diagnoses the problem, the other prescribes solutions – informing more effective, context-responsive efforts to advance women's safety and rights.

Collectively, the cases affirm that when communities and institutions take ownership, laws are enforced with compassion, and survivors are placed at the centre of solutions, VAWG prevention becomes both possible and sustainable.

This compendium is a learning and advocacy resource tool for policymakers, practitioners, donors, religious and community leaders, and others committed to preventing VAWG in Nigeria and similar contexts.

## KEY INSIGHTS AND EMERGING TRENDS

### 1. Faith Leaders Change Championship (*Faith-Led Interventions*)

- Interventions that engage local leaders, faith-based institutions, and traditional councils have demonstrated measurable changes in attitudes toward VAWG.
- Faith-based mediation, as exemplified in Case Study 1: Binta's story, when ethical and survivor-focused, can ensure both justice and social reintegration while upholding autonomy.

### 2. Cultural Custodians' Transformative Action (*Cultural reinterpretation*)

- Partnerships between CSOs, traditional and religious institutions, law enforcement, and health services (Case study 2: Kaka's story) ensure rapid response, coordinated survivor support, and legal action.
- Collaboration across sectors enhances legitimacy and reach, particularly in culturally conservative areas.

### 3. Community-Level Multistakeholder Collaboration

- Mobilize men as protectors, shifting norms and strengthening accountability (Case study 3: Male Allies in Kaduna).
- Strengthen coordination between traditional leaders, police, health services, and CSOs.
- Scale up community awareness on VAWG reporting and response.

### 4. Survivor-Led Preventive Initiatives (*Survivor-Centred Prevention*)

- Survivors are increasingly recognized as agents of change. Cases like that of Laraba (Case study 2) and Mairo (Case study 4) demonstrate empowerment through survivor-centred, faith-informed support.
- Interventions combine immediate protection, psychosocial care, legal redress, and family/community engagement.
- Community dialogues, awareness campaigns, and culturally framed advocacy challenge harmful beliefs such as wife-beating, early marriage, and survivor-blaming.

### 4. Support Systems Advocacy and Response (*Policy and Legal Influence*)

- Evidence-based advocacy contributed to Jigawa State's adoption and domestication of the VAPP law (Case study 5: Jigawa VAPP Law domestication), filling previous legal gaps and enhancing public awareness.
- Multi-year engagements with legislators, religious leaders, and communities overcame resistance and institutional inertia.
- Legislative success is reinforced by complementary awareness campaigns, public engagement, and training of law enforcement.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- **Norm change is central to prevention:** Interventions must target underlying beliefs, not just legal compliance.
- **Engage men strategically:** Transforming masculinities and mobilizing male allies

fosters accountability and community protection.

- **Survivor-centred approaches enhance resilience:** Immediate care, legal action, and empowerment strengthen trust in services.
- **Cultural alignment ensures sustainability:** Faith-informed and locally adapted interventions are more acceptable and scalable.
- **Multi-sector collaboration is critical:** Partnerships between CSOs, law enforcement, health services, and religious/traditional authorities optimize outcomes.
- **Monitoring and evaluation guide replication:** Capturing case outcomes informs scaling and adaptation across states.

The cases were selected for their impact, cultural relevance, replicability, and ability to offer valuable lessons and inspire policy, advocacy, or community action.

## THEMATIC STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

### Theme 1: Faith Leaders' Norm-Change Championship

- Institutionalize faith-based leadership as a sustained driver of attitude and behaviour change on VAWG.

### Theme 2: Cultural Custodians' Transformative Action

- Leverage traditional authority to reinterpret harmful norms and institutionalize protective practices.

### Theme 3: Survivor-Led Prevention Initiatives

- Position survivors not only as beneficiaries, but as agents of prevention and social change.

### Theme 4: Community-Level Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

- Institutionalize community-based coalitions that prevent violence, support survivors, and enforce accountability.

### Theme 5: Support Systems Advocacy and Response

- Strengthen the full justice and service delivery chain from reporting to resolution.

### Cross-Cutting Recommendation

- Develop a standardized national case documentation and learning framework that captures context, actors, processes, and outcomes across all themes.
- Use documented cases to inform policy reform, donor investment, replication strategies, and institutional learning.
- Ensure inclusion of marginalized groups (IDPs, persons with disabilities, widows, older women) across all thematic interventions.

# CHAPTER ONE | INTRODUCTION

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) remains one of Nigeria's most pressing human rights and public health challenges. According to the National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS 2018), 33% of women aged 15 – 49 have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. Some cultural beliefs, misinterpretations of religious teachings, and entrenched patriarchal structures continue to normalize violence and hinder progress. Frameworks such as the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) (VAPP) Law (2015) The Child Rights Act (CRA) exists, but weak enforcement and resistance at community levels have limited its impact.

Nigeria stands at a critical juncture. Rising insecurity, religious extremism, economic pressures, and political polarization have worsened vulnerabilities for women and girls. In conflict-affected states, sexual and gender-based violence has been used as a weapon of war. At the same time, growing activism around VAWG is seen in campaigns like #ArewaMeToo. The adoption of the VAPP Act in over 30 states as of 2025 signals a groundswell of appetite and demand for reform.

The Compendium aligns with this movement by showcasing homegrown models of prevention that bridge divides across ethnicity, religion, and culture. By amplifying these voices, it contributes directly to Nigeria's commitments under the Convention on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5: Gender Equality) The African Union's Maputo Protocol on the rights of women, the VAPP Act, the Child Rights Act, amongst other normative frameworks.

Women and girls commonly experience intimate partner violence (IPV) and sexual violence. A global survey (WHO, 2012) found that 15-71% of women across 15 sites in 10 countries

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<https://ngfrepository.org.ng:8443/bitstream/123456789/3145/1/NDHS%202018.pdf>

<https://naptip.gov.ng/download/violence-against-persons-prohibition-act-2015/>

<https://archives.documentwomen.com/arewametoo-timeline/>

<https://globalgoals.org/goals/5-gender-equality/>

[https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/37077-treaty-charter\\_on\\_rights\\_of\\_women\\_in\\_africa.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/37077-treaty-charter_on_rights_of_women_in_africa.pdf)

WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women: Initial results on prevalence, health outcomes, and women's responses.

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/924159358X>

reported lifetime prevalence of physical or sexual IPV. These women were more likely to experience poor physical and mental health outcomes compared to those never abused.

According to the survey, patriarchal structures and harmful practices like child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) perpetuate VAWG. Stigma and survivor-blaming silence survivors, discouraging reporting. Weak law enforcement, legal pluralism, and resource constraints hinder progress.

The phrase “Old Wine in New Wineskins” presupposes repurposing traditional ideas, practices, or systems within new frameworks, policies, or interventions. In the Nigerian VAWG context, it highlights how deeply entrenched social norms, patriarchal structures, and cultural practices (the “old wine”) are often repackaged or superficially reframed within new policies, donor-funded projects, or institutional reforms (the “new wineskins”). Without transforming the substance (social norms, interpretation of religious texts, and shifting power relations), new forms (laws, campaigns, service frameworks) risk reproducing the same inequalities.

The strengths of the theory of change lie in locally resonant interventions and familiar structures (elders, faith leaders, traditions) that the community trusts and can easily relate to.

Given this background, documenting and amplifying community-driven solutions has become crucial. 'Evolving Trends: New Wine in Old Wineskins' Violence Against Women Case Studies is a Compendium that seeks to highlight local innovations and champions of change, including faith leaders, cultural custodians, survivors, and multi-stakeholder collaborations that are shifting harmful norms and opening pathways for replication across Nigeria.

By partnering with these structures, VAWG prevention efforts can tap into local legitimacy and reach deeper into communities, ultimately contributing to more sustainable and inclusive change.

The cases featured in this compendium are pointers that knowledge and intentional actions are fuelling change. The outcome of cases monitored and acted upon following the implementation of VAWG programmes exemplifies the presence of functional community-based protection and accountability mechanisms that are critical to preventing and responding to violence against women and girls, and are replicable in other states.

To initiate sustainable prevention changes in practices, it is essential to promote the amplification of negotiated incremental social norms to protect women and girls from violence as a duty of care by duty bearers of formal and informal institutions.

## THE CASE STUDIES AT A GLANCE:

CASE STUDY	LOCATION	TITLE	MAJOR STRATEGIES USED	KEY OUTCOMES
Case 1	Kebbi	Faith and Justice Converge: How Religious Leaders Restored a Woman's Dignity	Partnership with religious leaders, advocacy, and legal support	Binta's case led to a Shariah court ruling in her favour, securing her divorce and exposing corruption.
Case 2	Plateau	VAWG Survivors Know They Matter	Community engagement, male championship, partnership with the Police and Health services	The perpetrator was charged in court and is serving a two-year jail term.
Case 3	Kaduna	Men as First Responders: How Male Allies Strengthened Community Accountability for VAWG Prevention	Perpetrator arrested, medical support for survivor, case charged to court, engagement of male allies, community mobilization and partnership with authorities	The perpetrator was arrested, and the case was charged in court thanks to male allies.
Case 4	Kogi	Paying for Freedom: A Young Woman's Journey out of Abuse, Silence, and Forced Marriage	Advocacy, support services, community engagement	The survivor received support to rebuild her life and escape abuse.
Case 5	Jigawa	Jigawa State's First Test of the VAPP Law: A Legal Turning Point for Survivor-Centred Justice	VAPP Law implementation, prosecution, advocacy, awareness creation, coalition-building	A rapist was sentenced to death and ordered to pay 5-million-naira compensation.
Case 6	Zamfara	Breaking Free from Forced Marriage: Jummai's Dignity Restored	Partnership with Hisbah, cultural sensitivity, and advocacy	Jummai's case led to a peaceful separation from her forced marriage. Her rights were upheld and the issue regarding her bride price was resolved.

# CHAPTER TWO

## CASE STUDIES AND PRACTICAL LESSONS IN PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

The case studies in this chapter showcase how communities engaged through faith, cultural, and youth platforms that challenge harmful norms, and women and adolescent girls are empowered through the provision of safe spaces. They also show that if men and boys are constructively engaged as allies and role models, and survivor-centred response services are available, accessible, and accountable, then the acceptance of violence will reduce, reporting and protection will increase, and the long-term prevalence of VAWG will decline.

The names in the case studies have been changed to protect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals involved. While the stories have been categorized, some of them are not thematically homogeneous, as they overlap with two or three other themes.

### **Key issues driving VAWG include:**

- Patriarchal norms and power imbalance
- Harmful practices like child marriage and FGM
- Societal stigma and survivor-blaming
- Weak law enforcement and resource constraints
- Misinterpretation of religious texts
- Emerging resistance and change through grassroots movements

## **2.1 THEME 1: FAITH LEADER'S NORM-CHANGE CHAMPIONSHIP**

Faith leaders remain some of the most influential voices in shaping beliefs and behaviours across Nigerian communities. Under this theme, the case studies capture how religious leaders have become active champions for justice, using faith-based teachings to challenge harmful norms and promote women's dignity. Through cases like Binta's, Halima's, and others, under this theme, we see how religious and cultural institutions and leaders have evolved from, more or less, being passive observers and, in some cases, enablers to agents of accountability, offering survivors safe, faith-aligned pathways to justice and healing. Cultural and faith-based structures are evidently becoming transformative and genuine vehicles for preventing VAWG, not just carriers of patriarchal values, but as advocates for projecting women's voices, which have hitherto been sidelined in favour of male-dominated cultural and religious gatekeepers.

Traditional and religious structures are playing a pivotal role in institutionalizing change in VAWG prevention as faith leaders and cultural custodians are championing shifts in VAWG prevention and response across cultures and faith leanings.

All the survivors' names used in this compendium are pseudonyms. Identifying details have been altered to protect privacy and ensure confidentiality.

## CASE STUDY ONE:

## Faith and Justice Converge: How Religious Leaders Restored a Woman's Dignity

**Location:** Birnin Kebbi, Kebbi State, Nigeria

### CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Before WRAPA's intervention, women in Kebbi State faced enormous barriers when seeking justice in marital or domestic disputes. Although the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act 2015 and Islamic law uphold women's rights to safety, fair hearing, and lawful separation, in practice, patriarchal norms, judicial corruption, and male privilege often deny them these rights. Wealthy or influential men could manipulate both religious and civil systems, leaving women silenced and stigmatized.

In this environment, Binta (not her real name), the wife of a respected district head (*Hakimi*), endured years of harassment, neglect, and emotional abuse. When she sought a divorce through the Shariah courts, her husband, using his wealth and political connections, bribed judges to block every attempt. Stripped of her dignity and separated from her children, Binta became a symbol of the deep-rooted inequities women face when justice is influenced by power rather than truth.

In 2018, Binta (not her real name) (42 years) the wife of a respected Hakimi (District Head) in Kebbi State, had made the difficult decision to request a divorce. For years, she endured harassment, neglect, and abuse: her husband refused to provide food, denied her medical care, abandoned his marital responsibilities, and even separated her from her children. "These were the reasons I sought divorce," she recalled.

When Binta turned to the Shariah courts for justice, she expected a fair hearing. Instead, her husband, Musa (Not his real name), used his wealth, connections, and influence as a senior government auditor to bribe judges. She lost five consecutive appeals, each time sinking deeper into despair. "I felt terrible. I thought we lived in a state where the government protects the rights of its citizens, but I realized corruption exists in the judicial system. I am not rich and I have no power, while my husband is wealthy and well-connected."

The price of her resistance was steep, as was her resolve to challenge the power broker. Binta was rejected, defamed, and left without shelter. Musa spread lies, calling her a prostitute to discourage people from helping her. She sometimes slept in the bush, separated from her children and stripped of dignity. Yet her determination to reclaim her freedom never faltered. "Some people pitied me, others admired my persistence," she said.

One day, a radio announcement about WRAPA and the work they do emboldened her. She went to their office and narrated her ordeal. After deliberation and investigation, WRAPA realized the courts would never grant her justice. They referred her case to the Council of Ulama, respected Islamic scholars whose decisions were rooted in Shariah rather than political influence. During this time, WRAPA also provided Binta shelter at the Ministry of Women Affairs' home, cared for her basic needs for 18 months, and stood by her even when her husband sued the organization.

The Council of Ulama convened two sessions attended by over 25 scholars, WRAPA staff, ministry officials, lawyers, and her relatives. Musa accused his wife of infidelity and even insulted the council. In the second session, the Ulama asked Binta if she was willing to reconcile. She firmly replied, “I no longer love him and cannot live with him again.” The Ulama listened, then ruled that Hakimi must issue a divorce without demanding any repayment, given the suffering she had endured. They compelled him to sign the divorce letter, sealing her freedom. Binta's story is a testament to resilience and the power of collective action. The Council of Ulama's ruling, rooted in Shariah, highlights the importance of leveraging religious frameworks to promote justice.

“Alhamdulillah, I have regained my freedom. I am very happy living with my children. I am into business now, although I have not remarried yet,” she said with a smile.

Her case became more than a personal victory. It exposed corruption in the judicial system, validated the role of religious scholars in delivering justice, and reinforced WRAPA's place as a trusted defender of women's rights. Since then, many other women have come forward with similar cases, many of which have been resolved through WRAPA's and her partners' concerted intervention.

Binta's resilience, coupled with WRAPA's support, sent a clear message: even in the face of systemic injustice, women can fight for and reclaim their dignity.

- **Intervention or Change Process**

### **Who led the change?**

The intervention was led by WRAPA Kebbi State, in collaboration with the Council of Ulama and the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development.

### **What methods were used?**

- Legal and faith-based advocacy and mediation;
- Case review and documentation by WRAPA;
- Referral to the Council of Ulama for an impartial ruling;
- Provision of shelter, legal guidance, and psychosocial support;
- Media outreach through radio that helped Binta discover WRAPA's services.
- The divorce case resolved through Ulama/WRAPA Collaboration – shows the corrective role of Islamic scholars where Shari'a courts failed.
- Marriage Law Reforms (Medical checkups, custody, alimony, bride price limits) – achieved through faith-based advocacy and sermons.
- *Khutubah* Books Distributed to Imams – demonstrates structured Islamic messaging against VAWG.

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A body of Muslim scholars who are recognized as having specialist knowledge of Islamic sacred law and theology.

- Community/Institutional Mediation of VAWG Cases (Domestic violence, forced marriage, inheritance denial, molestation) – handled with Hisbah, Federation of Muslim Women's Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN), and faith leaders.

- **Timeline of engagement:**

Over 18 months, WRAPA supported Binta, providing safe housing, monitoring court sessions, and pursuing alternative justice through religious structures until the Council of Ulama granted her freedom.

- **Results and Outcomes**

The Council of Ulama, after two hearings attended by over 25 religious scholars, lawyers, and community representatives, ruled in Binta's favour. The decision compelled Hakimi to issue a divorce without repayment of the bride price, citing the suffering she endured.

- **Tangible Outcomes:**

- Restoration of Binta's freedom, dignity, and custody of her children;
- Exposure of judicial corruption and demonstration of faith-based justice as an effective alternative;
- Growth in women's confidence to report abuse and seek legal help through WRAPA;
- Providing hope to survivors and offering learning opportunities to other survivors.
- Increased Reporting of VAWG Cases (rape, sodomy, battery) – as a result of sermons breaking stigma.
- Domestication of VAPP and Child Protection Laws – achieved by framing reforms in Islamic terms to gain acceptance.
- Stronger collaboration among WRAPA, Ulama, and state institutions in handling VAWG-related marital disputes.

**Voice of Change:**

*“Alhamdulillah, I have regained my freedom. I am very happy living with my children. I am into business now, although I have not remarried yet.”*

Binta (Survivor)

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The sermon delivered in mosques, particularly during Friday (Jumma) prayers, Eid festivals, or other occasions, offering religious guidance

- **Lessons Learned**

- Faith-based accountability complements formal justice and helps counter bias or corruption in court systems;
- Community awareness saves lives; Binta learned about WRAPA's work through a radio announcement, proving the importance of information access;
- Comprehensive survivor support (shelter, legal aid, and emotional care) is critical to sustaining justice outcomes;
- Partnership enhances credibility; collaboration between WRAPA, religious leaders, and government institutions strengthened legitimacy and trust in the process.

### **Replicability Potential**

This model offers a replicable pathway for addressing gender-based injustice in Muslim-majority communities where religious authority is highly respected.

#### **Preconditions for success include:**

- Active cooperation among faith leaders, justice institutions, and women's rights organizations;
- Continuous training for Ulama and traditional rulers on the intersection of Shariah and human rights;
- Accessible referral pathways and shelter facilities for survivors;
- Community engagement that aligns religious teachings with women's rights and dignity.

## **2.2 THEME 2: CULTURAL CUSTODIANS' TRANSFORMATIVE ACTION**

Cultural institutions, once viewed as barriers to women's rights, are being reimagined as vehicles for justice and equity. This theme highlights how traditional leaders and community mediators are reinterpreting customs to protect women and girls from violence and neglect. The story shows that when cultural custodians align tradition with compassion and fairness, they can uphold the same principles of protection that underpin both faith and law, transforming communities from within.

**“Rape Is an Insult to the Community”:** How Women's Leadership and Traditional Authority Secured Justice for an Elderly Survivor

**Thematic Area:** Theme 5 – Support Systems, Advocacy, and Survivor Support

**Location:** Bassa-Gurum (Mistali), Plateau State, Nigeria

## B. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Bassa-Gurum (Mistali) is a semi-urban mining and agrarian community located close to the Plateau State capital. Its proximity to the city and influx of people displaced by crises since 2011 have made it a diverse settlement often described locally as a 'miniature Nigeria.' Alongside economic hardship, this diversity has also brought increased social tensions and vulnerabilities, particularly for women and girls.

Before targeted interventions by WRAPA and its partners, incidents of violence against women and girls (VAWG) were largely under-reported. Survivors, especially elderly women, were silenced by stigma, fear, and the financial and emotional burden of engaging formal justice systems. While the VAPP Law provides for a minimum sentence of 12 years imprisonment and compensation for rape, awareness and enforcement at community and court levels remained weak.

Traditional institutions existed but women's participation within them is limited and largely ceremonial. Police response to GBV cases is often slow, costly, and prone to compromise, discouraging survivors and their families from pursuing justice.

Kaka, an 85-year-old woman, was raped in the bush when she went to collect firewood. This rape case, led by Women of Resilience (WOR) and an NGO and the Traditional Ruler HRH *Aima Gurum*, sparked community action. The response highlights women's leadership and traditional authority.

The perpetrator, a 20-year-old man, was convicted and sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment, sending a strong deterrent message. "*Rape is an insult to the community*," says HRH *Aima Gurum*.

Key outcomes: increased VAWG reporting, strengthened women's roles in traditional governance, and a recognized safe space in the Traditional Council palace.

The case shows that women-led reporting works, traditional authority matters, and justice without fines can be impactful.

Replicable model: functional women's groups, women in traditional councils, principled leadership, and clear referral pathways. When women and community structures unite, justice becomes accessible.

## C. INTERVENTION OR CHANGE PROCESS

### Who led the change?

The response was led by a coalition of Women of Resilience (WOR) a WRAPA-supported community watch group—working closely with Women in the Traditional Council, male champions, faith leaders, youth groups, and the Traditional Ruler of Gurum, HRH Aima Gurum Danladi Akinga.

### What methods were used?

- Survivor-centred reporting through trusted women leaders;
- Direct engagement with the Traditional Council to trigger authority-backed action;
- Persistent advocacy to prevent police compromise;
- Community mobilization involving male champions, faith and youth leaders;
- Referral through formal justice institutions, including the police and courts.

### Timeline of engagement

- **Incident:** An 85-year-old woman, *Kaka* (name withheld), was raped while gathering grass on her farm.
- **Initial silence:** She disclosed the incident only after falling ill due to pain sustained during the assault, citing stigma as the reason for the delay.
- **Reporting:** Her daughter-in-law, a WOR member, reported the case to WOR leadership and the Traditional Ruler.
- **Investigation and arrest:** The perpetrator was traced to a health facility and arrested on the order of the Traditional Ruler.
- **Justice process:** The case was transferred to higher police authorities and prosecuted in court.

## D. RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

### Tangible outcomes

- The perpetrator, a 20-year-old man, was convicted and sentenced to two years imprisonment with no option of fine (below the VAPP Act minimum but significant in context);
- Increased reporting of VAWG cases in the community, with an estimated average of two cases per month now reaching the palace;
- The Traditional Council palace has become a recognized safe space for women and girls, particularly on issues of rape and inheritance.
- Strengthened role of women within traditional governance structures.

### Voices of change

*“Women contribute during festivals and funerals, yet they are excluded when benefits are shared. Are they not human beings?”*

*HRH Aima Gurum, Danladi Akinga*

*“Though the sentence was not enough compared to the VAPP Law, it has served as a deterrent.”*

*Sarah Lakima Gandu, Women of Resilience*

Sarah also noted the financial burden imposed by the police, including costs for statements, transportation, and feeding, highlighting why many survivors abandon cases.

## E. LESSONS LEARNED

- **Women-led reporting mechanisms work:** Survivors are more likely to disclose when trusted women leaders are involved.
- **Traditional authority is pivotal:** The active stance of the Traditional Ruler prevented police compromise and ensured follow-through.
- **Justice without fines matters:** Imprisonment without the option of a fine sent a strong deterrent message, even if the sentence fell short of VAPP standards.
- **Stigma remains a barrier:** Delay in reporting was directly linked to fear of shame, even for an elderly survivor.
- **Legal awareness gaps persist:** The lighter sentence suggests limited application or understanding of the VAPP Act within the justice system.

## F. REPLICABILITY POTENTIAL

This case demonstrates a highly replicable model for rural and semi-urban communities.

### **Key preconditions for replication include:**

- Functional women's groups (like WOR) embedded in the community;
- Meaningful inclusion of women within traditional councils;
- Strong, principled traditional leadership willing to confront violence;
- Clear referral pathways linking community action to formal justice systems;
- Capacity-building for police and courts on the VAPP Act and survivor rights.

When women, traditional leaders, and community structures act in unity, even the most silenced survivors can access justice and communities can redefine violence as unacceptable, not inevitable.

### **2.3 THEME 3: COMMUNITY-LEVEL MULTISTAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION**

Preventing and responding to violence against women requires the commitment of everyone, especially men. Under this theme, the compendium showcases how initiatives like GAT's *Male Allies Network in Kaduna State* mobilized men across social, economic, and religious divides to become protectors rather than perpetrators. Their collaboration with local leaders, police, and health services shows that when men take collective action, they can shift community norms, improve reporting, and strengthen accountability for gender-based violence.

## CASE STUDY THREE:

### Men as First Responders: How Male Allies Strengthened Community Accountability for VAWG Prevention

**Thematic Area:** Theme 3 – Community- Level Multistakeholder Collaboration

**Location:** Kasuwan Magani and surrounding LGAs, Kaduna State, Nigeria

#### CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

In many communities across Kaduna State, violence against women and girls (VAWG) has historically been addressed through silence, informal settlements, or family negotiation, often at the expense of survivors' safety and justice. Before structured interventions, reporting pathways were weak, coordination between institutions was minimal, and survivors frequently bore the burden of navigating police, health services, and community leadership alone.

Men were often viewed solely as perpetrators or bystanders, rarely as part of the solution. This case study illustrates how the Male Allies model, supported by Gender Awareness Trust (GAT), disrupted this norm by organizing trusted men within communities to act as first responders, advocates, and accountability partners in preventing and responding to VAWG.

#### Men as First Responders: Male Allies Drive VAWG Change

In Kaduna's Kasuwan Magani, Male Allies - trusted men trained by Gender Awareness Trust (GAT) - are transforming VAWG response. They act as first responders, advocates, and accountability partners, ensuring survivors get medical care and justice. With traditional leaders' support, they've improved reporting, reduced stigma, and increased perpetrator accountability.

Male Allies navigate resistance, rejecting bribes and pushing for due process. The model shows men can be powerful allies in VAWG prevention.

Key to success: legitimacy, skills, and cooperation with SARCs, police, and CSOs. The approach is scalable, with potential for replication in other areas, strengthening community-led protection for women and girls.

#### Intervention or Change Process

##### Who led the change?

The intervention was spearheaded by Gender Awareness Trust (GAT) in collaboration with traditional leaders, particularly the *Mai Unguwa* (village heads) and a network of selected community men later designated as Male Allies.

##### How Male Allies were identified and organized:

GAT leveraged its existing grassroots presence by deploying field staff to engage traditional leaders directly. Village heads nominated respected, committed men already involved in

community service, many of whom belonged to existing groups such as GEDO Circle. Based on demonstrated integrity and leadership, these men were enrolled as Male Allies.

A formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by traditional rulers to institutionalize cooperation and legitimize the initiative within customary governance structures.

### **Capacity-building and tools:**

Male Allies received structured training on:

- Gender-Based Violence response and survivor-centred approaches;
- Power analysis and community accountability;
- Community charters and grassroots budgeting;
- Community-Based Monitoring (CBM);
- Safe referral pathways and documentation using VAWG tracker forms.

### **Stakeholder Roles and Coordination**

#### **Actors involved from the outset included:**

- Traditional leaders and district heads;
- Religious leaders from both faiths, coordinated through JNI and CAN;
- Police, Joint Task Force (JTF), and Civil defence;
- Health workers and Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs), including Salama Centre;
- CSOs such as GAT and partner NGOs.

#### **Division of responsibilities:**

- **Male Allies:** First response, survivor accompaniment, documentation, and follow-up;
- **Traditional leaders:** Convening authority, mediation, and referrals;
- **Health facilities/SARCs:** Medical examinations, treatment, and forensic reporting;
- **Police and security agencies:** Arrest, investigation, and prosecution;
- **CSOs:** Legal follow-up, capacity building, and survivor support.

Clear communication protocols ensured that once a case—particularly rape—was identified, survivors were immediately taken for medical care before any other action.

### **Breaking the Silence: Why Cases Were Reported**

Sustained community sensitization was critical. Male Allies distributed information materials, held dialogues, and repeatedly communicated clear instructions: *report incidents immediately*. Traditional leaders reinforced this by mandating that cases be shared with Male Allies for prompt action.

This awareness marked a sharp contrast to earlier incidents such as a schoolgirl raped by multiple perpetrators that were previously buried due to lack of knowledge, skills, and coordinated response.

## **Results and Outcomes**

### **Improved Reporting and Response:**

- Faster reporting of rape and domestic violence cases;
- Immediate access to medical care through SARCs;
- Increased willingness of families to pursue justice rather than informal settlements.

### **Reduced Stigma:**

Male Allies prioritized confidentiality, shielding survivor identities and discouraging public exposure. This approach reduced re-traumatization and enabled survivors including young girls to return to school without stigma.

### **Justice and Accountability:**

Collaboration strengthened decisions to charge cases to court, particularly once medical evidence was secured. Involving the Ministry of Humanitarian Services further discouraged police delays or compromise.

### **Navigating Resistance and Risks**

Male Allies encountered significant pressure to “settle matters quietly,” especially when perpetrators were influential or wealthy. In several cases, financial inducements were offered to survivors' families to withdraw complaints. Male Allies consistently rejected these attempts, insisting on due process.

Where police cooperation was weak, Male Allies relied on CSO backing, legal pressure, and inter-agency escalation to sustain momentum.

### **Role of Faith and Community Institutions**

Religious leaders played a reinforcing role by integrating VAWG prevention messages into sermons and faith gatherings. Monthly palace meetings provided a neutral forum for aligning cultural, religious, and legal perspectives around protection rather than blame.

### **Survivor Wellbeing and Safeguards**

- SARCs provided free medical services;
- Male Allies covered incidental costs such as transportation;
- Survivors were accompanied throughout the process to reduce fear and isolation;
- Confidentiality protocols minimized secondary harm.

## **Lessons Learned**

- Men can be powerful allies when equipped with legitimacy, skills, and accountability.
- Early medical referral is critical for both survivor care and legal outcomes.
- Formalized coordination prevents case collapse due to institutional gaps.
- Traditional authority, when aligned with rights-based principles, accelerates justice.
- Stigma reduces significantly when communities see consistent consequences for perpetrators.

## **Replicability and Sustainability Potential**

The Male Allies model has already been extended informally to other communities such as Rigasa, Unguwan Shanu, and Unguwan Kanawa, demonstrating organic scalability.

### **Minimum conditions for replication include:**

- Buy-in from traditional leaders;
- Structured training and tools for male allies;
- Functional SARCs and cooperative health facilities;
- Active CSO support for legal follow-up;
- Continuous sensitization and mentorship of new allies.

Male Allies expressed readiness to sustain the work beyond GAT's project lifecycle and requested stronger referral linkages with organizations such as WRAPA to deepen legal response capacity.

## **2.4 THEME 4: SURVIVOR-LED PREVENTION INITIATIVES**

Survivors are no longer just recipients of help. They are drivers of change and proof of resilience. This theme documents how women like Mairo turned trauma into empowerment through WRAPA's support and the responsiveness of faith-based allies. By centring survivors' voices and choices, these stories demonstrate that justice and healing are most sustainable when women are agents of their own recovery, and when communities uphold their right to dignity and autonomy.

## CASE STUDY FOUR:

## Paying for Freedom: A Young Woman's Journey out of Abuse, Silence, and Forced Marriage

**Thematic Area:** Theme 4 – Survivor- Led Prevention Initiatives

**Location:** Kogi State

### CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Mairo's case reflects the layered vulnerabilities faced by young women in early marriage, particularly within polygamous households where power, age, and hierarchy intersect. At 18 years old, Mairo willingly entered marriage, trusting assurances of care, protection, and comfort from her husband, an older man with a large household.

In many communities, marriage is expected to guarantee safety and dignity for women. However, when abuse occurs within the marital home, survivors often encounter pressure to endure, family resistance to divorce, and weak institutional support. Cultural expectations of patience, combined with limited economic independence and poor access to affordable justice, can trap women in violent unions.

Although Islamic principles emphasize protection, education, and fairness to women, these rights are frequently undermined by harmful interpretations and unchecked patriarchal authority. In this case, family-level mediation repeatedly failed, while formal justice mechanisms proved costly, slow, and unresponsive to Mairo's lived reality. Mairo's case can be described as a pyrrhic victory when compared to Binta's, who, unlike Mairo, was not compelled to pay back her bride price after getting justice.

#### Case 4: Mairo's Path to Freedom from Abuse

Mairo, 18, entered a polygamous marriage in Kogi State believing in promises of care, but faced abuse and hostility. Unlike Binta, who was granted divorce without returning her bride price, Mairo paid ₦600,000 to secure her freedom.

*"I was neither married nor divorced.*

*That was an injustice. I paid because I needed my freedom,"* Mairo says. After prolonged legal battles, she's rebuilding her life with a small food business. Her story highlights systemic barriers women face in abusive marriages and the power of survivor determination.

Mairo's case underscores the need for affordable divorce access, women's rights training for judges and clerics, and financial aid for survivors.

### C. INTERVENTION OR CHANGE PROCESS

#### Who led the change?

Mairo herself was the primary driver of change. Her determination, faith, and insistence on dignity guided every step. Limited support came later from one male relative by marriage (an in-law) who agreed to intervene when all other avenues stalled.

### **What methods were used?**

- Family-level reporting and attempted reconciliation;
- Appeals to parental authority and elders;
- Engagement with the Sharia court system;
- Legal advocacy through hired counsel;
- Ultimately, out-of-court mediation facilitated by a trusted in-law, with witnesses present.

### **Timeline of engagement**

- **Marriage at 18:** Entered marriage willingly, believing assurances of comfort and unity.
- **Immediate abuse:** Upon moving into the marital home, she experienced verbal and physical abuse from the co-wives' children and hostility from within the household.
- **Pregnancy and escalation:** Abuse intensified during pregnancy; her husband minimized her complaints and later sided with his children.
- **Return to parents' home:** She went home to have her baby, who she had through a Caesarean section; her husband did not support medical costs.
- **Post-delivery neglect:** After briefly returning to the marital home, she left again due to neglect, lack of care, and reinfected surgical wounds.
- **Legal limbo:** For months, she was neither divorced nor supported; her husband refused divorce and avoided court appearances.
- **Final resolution:** After prolonged legal delays and financial strain, she paid ₦600,000 as demanded, enabling her husband to issue a divorce letter in the presence of witnesses.

## **D. RESULTS AND OUTCOMES**

### **Tangible outcomes**

- Mairo secured a formal divorce, ending a year-long cycle of abuse and uncertainty;
- She regained personal autonomy and legal clarity over her marital status;
- Despite economic hardship, she established a small food business and began rebuilding her life independently.
- The process exposed systemic barriers facing women seeking divorce, including financial exploitation and delayed justice.

#### **Voice Of Change**

*“I was neither married nor divorced. That was an injustice. I paid because I needed my freedom.”*

Mairo

*“When I finally walked away, even though my belongings were tampered with, I was happy because I was free.”*

Mairo

## E. LESSONS LEARNED

- Survivor determination is critical: The case progressed only because Mairo refused to accept abuse as normal or deserved.
- Family pressure can deepen harm: Persistent insistence on reconciliation ignored her safety, health, and lived experience.
- Justice systems can re-victimize survivors: Prolonged adjournments, legal costs, and tolerance of absentee respondents delayed justice.
- Economic vulnerability limits choices: Lack of financial support forced Mairo into exhausting menial labour to fund her own freedom.
- Faith can be a source of strength: Personal reliance on God provided resilience when social and institutional support failed.

## F. REPLICABILITY POTENTIAL

This case underscores urgent areas for reform and action in survivor-led prevention and response:

### Key lessons for replication include:

- Ensuring affordable and timely access to divorce and family courts, especially for indigent women;
- Training judges, lawyers, and religious adjudicators on women's rights within Islamic law;
- Strengthening mediation models that prioritize safety, consent, and dignity, not forced reconciliation;
- Establishing financial and legal aid mechanisms for women seeking separation from abusive marriages;
- Promoting premarital counselling and due diligence to prevent harmful unions.

### As Mairo advised:

*“It's not about being married. It's about whether a woman feels safe, protected, and respected.”*

This case illustrates that freedom itself can be a form of justice and that survivor-led courage, when supported by fair systems, can transform silence into liberation.

## 2.5 THEME 5: SUPPORT SYSTEMS, ADVOCACY AND SURVIVOR SUPPORT

Effective response to violence against women and girls (VAWG) hinges on robust support systems and coordinated advocacy efforts. When legal frameworks, institutions, and community structures work together, survivors access justice, perpetrators are held accountable, and communities become safer. This theme highlights how strengthened support systems and survivor-centred advocacy drive prevention and response, ultimately reducing VAWG prevalence.

## CASE STUDY FIVE:

### Jigawa State's First Test of the VAPP Law: A Legal Turning Point for Survivor-Centred Justice

**Thematic Area:** Theme 5 – Support Systems, Advocacy, and Survivor Support

**Location:** Jigawa State, Nigeria

#### CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Before the adoption and enforcement of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Law, responses to sexual violence in Jigawa State were largely shaped by narrow interpretations of the Penal Code, strong social stigma, and limited institutional coordination. Sexual violence, particularly against boys and men, was poorly understood, underreported, and often misclassified under lesser offences such as sodomy, resulting in weaker sanctions and minimal survivor support.

Cultural taboos surrounding sexual abuse, combined with religious and social norms that discourage disclosure, further silenced survivors. While Jigawa State had domesticated the VAPP Law, questions remained about its practical applicability, especially in complex cases that challenged gender assumptions embedded in older legal frameworks.

This case emerged as a critical test of VAPP's universal applicability across all ages and genders. It involved a male child survivor whose abuse was initially misclassified, reflecting systemic gaps in legal awareness and practice. The eventual reclassification and prosecution under the VAPP Law marked a significant shift, demonstrating how legal reform, when operationalized, can redefine justice, accountability, and survivor protection.

#### Jigawa's VAPP Law: A Turning Point for Survivor-Centred Justice

Jigawa State's first successful VAPP Law prosecution marked a breakthrough in addressing sexual violence. A male child's abuse, initially misclassified as sodomy, was reclassified as rape under the VAPP Law, setting a precedent. A community member's vigilance and inter-agency coordination led to conviction, sentencing, and compensation.

"This judgment confirms the VAPP Law is enforceable," says a legal actor. The case shows legal reform can redefine justice and protection.

**Key lessons:** legal literacy is crucial, coordination ensures survivor-centred justice, and gender-neutral laws challenge cultural assumptions. Jigawa's experience offers a blueprint for Nigeria, emphasizing training, early legal review, and compensation. The VAPP Law's success hinges on implementation, making justice accessible and transformative for survivors.

The fact that the survivor is a male minor highlights the VAPP Law's strength – it's gender-neutral, protecting everyone from violence. This case challenges stereotypes and shows the law's potential to address often-overlooked issues, like male sexual abuse. It reinforces that violence can affect anyone, though women and girls face disproportionate risks. The case sets a crucial precedent, demonstrating the law's applicability and encouraging more survivors, regardless of gender, to seek justice.

## C. INTERVENTION OR CHANGE PROCESS

### Who led the change?

The change was driven collectively by a network of actors: a concerned community member, a local religious leader, civil society child-protection advocates, the Ministry of Women Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, and ultimately the judiciary. While no single actor owned the process, the Ministry of Justice played a decisive leadership role in ensuring the VAPP Law was applied.

### What methods were used?

- Community-level reporting initiated by a vigilant neighbour;
- Faith-based referral through a religious leader;
- Medical examination and documentation at a government hospital;
- Psychosocial support through state-supported services and referral centres;
- Legal review and advocacy leading to reclassification of the offence under the VAPP Law;
- Sustained inter-agency coordination among police, prosecutors, judiciary, and social workers.

### Timeline of engagement

- Initial disclosure: A neighbour noticed trauma and alerted a religious leader;
- Immediate response: The survivor was removed from harm and taken for medical care;
- Early misclassification: The case was recorded as sodomy under outdated Penal Code assumptions;
- Legal review: Ministry of Justice officials identified the applicability of the VAPP Law;
- Reclassification: The offence was charged as rape under the VAPP Law;
- Trial and judgment: Following delays, the case concluded with conviction, sentencing, and compensation.

## D. RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

### Tangible outcomes

- First known successful application of the VAPP Law in Jigawa State;
- Legal recognition that rape is gender-neutral, in line with Section 3 of the VAPP Law;
- Custodial sentence imposed on the perpetrator;
- Court-ordered compensation awarded to the survivor under Section 5;
- Establishment of new investigative and prosecutorial practices across institutions;
- Increased confidence among survivors and communities in reporting sexual violence.

### Voices of institutional change

*“This judgment confirms that the VAPP Law is not symbolic. It is enforceable, and it applies to all survivors.”*

Legal actor, Jigawa State

*“The law allowed us to focus on the violation, not the gender of the victim.”*

Prosecutorial official

## E. LESSONS LEARNED

- Legal reform must be accompanied by legal literacy: Initial misclassification exposed gaps in understanding the VAPP Law among frontline actors.
- Survivor-centred justice requires coordination: The case succeeded because medical, legal, and social responses were aligned.
- Gender-neutral laws change culture: Applying the VAPP Law challenged entrenched assumptions about who can be a victim of rape.
- Compensation matters: Justice that includes restitution strengthens survivor recovery and dignity.
- Delays risk justice: Procedural bottlenecks and adjournments highlight the need for fast-tracked handling of VAWG cases.

## F. REPLICABILITY POTENTIAL

This case provides a practical blueprint for other states seeking to operationalize the VAPP Law.

### Key preconditions for replication include:

- Continuous training of police, prosecutors, and judges on the VAPP Law;
- Early legal review of sexual violence cases to prevent misclassification;
- Survivor protection measures throughout prolonged trials.
- Institutionalized inter-agency coordination mechanisms;
- Inclusion of compensation as a standard component of justice outcomes;
- Engagement of faith and community leaders as entry points for reporting.

By demonstrating that political will, institutional collaboration, and survivor-centred interpretation of the law can converge, Jigawa State's experience shows that the VAPP Law can move from paper to practice, reshaping justice for survivors of violence across Nigeria.

When multiple stakeholders act in unity, even the most silenced survivors can access justice, and communities can redefine violence as unacceptable, not inevitable.

## RESISTANCE AND CHANGE MATRIX – PREVENTING VAWG IN NIGERIA

This matrix summarises the key forces of resistance and transformation generally shaping the prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in the states of focus. Resistance forces reflect entrenched cultural and institutional barriers; change reflects adaptive, institutional, faith-based, and community-led innovations promoting prevention and access to justice.

CASE STUDY # / THEME	GAP / CHALLENGE	Resistance Forces (Constraints)	Resistance Forces (Transformations)	Key Recommendation
Theme 1: Faith Leaders' Norm-Change Championship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Harmful gender norms justified through selective religious interpretations</li> <li>- Limited public discourse on VAWG from faith platforms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Patriarchal interpretations of religious texts</li> <li>- Fear of losing moral authority or community trust</li> <li>- Perception of VAWG as a private or family issue</li> <li>- Limited gender-responsive theological training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Progressive faith leaders reframing teachings around dignity, justice, and protection</li> <li>- Public sermons, teachings, and counselling condemning VAWG</li> <li>- Male faith champions influencing peer leaders</li> <li>- Faith-based referral and mediation mechanisms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Institutionalize gender-transformative faith leadership training</li> <li>- Support interfaith collaboration on VAWG prevention</li> <li>- Integrate survivor-centered messaging into routine religious teachings</li> </ul>
Theme 2: Cultural Custodians' Transformative Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Harmful traditional practices and norms perpetuated by customary authority structures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deep-rooted patriarchal customs</li> <li>- Resistance to change perceived as 'foreign' or anti-culture</li> <li>- Social sanctions against norm challengers</li> <li>- Limited engagement of women in traditional leadership spaces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Influential traditional leaders championing norm change</li> <li>- Reinterpretation of cultural values to promote dignity and protection</li> <li>- Community dialogues led by respected custodians</li> <li>- Inclusion of women and youth in cultural decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engage cultural custodians as norm-change allies</li> <li>- Document and amplify positive cultural practices</li> <li>- Formalize community accountability mechanisms led by traditional institutions.</li> </ul>
Theme 3: Survivor-Led Prevention Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Survivors' voices marginalized in prevention and response programming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Stigma and fear of retaliation</li> <li>- Trauma and lack of psychosocial support</li> <li>- Limited safe spaces for survivor leadership</li> <li>- Tokenistic participation of survivors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Survivor networks leading awareness and prevention initiatives</li> <li>- Peer-to-peer support and healing spaces</li> <li>- Survivor advocacy influencing community norms and service delivery</li> <li>- Trust-building through lived experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Invest in survivor-led organizations</li> <li>- Ensure safe, ethical, and compensated survivor participation</li> <li>- Integrate healing, protection, and leadership development into survivor-centered programming</li> </ul>

<p>Theme 4: Community-Level Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fragmented and uncoordinated VAWG prevention and response efforts at the community level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sectoral silos (faith, traditional, security, health, CSOs)</li> <li>- Power imbalances among actors</li> <li>- Weak coordination and referral systems</li> <li>- Competition for visibility and resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community coalitions linking diverse actors</li> <li>- Shared accountability frameworks</li> <li>- Coordinated prevention, response, and referral pathways - Joint community action plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strengthen community coordination platforms</li> <li>- Formalize referral and information-sharing mechanisms</li> <li>- Promote shared ownership of VAWG prevention across sectors.</li> </ul>
<p>Theme 5: Support Systems Advocacy and Response</p>	<p>Weak, inaccessible, or survivor-unfriendly support services and justice pathways</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limited-service availability in rural and conflict-affected areas</li> <li>- Survivor mistrust of formal systems</li> <li>- Cultural pressure to resolve cases informally</li> <li>- Inadequate funding and capacity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Survivor-centered, community-based service delivery</li> <li>- Advocacy improving access to health, legal, and psychosocial services</li> <li>- Improved linkages between community and formal systems</li> <li>- Rights-based advocacy influencing policy and practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Institutionalize community coalitions (CSOs, male allies, faith &amp; traditional leaders, police, health agencies)</li> <li>- Formalize referrals; document &amp; scale successes</li> <li>- Strengthen survivor-centered service delivery</li> <li>- Expand community-based response models</li> <li>- Improve accountability and resource allocation for VAWG prevention and response</li> </ul>

## CASE STUDY SIX:

## Breaking Free from Forced Marriage: Jummai's Dignity Restored

**Thematic Area:** Theme 2 – Cultural Custodian's Transformative Action

**Location:** Zamfara State, Nigeria

### CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

In many northern Nigerian communities, forced and early marriages remain a widespread form of gender-based violence (GBV), often justified by cultural norms or economic hardship. Despite Nigeria's *VAPP Act 2015* and *CRA 2003*, which outlaw coerced marriage and protect women's autonomy, these practices persist, leaving countless women without legal recourse or social protection.

Before the WRAPA intervention, women like Jummai Abbas, forced into marriage against their will and later abandoned, had little access to justice. In such cases, marital breakdown often resulted in economic deprivation, stigma, and loss of dignity, as families prioritized reputation over women's rights. Jummai's story demonstrates how faith-aligned institutions, when guided by justice and compassion, can restore hope and accountability in a deeply traditional environment. It emphasizes the need to challenge harmful cultural narratives and ensure accountability and assume innovation. Jummai Abbas never wanted the marriage that changed her life. Her parents had arranged it without her consent, and though she resisted, she was forced to comply. “No, the marriage was forced,” she explained.

From the beginning, Jummai felt trapped in a union built without love or choice. Her worst fears soon came true when her husband abandoned her, leaving her without support or care. Life became even more difficult, and Jummai, already vulnerable, had no one to turn to but the authorities. She reported her case to the Hisbah Commission, seeking help to find a way out of her forced situation.

The case revealed another layer of injustice. Her husband had not paid the bride price at the time of the marriage. Instead, he had made a private arrangement with her parents, promising to pay later when he could afford it. WRAPA, working alongside Hisbah, stepped in to ensure this agreement was not ignored. They held him accountable, reminding him of his obligations and citing verses from the Holy Qur'an to emphasize the importance of fulfilling promises.

Through their intervention, Jummai was able to separate from her husband peacefully, with the matter of the bride price resolved. “*I am very happy now that the matter has been settled,*” she said, relieved to finally regain her independence.

Looking ahead, Jummai hopes for a future built on her own choice. “*I hope to get another man that I can marry based on mutual love and respect,*” she shared.

Jummai's story reflects the struggle many women face in resisting forced marriages, and the critical role WRAPA and Hisbah play in ensuring women's voices are heard and their rights upheld. Her journey demonstrates that even in deeply traditional settings, justice and dignity can prevail when institutions step in to protect the vulnerable.

Jummai's case and the baseline study's findings on vulnerable cohorts align perfectly - both highlight how systemic barriers (cultural norms, economic dependence) trap women in cycles of violence. WRAPA's faith-aligned approach with the Council of Ulama shows a powerful path forward: leveraging trusted institutions to champion women's rights.

## **Intervention or Change Process**

### **Who led the change?**

The case was handled collaboratively by WRAPA Zamfara State and the Hisbah Commission, whose joint engagement ensured both religious legitimacy and rights-based action.

### **What methods were used?**

- Case reporting and mediation through Hisbah and WRAPA;
- Dialogue with family and community leaders to review the legality and ethics of the marriage;
- Religious counselling referencing Islamic injunctions on fairness and marital responsibility;
- Follow-up enforcement ensuring the husband fulfilled his obligation to pay the agreed bride price and release Jummai lawfully.

### **Timeline of engagement:**

Over several weeks, WRAPA and Hisbah coordinated counselling, mediation, and follow-up meetings with both families to secure a peaceful resolution that prioritized Jummai's welfare and rights.

## **Results and Outcomes**

Through WRAPA's intervention and Hisbah's moral authority, Jummai successfully terminated the forced marriage and obtained full recognition of her rights. The husband, who had initially defaulted, was compelled to honour his financial commitments, ensuring Jummai's stability as she rebuilt her life. It represents a dual-track strategy that integrates reforms into traditional/religious systems and pushes structural changes that directly empower women.

### **Tangible Outcomes:**

- Peaceful resolution and lawful separation, protecting Jummai from continued exploitation;
- Economic restitution through the payment of the pending bride price;
- Increased community understanding that forced marriages violate both religious and legal principles;
- Empowerment and renewed confidence for Jummai, who now hopes to remarry under conditions of mutual respect and choice.

## Voice of Change

*“The marriage was forced, and life was difficult. But WRAPA and Hisbah stood by me and made sure justice was done. I am happy now and hopeful for the future.”*

*Jummai (Survivor)*

### Lessons Learned

- Forced marriage is a form of violence, and religious institutions can be allies in addressing it when guided by justice and compassion;
- Faith-based advocacy grounded in Quranic principles helps correct harmful cultural interpretations;
- Community dialogue reduces stigma around women seeking divorce or redress.
- True prevention requires transforming the “wine,” not just the “wineskin.”
- Coordinated action between WRAPA, Hisbah, and local leaders creates a sustainable path for protecting women's rights.

### Replicability Potential

This approach offers a practical model for faith-informed justice and mediation in conservative settings.

#### Preconditions for replication include:

- Establishing trusted partnerships between women's rights advocates and faith authorities;
- Continuous sensitization of religious leaders on VAWG laws and Islamic justice principles;
- Availability of neutral mediation spaces for women to safely report grievances;
- Monitoring mechanisms to ensure agreed resolutions are upheld.

# CHAPTER THREE

## Strategic Recommendations and Conclusion

### **THEME 1: FAITH LEADERS' NORM-CHANGE CHAMPIONSHIP** *(Faith-Led Interventions)*

**Strategic Focus:** Institutionalize faith-based leadership as a sustained driver of attitude and behaviour change on VAWG.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Formalize the role of religious leaders in VAWG prevention by integrating rights-based messaging into regular sermons, religious calendars, and study sessions.
- Equip faith leaders with standardized guidance on survivor-centred response, confidentiality, referral pathways, and alignment with national laws such as the VAPP Act.
- Establish peer accountability and learning platforms among faith leaders to reinforce consistent anti-violence norms.
- Scale successful faith-led interventions through partnerships with Ministries of Religious Affairs, interfaith councils, and faith-based networks.
- Support faith institutions to publicly denounce stigma, normalize reporting, and act as trusted first points of disclosure for survivors.

**Key Actors:** Religious councils, Ministries of Religious Affairs, CSOs, donors, and interfaith networks.

### **THEME 2: CULTURAL CUSTODIANS' TRANSFORMATIVE ACTION** *(Cultural Reinterpretation)*

**Strategic Focus:** Leverage traditional authority to reinterpret harmful norms and institutionalize protective practices.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Support traditional leaders to codify protective community bylaws on inheritance, divorce, child protection, and VAWG response.
- Encourage documentation of palace-mediated resolutions, written agreements, and sanctions to strengthen accountability and precedent.
- Facilitate structured dialogue between traditional leaders, legal actors, and women's groups to harmonize customary practices with statutory law.
- Recognize and incentivize reform-oriented traditional leaders through public acknowledgment and peer learning exchanges.
- Scale effective cultural interventions by embedding them into local governance and customary justice systems.

**Key Actors:** Traditional rulers, councils of chiefs, local governments, CSOs, legal aid providers.

### **THEME 3: SURVIVOR-LED PREVENTION INITIATIVES** (*Survivor-Centred Prevention*)

**Strategic Focus:** Position survivors not only as beneficiaries, but as agents of prevention and social change.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Create safe, voluntary platforms for survivors to share experiences, inform programme design, and challenge stigma (with informed consent).
- Integrate survivor perspectives into advocacy, monitoring, and accountability mechanisms at the community and state levels.
- Strengthen psychosocial, legal, and economic empowerment support to reduce re-victimization and dependency.
- Establish long-term follow-up systems to track survivor wellbeing beyond immediate case resolution.
- Scale survivor-led approaches through survivor networks, women's associations, and peer support structures.

**Key Actors:** Survivors' networks, women's groups, social welfare agencies, NGOs, donors.

### **THEME 4: COMMUNITY-LEVEL MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION** (*Men and Boys as Allies*)

**Strategic Focus:** Institutionalize community-based coalitions that prevent violence, support survivors, and enforce accountability.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Formalize male ally networks with clear roles, codes of conduct, referral protocols, and links to police, health, and legal services.
- Expand training for men and boys on positive masculinity, bystander intervention, evidence preservation, and survivor-friendly response.
- Promote joint action platforms involving male allies, women leaders, faith leaders, traditional rulers, and security agencies.
- Document and scale successful community-led responses as models for replication in other LGAs and states.
- Include accountability and rehabilitation components for male perpetrators alongside prevention messaging.

**Key Actors:** Male ally networks, CSOs, police, SARCs, traditional and religious leaders.

## **THEME 5: SUPPORT SYSTEMS ADVOCACY AND RESPONSE** *(Policy and Legal Influence at Local Levels)*

**Strategic Focus:** Strengthen the full justice and service delivery chain from reporting to resolution.

### **Recommendations:**

- Sustain advocacy beyond law passage to focus on enforcement, resourcing, and monitoring of VAWG laws such as the VAPP Act.
- Strengthen coordination between Ministries of Justice, police, judiciary, health services, and CSOs through formal referral and response protocols.
- Build the capacity of law enforcement and prosecutors on survivor-centred investigation, evidence gathering, and prosecution.
- Expand access to services in rural, underserved, and IDP communities through mobile clinics, legal outreaches, and transportation support.
- Establish community-based monitoring and accountability mechanisms to track case outcomes and deter impunity.

**Key Actors:** Government MDAs, judiciary, police, CSOs, donors, and community monitors.

### **CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATION (SCALING & SUSTAINABILITY)**

- Develop a standardized national case documentation and learning framework that captures context, actors, processes, and outcomes across all themes.
- Use documented cases to inform policy reform, donor investment, replication strategies, and institutional learning.
- Ensure inclusion of marginalized groups (IDPs, persons with disabilities, widows, older women, out-of-school youth) across all thematic interventions.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the case studies in this compendium underscore the evolving trends in addressing Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) in Nigeria, showcasing the power of resilience and hope in the face of adversity. Through effective implementation of laws like the VAPP Law, community engagement, and stakeholder collaboration, Nigeria is forging a path towards justice and support for survivors. These efforts not only hold perpetrators accountable but also inspire hope for a future where VAWG is a relic of the past. As Nigeria continues to navigate this journey, these case studies serve as beacons of hope, illuminating the way forward and underscoring the importance of sustained advocacy and collective action.



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