



**A Compendium of Stories on**

# **Addressing Gender-Based Violence:**

**A Transformational Shift and Change Under the WVL-N Project**

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Gender-based violence (GBV) is a pervasive violation of human rights that affects individuals based on their gender. It encompasses a range of harmful acts, including physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse, often rooted in systemic gender inequality and discrimination. GBV predominantly affects women and girls, although men and boys can also be victims. The consequences of GBV are far-reaching, impacting survivors' physical and mental health, economic stability, and overall well-being. Furthermore, GBV undermines social and economic development, perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality.

Globally, one in three women experiences physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, most often from an intimate partner. Cultural norms, patriarchal structures, and societal attitudes that devalue women contribute to the prevalence of GBV. In many communities, survivors face stigma and discrimination, which further deters them from seeking help. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated GBV, with lockdowns and economic hardships, increasing the risk of violence and limiting access to support services.

The Women's Voice and Leadership (WVL) Nigeria project is an initiative aimed at addressing gender-based violence and promoting gender equality through the empowerment and leadership of women. From the experiences gathered through the implementation by various local women rights organizations, the project recognized that sustainable change must come from within communities and be driven by those most affected by the issues.

The project has been instrumental in addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) across 6 states and the FCT. By working through local women's rights organizations (LWROs) and community-based organizations (CBOs), the project adopted a multi-faceted approach to addressing GBV which includes the responsive and preventive measures. The responsive measures included access to justice, provision of essential psychosocial and medical support, and the establishment of safe spaces and shelters for women and girls.

On the other hand, the preventive measures included school group therapy, training for community stakeholders, public awareness campaigns, community dialogues that seek to shift societal norms and promote a culture of respect and equality, and advocacy for policy influencing and implementation. The project has recorded remarkable achievements in addressing GBV and VAWG through a range of outcomes and impact recorded in project implementation states:





# Advocacy for Policy Influencing

Significant progress was made through influencing policies, strategies and framework targeted at addressing GBV. Across the project states, 9 GBV policies were influenced through lobbying, stakeholder engagement and advocacy efforts:

- I. At the institutional level, Nana Girls advocated for. and facilitated the establishment of committees in Kebbi State to develop a GBV safeguarding strategy for 21 schools with high incidences of GBV. These schools now have a strategy in place which is being implemented to safeguard and protect their students.
- II. Nana Girls also pushed for the translation of the Kebbi State Penal Code into Hausa for better comprehension by the local population and facilitated its dissemination across 170 communities.
- III. Partners across the WVL project States initiated advocacy efforts and campaigned to key state stakeholders (legislators) and the legislative council for the passage of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Bill into law in project states (Bauchi, Enugu, Cross River, Imo, Kebbi, Kogi and Kwara States). For instance, WVL partners in Cross Rivers state alongside other CSOs drafted and submitted a bill to the Cross River State House of Assembly for the signing of the VAPP Law in 2021.
- IV. Bauchi WVL partners campaigned for the passage of the Child Rights Act in Bauchi State in 2020.
- V. AWWDI in FCT contributed to the implementation of the Disability Rights Law and the review and update of the Child Rights Law at the National level.
- VI. Cross Rivers WVL partners assisted in the development of the Cross River State Gender Policy and Strategic Framework.
- VII. AWWDI and 100 Women Lobby Groups supported the implementation of gender and disability policies for schools in the Federal Capital Territory through advocacy visits.
- VIII. In Lagos, the WVL project partners organized forums with CSOs and the media to call for the adoption of the Maputo Protocol, ratified by Nigeria in 2005, to eliminate all discrimination against women, especially the elderly.



**IX.** The WVL partners in Kwara State contributed to the development of the Kwara State Action Plan on Child Trafficking and the domestication of the Maputo Protocol on women's rights in Africa.





# Structures Established

The structures established include a diverse range of committees, coalitions, and support groups aimed at addressing gender-based violence (GBV) and supporting survivors. These include Paralegal Committees in Kebbi, Enugu and the FCT; WVL CBO Coalition Against Gender-Based Violence in Kebbi; and various school-based initiatives such as the Guidance and Counselling Unit, School Response Team on GBV, and GBV Clubs in Bauchi, Lagos, Kebbi, Cross River, and Enugu States.

Additionally, there are community-driven efforts like the Girl Child Protection Committee, Community Watch Women, and Community Advocates, alongside specialized groups such as the Inter-faith Coalition Committee in Cross River, Rape Support Group, and Prevention Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Advocacy Group.

Other key initiatives include the State Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Committees in Bauchi and Kwara, State SGBV Prosecution Committee in Kwara, Multi-sectoral GBV Committee in the FCT, Sexual Gender Committee on WPS in Kwara, State Committee on Trafficking in Kwara and the FCT. These efforts are further supported by the Gender Inclusive Club and mentorship platforms such as the "I Support Her" Club, ensuring a comprehensive approach to GBV prevention and response.





# Key Milestones Achieved

Economic empowerment was provided to 335 GBV survivors, and 5 safe shelters were supported by the WVL project.



School-related GBV sensitization reached 68,492 students, 2,715 schoolteachers, and management staff across 26 schools and 10 LGAs in Kebbi State.



At the state level, a WVL-CBO Coalition Against GBV was established, comprising seven CBO members. Additionally, 44 paralegal structures and three youth advocacy groups were set up at the community level in Kebbi, Enugu and the FCT



Sensitization/capacity building efforts reached 472 traditional and religious leaders and 306,230 women and girls in Bauchi, Cross River, Enugu, Lagos, Kebbi, Kwara, and the FCT. 9 peer education groups were formed, enrolling 95 women. Moreover, during the COVID-19 lockdown, 118 vulnerable women and GBV survivors received economic support through palliatives.



Over 4,781 people were directly reached through GBV/VAWG services such as legal support, medical services, psychosocial support and empowerment activities for survivors in the 6 project states and the FCT.



Over 4 million people were indirectly reached through media campaigns, awareness raising session, school group therapy, GBV club sessions, community dialogue sessions, town hall meetings



4,683 cases were handled and managed, with 178 GBV court cases filed, leading to 114 successful court judgments secured across the project states.



The initiative also established 12 safe spaces, including GBV Orange groups, 37 GBV awareness clubs, 16 SRGBV school response committees, and 16 guidance and counselling units.





## Provision of Protection Services through Temporary Shelters

Temporary shelters are critical in providing protection and support to GBV survivors. Through the WVL-N project, five temporary shelters were supported across Kwara, Enugu, Cross River, Lagos states and the FCT. For instance, CWEENS operated a safe space in the FCT where survivors and their children received mentoring, trauma counseling, psychotherapy, and other essential services.

GLOWHOC managed the Amoyo shelter home, offering survivors of SGBV not only a secure place to stay but also nutritional support, medical care, and vocational training aimed at promoting social and economic empowerment. These shelters were crucial in helping survivors recover and rebuild their lives.



## Provision of Psychosocial Support Services and Medical Care

Psychosocial support was a critical component of the WVL-Nigeria project. GLOWHOC's Clinical Psychotherapy Unit conducted sessions involving psychoeducation, counselling, relaxation techniques, and cognitive restructuring. These sessions were designed to help survivors manage anxiety, depression, and stress, fostering their mental well-being.

WRAHP utilized Psychological First Aid to offer respectful and supportive questioning, promoting calmness and reassurance among survivors. The Irete Resource Centre employed the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) in therapy sessions to address the emotional states of survivors, providing one-on-one counselling to female survivors using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT).

The ASHH Foundation conducts monthly therapy sessions for survivors, offering group counselling and creating a safe space for survivors of GBV to share their experiences and receive support. In Kwara State, the psychosocial unit of the Organization for Community Development Initiative (OCDI) also provided counselling, access to justice, and mediation services.



# Conclusion

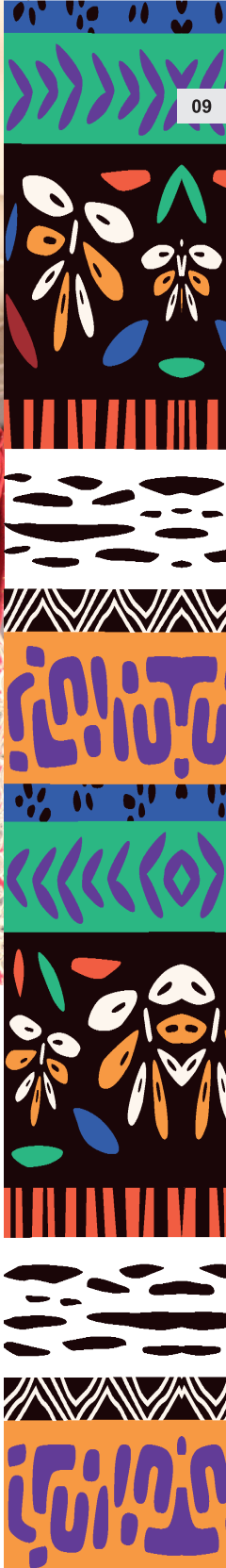
The WVL-Nigeria project has made significant strides in addressing Gender-Based Violence and Violence Against Women and Girls by empowering Local Women Rights Organizations and creating sustainable support mechanisms. Their collaborative efforts under the WVL-Nigeria project have brought hope and healing to countless women and girls, demonstrating the power of community-driven initiatives in fostering a safer, more equitable society.







# SUCCESS STORIES



# Triumph Over Trauma: Rising Above Disability

Iquo, a physically challenged woman, faced immense adversity when she became a victim of gender-based violence (GBV) at the age of 17, resulting in an unplanned pregnancy. However, her life took a transformative turn in 2020 with the support of the Women Voice and Leadership Nigeria (WVL-N) Project funded by Global Affairs Canada (GAC), managed by ActionAid Nigeria (AAN) and implemented by Neighborhood Care-well Foundation (NCF) in Calabar. Cross River State.

With the initiative's support, Iquo courageously documented her GBV case, seeking justice and closure while also accessing advanced trauma services to heal and rebuild her self-esteem. As her self-confidence grew, Iquo refused to be defined by her experience and dedicated her time to helping people with disabilities facing similar challenges. She became a mentor and advocate in Imoh Community and has provided emotional support and guidance to 30 women with disabilities, raising awareness about the rights and dignity of women, thus, affirming to the fact that there is ability in disability.

Today, Iquo Mkpang stands as a beacon of hope



for those who have suffered in silence. After 2 years of support, she became the State Coordinator of Advocacy for Women with Disability Initiative and works as a case manager in Neighborhood Care-well Foundation. She is currently the secretary of persons with disabilities in Cross River State. As a mark of these successes, she bought a car for her transport business. Through her initiative and support from Women2Women and Mentoring Walk under the WVL project, she has empowered 20 women with disabilities through transport business and merchandizing. Currently, Iquo has started farming activities and she is expected to receive technical support to start her own NGO.

# Demystifying the Power of GBV Perpetrators

Due to high levels of poverty, street hawking by young girls has become a tradition in some community groups in Azare, Katagum LGA in Bauchi State and environs. The resultant effect of exposing adolescent girls to hawking is that they are sexually molested and sometimes raped by men. Most of them end up pregnant and eventually get forced into early marriage. Before the intervention of WVL-N project in 2020, some people in the community used their positions, ranks and offices to molest girls thinking that they were above the law. This was the case of a police officer stationed at old township police station who had carnal knowledge of some girls hawking around the area. Zuwaira Hassan, a 14-year-old girl was one of the children rescued by Hisba patrol team at 12 midnight. When interrogated, she explained how she was raped by the alleged police officer. When the matter was reported to the DPO and there was no action taken against the perpetrator, Hisba involved KWAYUDA, which reported the case to the SGBV committee of the first lady of Bauchi State. The perpetrator was subsequently arrested while the SGBV survivor was kept in a safe home for rehabilitation following threats from the perpetrator's family. The perpetrator was eventually dismissed from the



police service. Through this case, community members saw the 'silent' or 'immunity' norm of non-prosecution of SGBV perpetrators shattered in their community for the first time. This case served as an example to the community that violating the rights of women and girls attracts punishment as nobody can be above the law.



## Breaking the Chain of Silence - Laduwa's Story

Discussing the subject of gender-based violence even when incidents occur and the perpetrator is known is a taboo in some communities in Gwalango, Yauri Local Government Area, in Kebbi State, Nigeria. Through the WVL project, however, people in the village and neighboring communities are beginning to realize the importance of speaking up for survivors, thus slowly changing the negative norms of secrecy over GBV incidents and the stigmatization of GBV survivors who dare to speak out about their experiences. The eroding of these exclusionary norms all started with the story of Laduwa (pseudonym). Laduwa was just 15 years old when a full-grown adult in their village lured and sexually assaulted her. The father of the perpetrator who is an influential religious leader in the community threatened to kill members of the minor's family or anyone who dared to speak up about the crime to the police.

The story was eventually leaked to Yauri Women Development Association (YAWDA) one of the WVL-CBOs working with NANA in Kebbi State. Through NANA's support to Yauri Women Development Association (YAWDA), a formal report was lodged at the CID headquarters in Birnin Kebbi leading to the arrest of the

perpetrator. Laduwa was successfully rehabilitated by YAWDA, she is happily married and earning an income through her tailoring trade which she learnt through this project.

Thanks to Laduwa's story and the resultant anti-GBV stigmatization campaign rolled out by YAWDA in the communities, four more GBV survivors have successfully been rehabilitated.



## Meimuna's Story

Meimuna (not real name) is a 16-year-old girl from Sabon Kaura community, Bauchi LGA, Bauchi state Nigeria who was abducted and gang-raped by 4 boys for 6 days in Bauchi State. She suffered serious injuries during the gang rape and was taken to the hospital by her parents for medical care but due to fear of stigmatization, they did not give the true picture of the situation to the doctor to facilitate proper care. The case was reported to ASHH Foundation a week after it occurred by a beneficiary of case management in the office. When ASHH Foundation first met with the survivor, her family was almost about to call off the case due to pressure from perpetrators' families. ASHH Foundation received the case, made referrals to the Police/hospital and involved the SGBV case management committee. A pro-bono lawyer was subsequently assigned to follow up the case with the Police. Through the organization's intervention, 3 suspected perpetrators who had been suspiciously released were re-arrested with the first information report (FIR) on the matter adjusted for proper judgment. In 2021, judgment was secured against the gang rape perpetrators who initially tampered with the case. This was the first successful intervention ASHHF embarked upon through the SGBV case



management committee members in the WVL-N project. In the words of Meimuna,

"I never thought this could be possible, I was afraid at first but now I thank ASHH Foundation, ActionAid Nigeria and Global Affairs Canada for standing with me, thank you."

## Giving Survivors Another Reason to Live

Matilda (pseudonym), a 19-year-old girl from Ijom Community, comes from a poor household and is a survivor of GBV. Due to her background and degree of vulnerability, her lack of resources and opportunities, she was trapped and unable to break free from the cycle of poverty and violence. Her journey towards success began when she received training on Dettol production from the Catholic Women Organization under the WVL-N project alongside 21 other girls in 2022. With her new skills, she saw an opportunity to make money and improve her situation. Through hard work, she built a customer base in the community clinics and hospitals, supplying them with her products. She was finally able to pursue her dream of getting into a higher institution and has this to say about the impact of the WVL project on her life:

*'oh how I wish this had happened before now, men would not have given me conditions to be with me before supporting me'*





## Children as Peer Models for GBV Education – Hafsat's discovery

Hafsat (pseudonym), a 17-year-old female student lives in a hamlet next to her school in GDSS Nasaru village in Ningi LGA of the Bauchi state. She is from a community where empowering conversations around SGBV is seen as a taboo and is not even considered an issue that people talk about. A team came to her school one day to discuss SGBV and how people might defend themselves when such an incident is likely to happen. The team recognized the timid Hafsat and asked her why she was hiding her face. Hafsat's response was disquieting:

*"In my community, people don't discuss such things, not even in front of kids. So, when I heard that it could be discussed in public and even with demonstrations of how to defend oneself once we encounter such things, I was startled."*

After taking part in several team outreach initiatives, Hafsat made the decision to join the GBV Champions Club, the first club to be founded since the inception of the institution. Six months into the GBV club activities, Hafsat had learned new information from several training sessions and outreach efforts, she was ready to sensitize her juniors at home and at school.



Today, Hafsat is the leader of the GBV champions club at her school, where she and her club members support their peers by sharing information on SGBV to the junior students, leading meetings, and reporting on SGBV. Hafsat is now a highly empowered GBV champion for her peers. According to her, "GBV champions club caught my attention from the first time I realized that SGBV can be reported and it's not a matter that you would observe happening and remain silent, therefore I have a contribution to provide through awareness in my school and village," She is now openly raising awareness about SGBV in her village, with both her parents supporting her in this endeavor.



# From Trauma to Triumph: Aisha's Journey to Healing

12-year Aisha's life took a devastating turn when she was brutally raped by a neighbor in her community. The trauma she experienced was deep-seated, and she felt hopeless and helpless. Her widowed mother, also a survivor of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), was struggling to provide for her 2 children – Aisha and her older brother.

A disillusioned Aisha and her mother were referred to the Christian Women for Excellence and Empowerment in Nigerian Society (CWEENS) FCT. The young girl was admitted at the CWEENS shelter at Kampke, where she received the medical care, shelter, and psychological support she needed to heal and recover.

Established in March 2021 with support from the WV-L-N project, the CWEENS shelter serves as part of the referral system for GBV victims, providing them with temporary refuge, lodging and access to medical care, legal aid, economic and psychosocial support services towards their rehabilitation and reintegration back to the society. The shelter has offered professional psychosocial support services to 87 survivors with 38 sheltered and still counting.



After six months in the shelter, Aisha was reintegrated into society, reunited with her mother and younger brother. To ensure her safety and well-being, CWEENS secured a one-room accommodation for the family, allowing Aisha to focus on her education.

In the meantime, the perpetrator was arrested, detained and made to face the legal department of the FCT police command. Aisha's mother was empowered with income-generating activities, such as selling soft drinks and petty trading, to support Aisha's education. Aisha herself was enrolled in Kabusa Junior Secondary School.

However, her journey didn't end there. CWEENS sponsored her enrollment into the daughter of Abraham Foundation, where she received behavioral therapy and skills training in fashion designing. After one year, Aisha graduated with a certificate in fashion designing and NABTEB. Her graduation also came with the equipment to set up her own fashion design shop.



Today, Aisha is a happy, hopeful, and resourceful teenager, eager to make a difference in her community. Her mother is grateful for the impact CWEENS has had on their lives, saying,

*"If not for the help received through CWEENS, I would have been stranded with my daughter because we don't have anyone to help us. She wouldn't have gone back to school at all. Meeting CWEENS is like God coming down to intervene ...This help received changed our lives, and I will never forget. Thanks to the donor and ActionAid."*

Thanks to the support, healing, and empowerment received from CWEENS, Aisha has moved from trauma to triumph. The young girl has found her voice and is ready to make a difference in the world.





## Tears to Triumph - The Story of Abosede (Iya Chinchin)



Abosede's story is one of courage and determination. Once a survivor of domestic violence, she is now a successful businesswoman, providing for her children and shaping a brighter future.

Life was not easy for Abosede. A single mother of two from Ajele community in Ilorin West LGA of Kwara State, her marriage was marked by violence and abuse. Her husband, who had taken another wife, subjected her to relentless maltreatment and neglect. He went as far as removing the roof of their shared home, leaving her and their children exposed and vulnerable. Abandoned and without support, Abosede faced the harsh reality of raising her children alone.

Though skilled in making chin-chin, a popular local snack, Abosede's dreams of starting her business were hindered by a lack of capital. Discouraged and heartbroken, she felt trapped in a cycle of poverty and despair as she struggled to feed her children.

Through a sensitization and referral process, Abosede's story reached the Olive Community Development Initiative (OCDI), a WVU-N partner

organization in Kwara State implementing a project funded by Global Affairs Canada. Recognizing her plight, OCDI provided her with much-needed psychosocial support and economic empowerment.

One life-changing day, Abosede received a surprise call from OCDI. The Ministry of Women Affairs in Ilorin, in collaboration with OCDI, had decided to support her business. They provided her with essential supplies, including a gas cylinder, flour, sugar, and a frying pan. This gesture was especially significant as Abosede had been using coal pots to fry her chin-chin. Overwhelmed with gratitude, she rushed to receive the items, tears of joy streaming down her face.

With the support and resources provided, Abosede's chin-chin business flourished. She now effortlessly purchases all the necessary ingredients, ensuring a steady production line. Her business success has translated into financial



stability, allowing her to feed her children, save money, and reinvest in her enterprise.

Abosede's entrepreneurial spirit didn't stop at chin-chin production. With her savings, she ventured into melon farming, which provides her with additional income. Her children now live happily, nurtured by a mother who has reclaimed her independence and confidence.

*"It never occurred to me that I will be one of those using a gas cylinder in my life!" Abosede exclaimed with tears of joy. "Thank you so much, God bless OCDI."*

Today, Abosede is an entrepreneur with two successful income streams. Her story is a powerful proof of the impact of supporting women to break the cycle of poverty and dependence. Each positive change in the lives of such survivors is a victory for gender equality and social progress. Once a victim of gender-based violence, she now stands as a thriving businesswoman and a symbol of resilience and hope for her community.



# Setting a New Norm - Restoring the Dignity of Sabon Kaura Women and Girls

For women and girls in the community of Sabon Kaura community of Bauchi State, rape is often not reported or taken seriously as a crime against the dignity of women. A fourteen (14) year old girl named Aishatu (pseudonym) who hawks ground-nuts in the community was raped by 2 men on different occasions. Both perpetrators lured her into their homes on the pretense of buying ground-nuts and raped her consecutively.

ASHH Foundation provided legal services through a pro-bono service lawyer for the prosecution of the perpetrators which led to an individual sentence of sixteen (16) years in prison for each perpetrator. This was the first time in the history of Kaura community that the community experienced the punishment of rape perpetrators as before now, it was almost impossible to secure judgment for rape cases in Bauchi State due to level of corruption among enforcement officers. The outcome of the case has caused a drastic reduction of rape incidents in the community, it has created great fear and served as a deterrent to others. The situation has equally built the confidence of survivors' families to report more GBV cases to ASHH Foundation. The sentencing has also encouraged increased case reporting to



ASHH Foundation from Sabon Kaura community through survivors' family members. Violation of the women's rights is no longer tolerated by the law and the dignity of women is gradually being restored.





## The Ordeals of a Minor – Fighting to Protect a Helpless Minor and Domestic Worker from GBV Perpetrators

WACOL spearheaded justice for a victim of child abuse on the 3rd day of July 2020, in Enugu State. The victim, a ten-year-old daughter of a widow, resided with a couple as a maid in Enugu. The couple drilled nails on her face in two places and used hot electric iron all over her body.

On receiving this case, WACOL immediately swung into action by writing a petition to the Commissioner of Police for the arrest of the couple. With support from the WVL-N project, the victim's widowed mother was also provided with financial assistance to offset her daughter's hospital bills.

In addition, Prof Joy Ezeilo (OON) led the legal team of WACOL on the day of arraignment of the couple where she spoke as amicus curiae to vehemently oppose their bail application. The bail was refused, and the couple remanded at the Nsukka Correctional Centre. By 2022, the couple were convicted of the offence by Hon Justice Ogbuagbor of the Enugu State High court and sentenced to prison. The prosecution and conviction of the perpetrators would not have been possible without the timeous prosecution of the matter by WACOL under the WVL project. The survivor is living with her mother and is gradually recovering from the trauma she suffered.



## CWEENS's Work on Intimate Partner Violence

CWEENS FCT adopts a preventive and remedial approach (Strategic partnerships, community engagement, sensitization and advocacy) to reducing SGBV. Due to awareness on SGBV in Tudun Wada Community, Blessing Nuhun (pseudonym), a 36-year-old survivor of domestic violence with two children got in touch with CWEENS FCT in 2021. This was as a fallout from the advocacy visit and awareness creation on GBV prevention to the Community leader of Tudun Wada of Lugbe, FCT. Blessing had suffered physical,, socio-economic and emotional abuse. The emotional violence was at its peak when her two children (aged 6 and 1year-old) were whisked away to an unknown destination by her husband, a perpetrator of domestic violence.

Through neighbours she learned that her husband wanted to sell her children. Traumatized and helpless, she ran to the CWEENS office. Proactive actions were taken, first to report the incidence to the Police FCT command and secondly to raise a prayer chain for the safety of the children, that God will restrain him from selling them. After few days, it was discovered that the children were taken to Cross River state. With the support of CWEENS, Blessing travelled to Calabar the capital City of Cross River and with the backing of the FCT Police Command, she was able to

recover her children. She received psychosocial support services and empowerment support from CWEENS on the WVLP project and is a happy mother today, taking care of her two children without further harassment from her husband who has been restrained by the police. Blessing was supported with a sewing machine to run her tailoring business, a skill she acquired while working as a cleaner at a bank within the community she lives. She is economically empowered today, making positive change as a GBV champion in her community.



## A Safe Haven, A New Lease of Life for SGBV Survivors

In Kwara State, the road to healing and recovery for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) was long and arduous. With no safe space to call their own, survivors were forced to navigate a daunting environment without a roof over their heads. Though, with the emergence of the Women's Voice and Leadership Nigeria project, hope was brought to the community, and a new beginning to those affected by SGBV.

Through the COVID-19 top-up intervention, GLOHWOC, a WVL-N partner in Kwara state, collaborated with the State Ministry of Women Affairs to acquire a safe space for SGBV survivors. This shelter has been a game-changer, providing integrated services including shelter, medical, psychosocial, and nutritional support to 19 immigrants trafficked from Benin Republic.

In a remarkable turn of events, the 19 survivors were successfully repatriated back to their country and reunited with their families. This achievement is a testament to the power of partnership and collaboration in addressing the complex needs of SGBV survivors.

The shelter has also enabled GLOHWOC to cater for over 70 SGBV survivors in the state, providing a range of services including psychosocial

support, counseling, medicals, life skills, vocational training

One survivor, who wishes to remain anonymous, shared her story of resilience and hope.

*"I never knew I could go through the journey and be strong, but with a roof over my head, I have been able to complete my studies and take care of my daughter".*

The shelter has given survivors a platform to express their emotions, heal from their experiences, and build their self-esteem. Moreover, it has provided a voice for survivors, encouraging them to take control of their lives and futures.





The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, Kwara State, echoed these sentiments, expressing gratitude to GLOHWOC for their support and commitment to the shelter project.

*"Shelter is the major challenge of the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, but with the intervention of Global Affairs Canada and ActionAid through GLOHWOC, the survivors of SGBV now have a place. We are eternally grateful to GLOHWOC for facilitating this support for Kwara State."*

As the shelter continues to serve as a beacon of hope for SGBV survivors in Kwara State, it is more than just a physical space – it is a symbol of the power of partnership, support, and determination to create a brighter future for these survivors.



# Women Win: Ending Female Genital Mutilation in Amagu Akegbe-Ugwu Community

In the quiet village of Amagu Akegbe-Ugwu, a profound transformation has revolutionized the lives of countless girls and women. This is the story of how the practice of Female Genital Cutting/Mutilation (FGC/M) was abolished, ushering in a new era of hope and emancipation. For generations, FGC/M was deeply rooted in the community's culture, driven by unfounded beliefs and perceptions. However, thanks to the tireless efforts of the Women's Integrated Network for Empowerment and Transformation (WINET), supported by the Women's Voice and Leadership Nigeria (WVL-N) project, the community has eliminated this harmful practice.

WINET's comprehensive campaign, which included town hall meetings and dialogues, educated the community about sexual and gender-based violence, specifically focusing on the harmful practice of FGC/M. The organization highlighted legal frameworks that prohibited FGC/M in Enugu State, such as the Enugu State VAPP Law 2019 and the Enugu State Child Rights Law 2016. Although the community's resistance to change was gradual, the persistent efforts of WINET and the community women eventually paid off. The Town Union, led by the Traditional



Ruler, unanimously approved a proclamation abolishing FGC/M in the community, effective from March 9, 2023. This landmark decision ensures that girls will no longer suffer the adverse effects of FGC/M. Women who were once victims of this practice have become vigilant monitors, ensuring no one violates the community's decision.

An octogenarian, Mrs. Gladys Ogbu, who from a young age watched baby girls undergo circumcision and ensured the same for her own daughters, now understands the dangers of FGM and chose not to subject her granddaughters to the practice. Another woman, Mrs. Theresa Oko, confirmed this, saying, *"We circumcised all our daughters, but that was in the past. We know now that anyone who cuts a female child, the parents*

*of the child who approved the cutting, and any other persons who supported the act are liable according to the provisions of the VAPP Law in Enugu State."* Mrs. Rita Ani expressed her happiness for the project's impact, saying,

*"With this proclamation by our traditional ruler and the laws we know of, anyone found doing it secretly must not go unpunished."*

Mrs. Angela Okafor added,

*"I am happy that children born in our community will no longer experience trauma due to the abolishment of FGM/C in their community."*

The WVLE-N project has empowered women's rights organizations to challenge harmful socio-cultural norms and practices that exacerbate violence against women and girls. In Amagu Akegbe-Ugwu Community, the chains of tradition have been broken, and a brighter future awaits the generations of girls who will grow up free from the burden of FGC/M.





## Temporary Refuge for GBV Survivors – CWEENS Shelter



Shelter is key to reducing vulnerability and building resilience for GBV survivors, as it creates a safe space for abused women and girls to heal and re-discover the power inherent in them and reflect. In the FCT, apart from the NAPTIP and Federal Ministry of Women Affairs shelters, female victims of sexual gender-based violence find it difficult to access shelters, because they are rarely available. With this situation, many women and girls are left alone to struggle with their personal safety, security, protection from external pressure and influences that may hamper the process of healing, rehabilitation and justice sought. With the funding from Global Affairs Canada through the WVL Project, CWEENS established a shelter in March 2021 with trained and competent staff. This GBV shelter serves as part of the referral system, providing temporary refuge, lodging and linking survivors to medical care, legal aid, economic and psychosocial support services for rehabilitation and reintegration back into society. The shelter has offered professional psychosocial support services to 87 survivors with 38 sheltered and still counting.



## Rescue from Forced Sex Labour



The story of Miss X (pseudonym) is evidence of the web of deceit and trauma in which many young women are presently caught in southern Nigeria. Miss X, a 23-year-old woman from Port Harcourt, was deceived by a friend who promised her a job as a Sales Representative in Lagos.

The friend trafficked her to Kwara State, where she was forced to take an oath regarding the nature of the job she was expected to do. She later discovered that the job involved sex work. Despite her refusal, she was drugged, injected with stimulants and forced into prostitution.

Desperate to escape, she sought refuge in a church in Ilorin, where she shared her harrowing story. Golden Heart Women Forum, through the WVL-N project, came to her aid and transferred her to the Amoyo shelter where she received psychosocial support, counselling and safe space assistance. The church and GLOHWOC contributed funds for her return to her home state.

Miss X is now an advocate against Gender-Based Violence and remains deeply grateful to Golden Heart Women Forum and GLOHWOC for rescuing her from abuse and providing a safe haven. She continues to receive counselling and support as she rebuilds her life.





# act:onaid

Abuja Office:  
Plot 477, 41 Crescent, Off  
4th Avenue, Gwarinpa,  
FCT.

Lagos Office:  
1a Adeboye Solanke  
Street, by first bank bus  
stop, Allen Avenue, Ikeja,  
Lagos State.

Maiduguri:  
No 3, Gombole Street, Off  
Gombole Road  
Old GRA, Opposite Giwa  
Barracks, Maiduguri

[info.nigeria@actionaid.org](mailto:info.nigeria@actionaid.org)

[www.actionaid.org/nigeria](http://www.actionaid.org/nigeria)

🌐 [nigeria.actionaid.org](http://nigeria.actionaid.org)

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