

Conflict and the Search for Justice



(Report of Enhancing Access to Justice and Safe Spaces for Women & Girls in Conflict Prone Communities of Nasarawa State)





# Introduction

Access to justice in Nigeria has been a mounting challenge. The situation is even worse for women and girls in a traditionally patriarchal society with dysfunctional institutional mechanisms for justice administration. The context of conflict also expands women's vulnerability to sexual violence. Although there are limited statistics to support the depth of violence against women in Nigeria, the country has one of the worst incidences in Africa.

Over the past two decades, northern Nigeria, especially the middle belt, has experienced increased level of violence. The state of insecurity has affected virtually every aspect of social and economic life of the people, and women have been the major victim of such violence because of their peculiar vulnerability occasioned by deep seated patriarchal cultural and religious practices that depict women primarily as homemakers, caregivers and sex objects. Such practices keep women in relatively poor economic status and make them politically powerless.

In Nassarawa state where most of these conflicts occurred, women and girls experienced different forms of sexual violence including rape, violent abduction, forced marriage, forced prostitution and child trafficking and other forms of domestic sexual abuses. The most challenging part of this problem is the almost lack redress or accountability mechanism. Violence against women is therefore perpetrated with impunity.

The research, "Enhancing Access to Justice for Women and Girls in Conflict Areas of Nasarawa State" was conceived to document evidence of the existence of this violence, the magnitude and the role played by various stakeholders.

In achieving this, various meetings were held and processes were followed ranging from tool development through field works, evidence gathering to validation of collected data and evidence.

The overall purpose of the tools development meeting was to bring persons who work in organisations that deal with issues around Human Security, Human Rights, Gender & Gender based violence as well as other relevant technocrats whose experiences could add value to the research process and findings. The specific objectives of the meeting were to review research tools developed by research consultants for appropriateness in generating relevant information and data on sexual violence, and secondly, provide opportunity for stakeholders to make relevant recommendations and commitments towards achieving the research objectives.

The methodology was participatory. Syndicate group work sessions were created to deepen discussion and encourage learning. Feedback sessions were allowed for group presentations at plenary. Simple Quiz approach was used to stimulate relevant thoughts among participants. Experience sharing provided opportunities for participants to learn from one another while clarifying issues and challenges encountered on similar interventions.

Three communities were selected from each of the two focal local government areas for the study. Criteria for selection included; communities that were engulfed in conflict, communities without manifest history of conflict, for comparison and communities that are mixed along the lines of religion. In all, six selected communities namely: Barkin

Abdulahi, Brumbrum, Angba Igga, Asakio, Ipusu and Alogali drawn from two conflicts prone Local Government Areas of Nasarawa Eggon & Lafia, were arrived at and visited by Research and Research Supervisory teams to collect primary data. Offices of numerous stakeholders in Nasarawa state earlier identified were visited for evidence gathering. Various participatory tools were deployed by the teams to generate discussions and elicit information and case studies from the respondents.

After collation of evidence, a debriefing meeting aimed at providing opportunity for the lead researchers to share with the supervisory team preliminary findings of the research project was held. The report in the end identified structural and institutional weaknesses in terms of agencies responsible for monitoring and providing redress for cases of violation as exposed by the research.

Also, validation meeting where researchers shared with the numerous participating stakeholders details of findings was held. Stakeholders examined and scrutinized the key recommendations, and identified gaps for critical review. At the end of the well attended and highly participatory validation event, the draft report of the research as presented by the two lead researchers was accepted, endorsed by the stakeholders after effecting minor amendment.

The research was conducted in very close partnership with local Non Governmental Organisations partners, community groups, traditional leadership and other relevant faith based organisations - Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Jama'atul Nasril Islam (JNI) to entrench ownership. Relevant government institutions including the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), Nasarawa State Emergencies Management Agency (NASEMA) were duly involved in all processes of the research and avowed commitment to implementing outcome within their mandates.

Others involved are; the Nigeria Police and judiciary who occupy vital parts in the chain of Justice Administration System. Numerous civil society organizations were involved both from local to regional actors. Their continued advocacy supported by media agencies could go a long way in ensuring sustained pressure on duty bearers and defenders of access to justice for women and girls.

It my hope that this research has generated ideas and the kind of information needed by human rights defenders and networks to fight injustice against women and girls, help victims and survivors of sexual violence to get better access to justice; and promote greater accountability by national institutions responsible for tackling sexual violence.

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## Preface

This booklet summarises the outcome of the research funded by the British High Commission on “Enhancing Access to Justice for Women and Girls in Conflict Areas of Nasarawa State”, Nigeria. ActionAid Nigeria commenced the implementation of the study process by developing Terms of Reference that could deliver on the objectives of the Project. It also mobilised a broad-based of actors and stakeholders at every strategic points of the research in ensuring that the research reflects the reality of its contexts. The tools development process ensured that various perspectives of the multi-stakeholders were incorporated to make the research output very rich and robust. This led to joint planning where we outlined activity implementation chart to deliver the project. Armed with the improved tools, the consultants hit the field for rigorous qualitative and quantitative data collection exercise.

The outcome of the field work and data collected have been summarised in this publication to ensure wider audience. The research was able to generate abundant evidence, ideas and the kind of information needed by human rights defenders and networks to fight injustice against women and girls, help victims and survivors of sexual violence to get better access to justice; and Promote greater accountability by national institutions responsible for tackling sexual violence. The research deployed tools with Methodological Empathy that show Understanding of behaviour as perceived and interpreted by victims of sexual violence in order to capture the realities of sexual violence in the contexts of conflict.

Realising that effective and efficient Justice Administration System is crucial to Justice this work brought a lot of relevant people and institutions/organisations together. So, what you are holding is a collective effort of a dedicated stakeholders, who sacrificed time and other engagements to contribute to the enhancement of access to justice to victims of sexual violence. Participants were drawn from the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR), National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Nasarawa State Network of NGOs (NANGONET) and the Human Security Network (HSN) from Delta and Nasarawa states.

Others include Nasarawa State Emergency management Agency (SEMA), Concern for Peace and Society Survival (COPASS), Project Agape-Nasarawa State, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Jama'atul Nasril Islam ( JNI) and Kakara Development Initiative, Nasarawa State. The lead researchers were Prof. Ogoh Alubo and Prof.(Mrs) Irene Agunloye, both of the University of Jos, Nigeria. Mr Vitalis Hunduh and Mrs Angela Olofu-Adeoye served as research assistants.

ActionAid Nigeria facilitated and supervised all the phases of this project. The contributions of my colleagues in ActionAid Nigeria, Gbenro Olajuyigbe, who coordinated the project Albert Pam, Tasallah Chibok, Goodluck Omoh, Nkechi Ilochi-omekedo, Onyinyechi Okechuku to the overall achievements of the project are commendable.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Nasarawa state is located in Nigeria's north central geo-political region otherwise referred to as the middle belt zone. It was excised out of the old Plateau State in 1996 to become another State. The area was also part of Benue-Plateau state until the 1976 state creation exercise of the Federal Government of Nigeria

Figure 1.1 MAP OF NIGERIA showing Nasarawa State



Figure 1.2 MAP OF NASSARAWA STATE SHOWING ITS 13 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS



The grey shading represents LGAs of recent violence  
 Nasarawa State currently comprises 13 Local Government Areas (LGAs) which have been further divided into 16 development areas. The developments areas are for,

among others, ease of implementation of development programmes and may also form the nucleus of future LGAs.

The two major religions in the state are Christianity and Islam. There are also some traditional religions. The State has a count of 25 ethnic groups (Alubo 2008:12), making it the 12th most ethnically diverse in Nigeria. More populous among the ethnic groups are the Alago, Eggon, Tiv, Mada, Gbaggi and Fulani. Most of these ethnic groups are located in particular LGAs except the Alago found in at least four, the Eggon in about eight and the Fulani in all the 13 LGAs. Areas occupied by ethnic groups are important as crises which emanate in one LGA can easily spread to other locations in contiguous LGAs of the same target ethnic groups.

The various ethnic groups have cultural festivals which avail them with platforms for colourful exhibitions of traditional clothing, dances, food and other forms of culture. The festivals are major attractions for people within and outside the state as well as serve major public relations functions for the host communities. They are occasions for all ethnic groups to interact more freely with hosts and other guests from the state and beyond.

Relationships, it is generally agreed, between the various ethnic groups, are usually cordial. According to the 2008 state document prepared for the Nigerian Arts Festival, Despite its religious and cultural diversity, the state has continuously enjoyed a peaceful and harmonious relationship between the various groups (Nasarawa State Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2008:1)

However, this harmonious relationship is sometimes disrupted by violence between more ethnic groups. As documented in a recent report (Alubo and Hundu, 2013), ethnic violence seems to have increased in frequency and severity since the turn of the century, particularly, since the return to democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999. The people are mostly engaged in agriculture, mostly as subsistence farmers. They produce food crops such as yams, cassava, guinea corn and rice, as well as cash crops such as soya beans, beniseed, and cashew.

There are also citrus fruits such as oranges and mangoes. Other economic activities in the state include commerce, light manufacturing and the business of transportation. As part of latter, the availability of vehicles has been augmented by motor cycles and tri-cycles, the last two as part of poverty alleviation programme of the Federal Government which is now replicated in the state. Popularly called Achaba and Keke-NAPEP (National Poverty Eradication Programme), these means of transportation are available in virtually every community and thus facilitate movement of persons and farm produce. Nasarawa is called "the state of solid minerals", a reference to the abundance of such minerals in the state. Most of the solid minerals here are either unexploited or mined mostly on a small scale. There is also a growing business of food vending, including fast foods.

Since the return to democratic rule in 1999, the State has had the following elected governors: Abdullahi Adamu, 1999- 2007; Aliyu Akwe Doma 2007-2011; Tanko Almakura, 2011-to date. The first governor served two full terms of four years each. His successor served only one while the third will only be due for re-election in 2015. Each of the governors has had to contend with ethnic violence in one or more local councils.

Nasarawa State is now a centre of learning and scholarship with over 200 secondary



schools, about 1000 primary schools and up to 12 tertiary educational institutions made up of private and government owned polytechnics and colleges of education and the state-owned university in Keffi. The state is well linked to the rest of Nigeria by motorable roads and has modern telecommunications systems, including GSM telephones and internet services. Most of the latter services are, however, limited to the main urban centres. Rural areas are either not served or have unreliable services. Road networks to the rural areas and general problem of all season accessibility are subsisting challenges. Furthermore, most of the medical care and health services' centres are also concentrated in the urban centres. This is also true of tap water and electricity.

### **1.2. RECENT VIOLENCE IN NASARWA STATE**

Recent outbreaks of violence include those of Alago Vs Eggon at Assakio; Alogo Vs Eggon at Brum-Brum; Fulani Vs Eggon at Ladi-ende/Angba-Igga; Eggon Vs Mighili at Gwadinnye; and later Mighili Vs Fulani; Tiv Vs Fulani around Kadarako; and Fulani Vs Agatu at Agbashi. These communities are all in the LGAs surrounding Lafia. These incidents triggered large scale internal displacement as the assailed sought refuge in other locations far away from the conflicts centres. Many of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) found their way to IDP camps for a few weeks before the majority were harboured by relatives (Alubo and Hundu, 2013). These outbreaks in 2012/13 have abated and the various communities are beginning to piece their lives back together by the December 2013.

However, suspicion and traces of enmity never faded off between the parties involved in conflicts here (Alubo and Hundu, 2013). In some locations, opposing ethnic groups disapprove of inter-ethnic marriages. However, some other activities such as football matches are beginning to include the other side. The uneasy calm and general distrust could also lead to gender and other violence.

According to IDPs, life in the camps offered little privacy as men, women, adolescents and younger children were all crammed in the same rooms. The situation exposed people, especially the young, to activities which before now they were shielded from. In addition, the nature of the IDP accommodation could lead to sexual activities as there is

generally free interaction between the opposite sexes in complete disregard to cultural norms.

Furthermore, there are instances in the literature (see Alubo 2008; Elaigwu 2012) where the lack of provisioning drives IDP women to trade their bodies for food. Also, in some cases, IDP women are regarded as easy prey and sometimes used to ingratiate, and pay "homage" to the local chiefs. Many of the younger girls are also given out by parents in hurriedly arranged marriages—which may be a way of obtaining revenue (from the bride price) to survive the difficult times. Besides, the in-laws, would then bear some stake in ensuring survival, and thus boosting survival of the displaced family.

The violence may therefore create opportunity for sexual assault and gender violence in general. This is because in many cases of violent outbreaks, women and girls pay the price of being sexually assaulted and raped by the enemy. Only thorough investigations may provide a clear perspective of whether this is true of the violence in Nasarawa state.

### 1.3 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Although there are limited statistics to support the depth of violence against women in Nigeria, the country has one of the worst cases in Africa. Over the past two decades, northern Nigeria, especially the middle belt (in which Nasarawa state is located), has experienced increased level of violence. The state of insecurity has affected virtually every aspect of social and economic lives of the people. A recent study by Actionaid (Alubo and Hundu 2013; also Elaigwu 2012) painted a graphic picture of the nature of violence and its toll on the people. Women have been the major victims of such violence because of their peculiar vulnerability occasioned by deep seated patriarchal culture and religious practices that depict women primarily as homemakers, caregivers and sex objects. Such practices keep women in relatively poor economic status and make them politically powerless.

In Nassarawa state where most of these conflicts occurred, women and girls experienced different forms of sexual violence including rape, violent abduction, forced marriage, and other forms of domestic sexual abuses. The most challenging part of this problem is the virtual lack of redress or accountability mechanism. Violence against women is therefore perpetrated with impunity.

This study is an attempt to first document evidence of the existence of gender based violence in the state as well as the magnitude and the role played by various stakeholders in causing, fuelling or controlling this violence. The study focuses on two conflict prone LGAs of the state:- Lafia and Nasarawa Eggon, details are provided in the methodology chapter below. Both of these experienced violence in the 2012/13 period.

### 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

The research is expected to provide answers to the following and related questions:

1. What is the nature of the socio-cultural space for girls and women in the various communities?
2. What is the general context of power relations and how does it impact on violence against girls and women among ethnic groups in the research sites?
3. What are the existing provisions for girls and women to seek redress from sexual and gender based violence?
4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the existing institutional mechanisms for seeking redress for sexual and gender based violence?



5. What specific and general recommendations can be proffered to assist in building safe spaces and access to justice for girls and women?

**1.5 Aims and Objectives of the project are to:**

The general objective is to examine the nature of sexual and gender based violence in Nasarawa state with particular reference to the state's repeated experiences with outbreaks of communal violence. This general objective is further broken into the following specifics; the study is therefore being executed to:

1. Investigate the nature of socio-cultural spaces for girls and women in the communities.
2. Document the general context of power relations and how these may cause violence against girls and women.
3. Document the extent of violence against girls and women in the specific locations in general and during recent violence in particular.
4. Investigate what provisions there are for girls and women to seek redress from sexual and gender based violence.
5. Identify strengths and weaknesses of existing institutional mechanisms for redress of sexual violence against girls and women.
6. Make recommendations specific to the locations as well as generally to enable girls and women have safer spaces and access to justice.

These issues are studied with reference to Lafia and Nasarawa Eggon LGA in locations where the dominant ethnic groups are Eggon, Alago, Tiv, and Mighili.

**1.6 Justification**

The objective of the research is to secure the rights of women and girls in conflict settings through evidence gathering; and to provide a safer space conducive to welfare and full exercise of rights of girls and women. It is expected that the research will generate ideas and the kind of information needed by human rights defenders, women's groups and networks to fight injustice against women and girls; help victims and survivors of sexual violence to get better access to justice; and promote greater





accountability in institutions which address sexual and gender violence.

The study is therefore a contribution to building the rights of women and girls in line with national and international documents such as convention for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW). Nigeria is a signatory to other similar documents such as the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (African Union 2003); and Resolution UNSCR 1325. In addition, there are several groups and networks involved in the struggle to realize human rights at the local and national levels. Many of these groups lack the capacity and/or the resources for research and would therefore find the outcome of this research a useful source for mobilization, advocacy and action.

### 1.7 THE REALITY OF GENDER VIOLENCE, RAPE AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS VIOLATION

Press reports have indicated that the public space in Nigeria is not safe, especially for girls and women. There are frequent media reports of rape and other forms of sexual violence, not to mention different forms of discrimination in relation to inheritance and other things (Imam et al, 2003). A recent newspaper editorial on rape cases and other violence against girls and women is so revealing:

...an eight year old girl was raped to death in Etinam local government area in Akwa Ibom. These days, minors, including boys and girls are raped almost on a daily basis by apparently sick adults. Some of the girls are raped by their biological fathers.

In 2012...there were reports of serial rape of elderly widows in their 70s and 80s in Opi, Nsukka in Enugu...Available statistics show that in 2013, no less than 132 rape cases were reported to the Police in Lagos state alone. Benin Central Hospital in Edo state recorded 80 rape cases between March and October last year...in Kano state over 100 rape cases were recorded in the courts in 2013 (The Guardian Editorial February 14, 2014).

News reports in the press have not been any less manifest of sexual violence incidents and related abuses involving different categories of people including law enforcement operatives. Examples of such reports are: "Boy 14 rapes 9 year old girl to death"(wwwpunchng.com); "Policeman 32 rapes JSS1 virgin girl" (Nigerian Standardnews.com. EDII Crime html). and "Girl 16, raped to death in Bayelsa" (Daily Trust, January 17, 2014). Some other more widely reported recent cases involved a popular musician, who allegedly raped a lady in Lagos but claimed it was consensual sex.

Also a police corporal, Anothony Onoja, raped a two year old and was ordered by a court to, alongside the inspector General of Police, pay N10 million. Perhaps more tragic was the case of an 18 year old, simply identified as Janet, who could not endure the shame of being gang raped in Yenogoa. She committed suicide. The Sun newspaper of February 15, 2014 also reported the sentencing of a 62 year old Pastor who defiled a 10 year old girl in Benin. He was sentenced to a two year jail term but with the option of two hundred thousand naira fine

One may even conclude that Nigeria is under the siege of rapists. Hardly a day passes without screaming headlines of bizarre cases of rape. What is more bizarre is the involvement of law enforcement officers. Many now take advantage of female suspects as some male teachers exploit their female students. Some guardians too, or some



otherwise trustworthy, intimate family members also violate their female wards and relations respectively.

**1.8 Other violations of rights of girls and women:** The struggle to realize girls and women's rights has occupied individuals and some local and international organizations. In order to pursue the cause of women, some studies have been conducted to obtain empirical data which would provide concrete and verifiable information for action. One of such studies was conducted by Imam et al (2003) which covered the period of military regime in Nigeria, 1966 – 1999. That study found that during the period in focus, women and girls experienced different forms of rights violation in Nigeria, and even these violations had some regional variations. Some of the patterns that emerged during the period have been reviewed here.

**1.8.1 Violence during the civil war:** Some of the women, both on the Federal and Biafran sides, lost their children or husbands who were conscripted to fight during the civil war. Several of such women faced hardship as a result of the death of the breadwinner. The atrocities of the war were worse on women in the eastern and western Nigeria. Soldiers from these two regions displayed terrifying, animalistic behaviour which may not even be excusable in conflict situations. They had indiscriminate sex with young girls as well as married and unmarried women by force. These resulted in unwanted pregnancies and children as well as starvation as most of the violated girls and women were displaced persons who were only captured and made to face hardship at will. Some of them were even killed.

**1.8.2 Assault by state agents:** Women are assaulted in Nigeria on simple issues that can be resolved amicably. A woman was slapped and continuously kicked by a Divisional Police Officer, DPO, for complaining when she was asked to pull her car off the road in congested traffic. A pregnant woman was hit when a group of soldiers shot at a bus in which she was a passenger. Such incidents occur across the nation, but victims do not get justice (Imam, et al, 2003).

**1.8.3 State killings:** Cases of the state killing women have been recorded severally. A most spectacular example was the killing, Tuesday, June 4, 1996 in Lagos, of Kudirat Abiola wife of the winner of the June 12, 1993 presidential election in Nigeria. She was killed by the agents of the military government of Gen Sani Abacha. The police made half-hearted efforts on the investigation to no avail till date.

**1.8.4 Wife battering:** Reliable data on this is hard to come by in Nigeria. This gender based crime is considered by most people as a family matter. Consequently, it is hardly reported and there are few prosecutions.

**1.8.5 Domestic killings:** This is another form of grave violence on girls and women. It occurs most in the east and south-south regions of Nigeria. There are many cases of extrajudicial killing of women by their neighbours or husbands after some quarrel. In some instances, the law has been duly applied. Some other cases were never brought to book.

**1.8.6 Acid attacks:** Acid attacks on women and girls in Nigeria are common in the east, south-south, and south-west parts of the country. There are several cases other than that of Charity Agbakwuru in 1990. Most of the attacks are perpetrated by persons who are close to the victim including husbands, lovers, relations or neighbours. There were instances acid bath by husbands caused the death of wives. (Imam et al 2003).

**1.8.7 Right to human dignity and security:** The right of women to human dignity is always violated in Nigeria because women are perceived and treated as socially inferior to men. The state did not take action to prevent rape of women by soldiers in eastern Nigeria during the civil war years, 1967 – 1970. The state does not do much to protect the rights of women and enforce human dignity. The first decree violating human rights came from Gen. J. T. U. Aguiyi Ironsi's regime. Since then, state violation of the rights to liberty of women have kept on recurring in several parts of Nigeria.

**1.8.8 Ritual killing of women:** This occurred mostly in Ebiraland in Kogi state in the 1980s. There were usually no serious investigative efforts by security agents and the people responsible for the acts did not face justice.

**1.8.9 Illegal arrests and detention:** These are common for women in Nigeria, especially human rights defenders. Sexual and other forms of violation of women behind prison walls are also not uncommon. Women in several parts of Nigeria have faced court trials without representation. Consequently, they did not receive justice. Many women were beaten while in detention, some of them confined in solitary prisons, had statements extracted from them, and occasionally handed death sentence.

**1.8.10 Women and conflicts:** Conflicts have claimed the lives of women in Nigeria, especially in northern Nigeria in places such as Takum, Tignu, Waduku, Kafanchan, Zangon Kataf, Tafawa Balewa, Jos, Toto, Bauchi, Kano, Kaduna, and Maidugari. The human and reproductive rights of women and girls were violated in such conflicts.

**1.8.11 Right to education:** Women constitute a larger proportion of the 70% of the illiterate population of Nigeria. About 70% of women aged 35 years or older are non-literate. UNESCO figures show that Nigerian girls represent 30 – 90% of the estimated 118 million children of school age who do not attend school. Literacy rate is 15% for

adult females and 45% for adult males. (Vital statistics but specific page of the exact source will be necessary)

**1.8.12 Right to reproductive health:** The earliest marriage age is 11.5 in Kebbi state, 14.2 in Sokoto, 14.3 in Kano, 14.8 in Borno, and 14.7 in Adamawa. Cases of early marriage are predominantly in the northern Nigeria's states dominated by Muslims. Not much has been done to check this indulgence. However, some of the victims have had representation in law courts and won some cases.

The violations above were recorded during the years of military rule notorious for rights violations. However, since the issues of women's rights are rooted in the patriarchal leaning of the culture of most ethnic groups in Nigeria, the change from military to civil rule in the post 1999 era may not make much difference.

### 1.9 CONCEPTUALIZING SPACES

Public space often conveys some notion of a publicly owned environment where members of the public have equal access and participation. In reality however, the public space brings together several publics as purveyors of religion, ethnicity, class and gender, each with its moral codes. This is perhaps why the public space is invariably a contested terrain with countervailing claims over norms, behaviours and what should be permitted or prohibited (Egwu, 2008; Confortini 2006). In Nigeria, some of the contestations in the public space pitch indigenes against settlers and more intensely, Muslims against Christians, often leading to violence ( Elaigwu, 2012; Alubo, 2008).

In this sense, the public space may not belong to an undifferentiated general public. Rather, there are many publics pushing various agenda and seeking to dominate and control the common public space to their advantage (Alubo 2011).

Central to these interests is the question of gender and powers that go with it. In most parts of Nigeria, the public space is dominated by men in general and the ideology of patriarchy or male supremacy in particular. There are clear demarcations of turfs, where women are generally confined to areas where, in addition to being less visible, they also exercise little discretion and power. Thus, the structures that run Nigeria's government at the Federal, State and Local Government levels only have only a sprinkling of women which amounts to mere tokenism. This reality, which has been true since colonialism, the immediate post colonial period as well as the years of military rule has continued even with the restoration of civil rule since 1999. As the table 1.1 below shows, the structure of power at the Federal, State and LGA levels has remained male dominated.

Currently, Nigeria's upper legislative house of 109 members, for example, has only nine women while the lower house with 360 members has less than 40 women. In a similar manner, none of Nigeria's 36 governors is female. In this way, patriarchy is a defining characteristic of public space in Nigeria.

The situation in Nasarawa State is not different from what obtains at the national level. There is no single woman in the State House of Assembly of 25 members. The LGA level is not better. Indeed, since the creation of the state in 1996, no woman has held the chair of a local government.

Beyond gender representation, such other aspects as the control of the public space have legal and institutional dimensions. In the judiciary, even if women are few, can

Table 1.1: Women elected into Public Office in Nigeria 1999 to 2011

Office	1999		2003		2007		2011	
	Seats Available	Women	Seats Available	Women	Seats Available	Women	Seats Available	Women
President	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Senate	109	3(2.8)	109	4(3.7)	109	9(8.3)	109	7(6.4)
House of Reps.	360	7(1.9)	360	21(5.8)	360	27(7.5)	360	25(6.9)
Governors	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0
SHA	990	24(2.4)	990	40(3.6)	990	57(5.8)	990	68(6.9)
SHA Committee								
Chairperson	829	18(2.2)	881	32(3.6)	887	52(5.9)	887	-
LGA								
Chairpersons	710	13(1.8)	774	15(1.9)	740	27(3.6)	740	-
Councillors	6368	69(1.1)	6368	267(4.2)	6368	235(3.7)	6368	-

Source: British Council Report (2012)

\*Note: The numbers in bracket represent the percentage of women elected.

women negotiate their way to have cases heard at the top? Where the structures are full of men, the possibility appears slim. Furthermore, the public space have institutions, which in Nasarawa as well as Nigeria in general are run mostly by men. Given the low or no gender representation, how can issues arising from and related to women can be heard dispassionately to ensure justice? This particularly concerns those communities where cases, including rape, are heard by the committees without any female representation. In this way, not only is space contested, the structures in place also seem to load the dice to the disadvantage of women accessing justice.

This underrepresentation has led to what Confortini (2006), following Galtung(1969), has articulated as three forms of violence against women:- direct, structural and cultural. Direct violence is where the harm affects the woman as a human being and may involve use of physical form such as rape, torture and murder. Physical violence is visible and may be reported in the press as well as to law enforcement. There is also cultural violence which involves practices and attitudes that have existed over a long period as to be considered part of "our culture". Cultural violence is generally invisible and often not recognized as violence. Structural violence is when groups such as ethnic and gender categories have differential access to goods and services in society. This structure of inequality then becomes part of the system. Structural violence is often invisible and may not be recognized.

This report is in five chapters. The proceeding will describe the methodology and fieldwork processes after which chapter three will commence presentation of the research findings: issues of gender power in the communities and various types of sexual and gender violations. Chapter four continues the research findings with particular reference to the processes of seeking redress from violations as well as the limitations. The final chapter provides a summary of the key findings and proceeds to the suggestions for safer spaces. The conclusion states that while the study was focuses on Nasarawa State, the findings resonate in all of central Nigeria and other places where patriarchy and male dominance tend to turn blind eye to gender violence.



# Chapter 2

## Methodology

This study was conducted using qualitative methods, specifically, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) as well as In-depth Interview (IDI). The choices were determined by the need to get to the roots for the existing situation, rather than just quantify or provide percentages or other statistics. The challenge here, as stated in chapter one, is to investigate, among others, the nature of gender and sexual violations; social-cultural factors lead to them; and how rape and other sexual and gender based offences are addressed in Nasarawa State. The state experienced repeated violence in the past five years and it was reasoned that the eruption of violence might exacerbate the situation.

The first step was the choice of which one of the 13 LGAs would be covered. In the end, it was agreed with Actionaid, the funders, the Project Agape, a local NGO which works in many of the communities in the state, including the ones which experienced recent violence, that Lafia and Nasarawa Eggon LGAs be chosen. NGOs which work in the area of human rights as well as FIDA were involved in deciding on the choices. In each LGA, three communities were selected as examples of either areas of recent violence or places which provided refuge for fleeing Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The following were the chosen research sites, along with the main ethnic groups in each location.

Table 2.1 Research sites and ethnic composition

Nasarawa Eggon LGA,	Lafia LGA
Alogani, mostly Eggon ethnic group	Assakio, mostly Alago ethnic group
Brum-Brum, Mostly Eggon ethnic group	Gwadinnye, mostly Mighili ethnic group
Angba-Igga, mostly Eggon ethnic group	Kadarko, mostly Tiv ethnic group

### 2.2 RESEARCH METHODS USED

The research is based on Focus Group Discussions, In-depth interviews and Documentary Sources.

**2.2.1 Focus group discussion:** This method was used to obtain data from community members. Through the FGDs, the entire range of issues related to the research objectives were explored (see Appendix A). In each community, four FGD sessions were conducted with male and female adults, as well as male and female youths; this yielded a total of four FGDs in each community and a total of 24 FGDs. All planned FGDs were conducted in lively sessions.

It was an opportunity for community members to discuss issues related to the community and to the recent crises. The groups were constituted through mobilization by Project Agape which ensured that invitees were of equal status. The facilitators listened carefully to stakeholders, placing value on their shared experiences and knowledge but conscious of the fact that only they can find solutions to their problems/challenges. At these sessions, women's voices and those of other marginalized groups were heard. By separating the women who are sometimes inhibited when in the midst of men, due to cultural reasons, it ensured that women's views, as distinct from men's, were captured. This was empowering and a boost for women. These sessions raised the awareness of the participants, strengthening their capacity to discuss problems affecting them and exploring ways of solving them their

own way. The FGDs comprised 8-15 discussants and interactions were tape recorded for transcription.

**2.2.2 In-depth Interview**—there were also IDI sessions with the following groups/individuals.

- Male community leaders
- Female community leaders
- Traditional rulers
- Victims and parents
- Faith Based Organizations/Religious leaders and organizations such as , Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN, Jamatuul Nasaral Islam, JNI, and others
- Security agencies
- FIDA
- NGOs
- Health Services providers
- Judiciary
- National Human Rights Commission
- State Ministry of Women Affairs
- Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolutions
- Victims of rape and sexual violence (see instrument 3)

The IDIs explored the same issues as the FGDs (see Appendix A) except that the respondents are individuals. Up to 6-8 IDIs were conducted in each community. In addition, IDIs were held with officials in various NGOs in Lafia, Ministry of Women Affairs, Police officers and leaders of women organizations.

**2.2.3 Documentary sources:** We also used documentary sources such as reports of NGOs as well as the Police crime statistics. The literature on women's access to justice in Nigeria, girls and women's vulnerability during and after conflicts, and sexual violence against women in Nigeria, and in Nasarawa State were examined. Other secondary data sources such as the popular press were used. As shown in chapter three, these documentary sources further enriched the primary data.

**2.3 The Sample:** The sample was made up of male and female adult community members, and male and female youths. These groups were the discussants in the FGDs. In addition, the sample also included individuals for the IDI sessions as indicated above. The sample was not defined to meet the rigours of scientific criteria of giving every eligible community member an equal and calculable opportunity for entering the sample. The purpose here was to interact with people who experienced the recent violence and therefore were well placed to discuss the impact of the violence on the rights of girls and women.

**2.3.1 The role of stakeholders:** Stakeholders played crucial roles in the study by critiquing the methodology as well as the research instruments. They also pointed to documentary data sources which could enrich the study. These roles were facilitated through a pre-research workshop organized which drew participants from pro-peace movements; women NGOs; human rights organization such as FIDA and local NGOs within Nasarawa State and beyond. The research proposal, as well as the planned methodology, including the instruments, were presented to the stakeholders for their critique and suggestions. In the final analysis, therefore, the instruments used were as refined by the informed stakeholders.

**2.3.2 Debriefing and Validation Meetings:** The methods were enriched by the debriefing and validation meetings. The first brought together some members of the community as well as stakeholders to whom the draft report was presented. The presentation was discussed and additional information offered. The same process was followed in the validation meeting which comprised a larger audience. The audience here also included the police, representative of the judiciary, research institutes, human rights organizations as well as community based organizations and NGOs. Two victims of rape attended the validation meeting. These two meetings brought further input into the reports, especially aspects dealing with safer spaces and recommendations. The input were incorporated into this final version of the report.

**2.4 Challenges and Limitation of Fieldwork:** Fieldwork for the study was conducted between the 28<sup>th</sup> of February and the March 8, 2014. While the research team accomplished all planned field activities, there were also some challenges. It was not always possible to keep to the ceiling of 15 persons (male youth FGD in two locations, and adult male FGD in one location) for FGDs as many more turned up and were reluctant to leave. It was perceived that the team might be offering some relief materials. The research team simply divided the people in groups, conducted FGD with one and returned to talk with the others so they did not feel neglected. Secondly, in some locations, participants turned up in trickles leading to longer delays than planned. This was particularly true of Assakio, and to some extent in Brum-Brum. Finally, there were initial problems with logistics, as there were more people than the spaces available in the available vehicle. The team improvised again by hiring an additional vehicle.

None of the challenges adversely affected the quality of the data. The team did well to assure all of anonymity in the process of data collection. Accordingly, the team deleted all names supplied. Furthermore, in order to guarantee anonymity, the names of all respondents were expunged from various reports. Where specific officials in the Ministry or Police were interviewed, references were superficially made rather than to a specific office.



# Chapter 3

## Power And Spaces For Girls And Women

**T**his chapter examines the nature of sexual and gender violations in Nasarawa state, beginning with gender relations, power and privileges and continuing with specific abuses such as rape, wife capture and early marriage.

**3.1 Gender and power in the communities:** In all the concerned communities, men dominate the power structure. Every community has a Mai Ungwur, or village head who is a man. He adjudicates in day-to-day issues including cases of theft. Many of these issues are resolved at the community level with the council of elders, all of them male. Women are not part of the elders' committee and they are not consulted on issues in the community. However, in Angba-Igga and Kadarko a woman each has been appointed as Magajiya. These female chiefs have since become members of the village head's council. As shown on the section on rape cases, women may be invited only to give evidence. Women are not part of decision making, (see section 3.7 below) including decisions such as the marriage of her own daughter. Power in the community therefore resides with the men who preside over affairs and pass instructions to women.

In all these communities, male dominance is emphasised and women are marginalized. There is no programme on ground to enable women become the village head. As already indicated, there are only two villages where female magajiya are allowed to sit on the committee of the village head. Until some changes happen, the current structure emphasising patriarchy seems firmly entrenched. Community representatives at the validation sessions organised by the research team affirmed that the power in the communities resided with men.

**3.2 Gender relations, power and privileges:** The issue of gender relations is frequently rendered in the biblical story of creation-that God created man, then he made for him a helper, a woman. This divine arrangement where the man was the head of the household still persisted in many cultures including those in Nasarawa State. The gender and power relations in Nasarawa state reveal among all the ethnic groups surveyed that the man is the breadwinner who provides for the wife and children. He is also the head





of the family and directs affairs in the household. On the other hand, the woman cooks, takes care of the house and is the mother of the children. The man is the protector and head of the house. The woman helps the husband, mostly in the farms, but they also do some income earning activities such as trading, or knitting. Some of the women are civil servants and in other salaried positions. Income generated by women from their economic activities complement efforts of the household heads.

The man has more power in the house and in the community. Among the Tiv, the father is the leader while the role of the woman is to look after the children while the man goes out to cater for the family. The man takes care of the woman. During wars or crises the man faces the enemy; the women flee with the children. All respondents acknowledged the inequality of power between male and female. This unequal power is rooted in the culture and the general patriarchy. A female youth participant in focus group discussion in Kadarko stated that among the Tiv, women and men are “not equal because according to the the Tiv tradition, man has the authority to provide the shelter for the woman; you as the woman your own is to take care of the house and children”.

The situation among the Eggon is similar. The man is in charge of the home, he provides for the house and feeds the family. The woman takes care of the children and she also has her own farm but must first complete work on the husband's. She consults the husband before she can sell her own farm produce. Here too, power is not equal. A female participant at the FGD at Brum-Brum observed that among the Eggon “men are the decision makers, they are the bread winners and women are supposed to just obey; they stay at home if the husband say they should. Women and girls are expected to show respect to men and boys.

For the Alago, the man is also the breadwinner, he protects the family, provides all the needs and the women take care of the home and the children. Women are equally involved in enterprises like farming and buying and selling and they make financial contributions to the family. However, they cannot take decisions independently. The father must be present before major decisions are taken. The men are the decision makers. Women can contribute in decision making but the man has the final say. The man has all the powers, runs the house, and gives directives. His decision overrides the woman's. A male youth FGD participant stated that "Men have power over women among the Alago. Women serve the men, but the men do much of the farm work. The women do the domestic chores".

**3.2.1 Unequal power and sexual violence:** Although there are unequal power relations between men and women in Nasarawa state, the majority of respondents observed that this does not lead to gender violence. For the Eggon, the women have some portion for her farm, but she sells her farm produce only with the approval of the husband. The woman keeps her money, the man keeps his as well, but the overall decision is by the man. He can stop any activity in the house.

The situation among the Mighili is similar. The man is the overall head, gives directives as well as provides for the family. The woman cooks the food as well as looks after the children. According to respondents, unequal power relation between Mighili women and their men does not lead to gender violence. A male FGD youth participant at Gwadanye maintained that there is no gender violence. According to him,

Unequal power relation between Mighili women and their men does not lead to gender





violence. For instance, when we cultivate our farms, we give the woman a piece of land to cultivate as well. When they sell the produce from their land we do not confiscate the money they get. If the husband does not have, he can request assistance from his wife. However, he does not use force to claim [take] what belongs to his wife.

Some of the respondents maintained that although there is no gender violence. It is men that bring women into their homes, consequently, women are supposed to be submissive and obedient to their men—a further reinforcement of patriarchy. As a male youth explained, “men do not violate the rights of women. However, it is the man who goes out to marry a woman into the family and not the other way round. Therefore, whatever the husband says, the wife obeys”.

Although most respondents maintained that power inequality does not lead to gender violence, a few respondents argued otherwise. According to them, wife battering also occurs among all ethnic groups. According to an adult female FGD participant, unequal gender relations lead to gender violence. His words:

Yes, the unequal power relationship leads to gender violence because the women and girls have no right of expressing themselves; they are not part of the decision making in their community as well as their homes. Even when they feel their right has been violated as a wife they have to seek their husband's consent before reporting.

A female youth at Assakio also believed that that unequal gender relations lead to violence on women. According to her:

Sometimes, yes, because he is the head of the household, he does whatever he likes. The woman must ask for the man's permission. If the woman asks questions, she may be beaten up. Sometimes when food is in short supply in the house, the man goes out to eat. If the wife asks why there is no food she may be beaten up. Sometimes the wife may move over to the parents when beating becomes regular.

**3.3 Girls' and women's Education:** Women and girls within Nasarawa State do not have equal access to education. Consequently, there are more boys in schools than

girls. A male FGD participant at Angba-Igga estimated the male – female ratio of enrollment in schools at 35:65 in Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ (ERCC) Nursery and Primary School and Local Government Education Authority Primary School in the community. According to him, "boys' enrolment is higher than girls' even though girls' academic performance is better than boys". A male youth at Alogani estimated the ratio of female – male enrollment in schools within the community at about 8/20, while in Kadarko a female youth observed that "in some classes there are 20 females and 30 boys". Respondents adduced several reasons for this situation.

Some of the respondents stated that some of the females who are enrolled sometimes become pregnant and discontinue schooling to marry; some of the girls marry early. Once they get married, most females do not continue with education. For males, even where they have a wife they continue to attend school. In addition, other factors which determine girls' poor access to education include distance to schools; inability of parents to meet financial obligations; lack of role models in the communities; poor facilities in the schools; cultural beliefs especially the preference for the male child.

According to some of the respondents once a girl attains puberty she is given out in marriage; it is even alleged by a respondent at Alogani that "many girls are anxious to marry". In the opinion of other respondents priority is given to male education such that where there is not enough money for male and female children to attend school, most fathers give preference to the boys. As a male FGD participant at Alogani stated, "why we give preference to the male child to continue in school is because for some of the girls, after parents spent so much on their education they become pregnant and discontinue schooling".

Others, such as this male adult lamented the attitude of girls who become pregnant while in school and become dropout:

Girls generally especially in Gwadanye community can easily be pregnant and go for early marriage. A case in point was the daughter of my friend Mr..... He spent a lot of money on his daughter's education (Felicia ...), she has married, so we considered that as waste of limited resources available for the family use (Adult male, Gwadanye).

Many respondents stated that there are more boys than girls in schools because in the past community members believed that if female child went to school she would become "spoilt" or simply wayward or promiscuous. So, once a girl attained puberty she was given out in marriage. They also observed that some of the girls were highly materialistic and were therefore easily lured and put in the family way, and their education suddenly truncated.

In some instances, the girls are forced to stop schooling and remain at home to do domestic chores, especially to help in fetching water from distant places. Some of the respondents blamed parents for low enrollment of girls. They stated that the females were discriminated against by parents and hence "some parents are at fault for low enrollment of females in schools because they do not consider it relevant to enroll females in schools". Other respondents explained that where a family lacked the resources to sponsor the education of children, male children supported themselves by engaging in motorcycle transportation business, hewing of wood or farming to get school fees.

Female children could not do these. This is a further reason why more boys than girls were enrolled in schools. According to respondents many fathers gave priority to male children acquiring education because they believed that the male child that would succeed them as head of the family needed to be trained.

In spite of all these deprivations, the enrollment of girls in schools is generally improving. Among the Tiv people more women and girls are now enrolled in schools because they have realized the benefits of girls' and women's education. A male adult respondent at Kadarko observed:

Female children are also being enrolled into schools and given the benefit to acquire higher education. Nowadays it is the female children that bury their fathers. We believe that if a female child acquires higher education she stands chances of getting a good husband who will take care of the in-laws.

There is thus a stronger reason to assist the family with the new disposition rather than to train the girl to make her fully functional in the society.

In spite of the increase in enrolment of females in schools in Nasarawa State, most of the schools in the conflict areas are not functioning. Many of the pupils have fled with their parents. Some other children have been transferred to other schools either outside of the state or relatively more peaceful communities where schools are running. This is a major challenge to education in general and girls' education in particular.

On the issue of a reliable solution to the challenge of access to education confronting girls, some respondents argued that a legislation by the State House of Assembly would be helpful. The law should seek to discourage the practice of arbitrary marrying off of girls even as it should seek to also put a stop to marriage for minors.

### 3.4 Harmful traditional practices

There are some harmful traditional practices against women and girls in the state. Not all the ethnic groups have the same set of practices though. Among the Alago, there are



two masquerades which are very dangerous for women and girls to see, namely Asuko and Alekwu. Once one of these two come out, women are not allowed to see it. If they do, they will be barren or experience miscarriage. If they have a child, that child will die. For the Eggon people at Angba-Igga, it is torture and curse for females who set eyes on the village masquerade generally referred to as Dodo. Girls are subjected to female genital mutilation, although it is not rampant. Among the Mighili, female genital mutilation commences from the age of 15. It is said that the practice is gradually dying out. According to a female youth FGD participant in Gwadanye, "we don't like it because it's painful". Another female youth at Gwadanye mentioned that "Now girls take themselves to the woman who does it. Some of us are afraid because we heard it is painful". A women's leader at Gwadanye stated that "we have FGM for girls below 15, there is no ceremony".

In addition to female genital mutilation, there are houses that Mighili women are not allowed to enter. If they do, they will not bear children. Another harmful cultural practice of the Mighili occurs when a woman loses her husband. On the day the husband dies she is expected to go crying to each of the surviving uncle to announce the death. But if the wife dies, the husband does not do the same. Among the community in Kadarko, Tiv women are not allowed to participate in decisions being made by men at public fora.

Across the entire state, there is a high preponderance of young female hawkers. This is particularly more prevalent with girls from muslim families. A staff of the Ministry of Women Affairs in the state noted that at Tundun Wada Abu, many girls are out of school hawking wares for their parents. This practice often exposes girls to sexual violation. Thus, hawking not only results in school dropouts, it may also expose girls to early sexual debut.

Most of the harmful practices against females are done in secret and not discussed openly. A staff of the Ministry of Women Affairs in the state lamented that "female genital mutilation and other harmful practices are not known because they are not discussed openly and so there is little that can be done if women are not complaining".

**3.5 Inheritance:** A particularly recurrent feature of the cultures of all the ethnic groups in Nasarawa State is the relegation of females to the background. They are not allowed to be part of any decision making on matters of importance including inheritance. They are also not entitled to inherit property from either their fathers or husbands. Among the Mighili, few women are part of the decision making in the community and their opinions are sometimes considered.

However, women and girls do not have a say on decisions on inheritance as they can only have whatever is given to them by the male family members. If the father dies, the only property the female children can inherit are yam seedlings. They cannot inherit farm, money, houses or land. If the male child who inherits the late father's property such as money is willing, he can share with his sisters. In the case of a woman's death, her property is shared among her children. If she had farm, land or house it will given to the male child, while the rest of her belongings including dresses, plates and food are given to the female child. A male youth who participated in an FGD in Gwadanye explained that,

Why female children do not inherit the property of their late father is because they go out for marriage. If you allow the female child and her husband to inherit her father's



house then if later she has problems in her husband's house, where will she run to?

Also, married women from the Mighili ethnic group cannot inherit property of their late husband. It is the male children who inherit their late father's property and the mother could only benefit through the son. So strict is this discrimination that even if the father has more than one wife and the other wives have male children and one of the wives does not have any male child, the childless woman is not entitled to any property. A male Mighili youth wondered, "The woman you marry is not from your house, she is from a different family, why would she inherit property in your house?"

It is also the practice among the Tiv that women and girls do not inherit property from the late father or husband. A women's leader at Kadarko understood the situation and expressed it as a rhetorical question: "Who will give it you?".

For the Eggon, women and girls do not participate in decision making on issues of inheritance. According to an adult male FGD participant at Alogani, their participation in decision making on matters of inheritance does not matter". For the traditional Eggon person who is neither a Muslim nor a Christian, women are not entitled to inherit any property. It is the male children that inherit from the father.

Usually, it is the male members of the family who decide on how the estate can be shared. When the father dies all property are gathered and shared among the male children. The eldest son takes his share first, down to the youngest. Where a man has two wives, everything is shared into two for the children of the two wives. Girls and women do not have a say on matters of inheritance. However, a girl is only entitled to whatever is given to her by the father during his lifetime. Similarly, among the Alogani, women and girls do not have the right to inheritance from either the husband or the father. Usually, the younger brother of the deceased inherits his property including the children, and the widow. If a woman dies, her property including children are inherited by her sister, who also takes care of the children.



The general rule about inheritance is now mediated by Islam. Among Muslims both male and female children can inherit. However the property is not shared equally. In some cases, the male child is made to take two times of what is shared the female.

Although women and girls do not inherit property of their father or husband, the practice of denying them inheritance is gradually changing among the more enlightened families. Women and girls are beginning to inherit from fathers and husbands, especially from the husbands in some instances. However, the situation varies from family to family. A community leader in Gwadanye observed:

Well, from my experience about the right of girls and women to inheritance in this community, the girls are not entitled to inheritance. However, it also varies from family to family. A case in point was a family friend who lost his brother Mr. Ishaku....., some little portions from his land were given to the women in the family.

In some instances, some relations of the deceased out of toseyi (sympathy, compassion) may give some property to women and girls.

**3.6 Early marriage and sexual violation:** There are widespread cases of early marriages involving all ethnic groups studied. In most cases, early marriage is with the full support of the girl's parents and typically involves dropping out of school. It is alleged that parents regard early marriage as revenue yielding enterprise as they stand to gain from the bride price. A female community member in Kadarko shed more light on this thus:

It happens here, from 12 or 11 to 15 years of age. It is not about age, suitors will come and sometimes, the parents force the girl because they need the money, they will force the girl to the man. Worse, when you are from poor family, rich man comes, they force you to him, collect money and take care of their children.

Many adult female respondents said that once a suitor comes for a girl with the bride price to offer, whether the mother likes or not, she has little choice. The father gives out the daughter and collects the money. Another reason for early marriage is unwanted pregnancy which causes some girls to drop out of school and get married. For many parents pregnancy brings shame and a way to avoid it is early marriage. However, there is a growing concern for child rights violation in the state. The Child Rights Law which was domesticated in Nasarawa State in 2006 states clearly in Article 18 that:

A person-

- (a) Who marries a child or
- (b) To whom a child is betrothed, or
- (c) Who promotes the marriage of a child or
- (d) Who betroths a child

Commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine of N50, 000; or punishment for a term of one year or to both (Child Rights Law, 2006)

Also, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of Women in Africa says in Article 6 under marriage that:

- a) No marriage shall take place without the free and full consent of both parties;
- b) The minimum age of marriage for women shall be 18 years

During the validation meeting, some members of the community said no early marriage

takes places without the consent of parents on both sides. They also said the consent of the girl is sought.

Respondents enumerated causes of teenage pregnancy among girls in Nasarawa state to include parents not living up to the responsibility of looking well after their female children. The girls therefore get exposed to bad manners at licentious social functions and the experience they come across, and the influences such experience have on them make them vulnerable to early marriage. An adult male participant at Angba-Igga explained a case of teenage pregnancy leading to early marriage. According to him, "A man (who) struggles hard to sponsor his daughter but she chooses to be pregnant. The daughter of the Madaki is an example. She became pregnant at 16 years and got married". Early marriage makes other girls in Nasarawa State to be susceptible to further sexual violation because girls of the same age are seen as "ripe" for sex.

An adult male FGD participant said "cases of early marriage are rampant at Angba – Igga, and the age of 14 – 15 years is normally times when girls run from schools to marry". In Brum-Brum, the male youths said "ta isa taba, se a taba" meaning she has reached the age, so give it a trial, to justify early marriage. Some of the respondents justified early marriage on the reason that if the girls reach puberty but they do not marry, they may begin to flirt. A male youth at Alogani maintained that 'If balaga ya yawa (too mature) that is also a problem; balaga may lead to sexual debut'. In addition, many parents are anxious to receive the bride price of the daughters in the hope that it will cushion poverty. Few respondents observed that some girls come into marriage with little idea of what marriage is about, consequently the husband overrides their decision making in matters of sexual relations.

According to some of the respondents, early marriage is very common in Nasarawa State and it exposes young girls to both health and emotional hazards. In most cases, the men in the relationship are very old people, and the generation gap is rather oppressive. Respondents noted that very often, these marriages break up leaving the girls devastated, vulnerable and with low self-esteem. Also, early marriage may make the girls prone to Vesico Virginal Fistula (VVF), and other sexually transmissible diseases (STDs) as well as increased risks of maternal mortality. These conditions are common among younger pregnant girls who are physically immature.

**3.7 Rape:** Rape is very common in Nasarawa state. The perpetrators and victims cut across ethnic and religious groups. However, in recent times herdsmen are noted for raping women from other ethnic groups especially in Kadarko and Gwadyane. Women are raped by the herdsmen on the farms and desolate roads. The women also fall victim when they go about their gender assigned roles of fetching fire wood and water. In most communities water and firewood are available in the bushes and farms. As a women's leader at Angba-Igga stated, "less than one week ago the Fulani intercepted and threatened an old woman. She had no choice. They raped her and she could no longer walk. Later the boys mobilized but the Fulani had already disappeared". The leader also observed that, In another case, a group of 10 women went to the bush for firewood. The Fulani attacked them and caught two and raped them. One of the women could no longer walk after the rape, men went to assist. They were both taken to the clinic for examination. The boys wanted to chase out the Fulani from the areas but the elders prevailed on them. It was feared such action may lead to another round of crisis.

When the two rape victims reached the village, their husbands divorced them instantly.



There are several cases of rape of women by herdsmen in Kadarko. As an adult male FGD participant stated,

Not long, Joseph ---'s wife was returning from farm with yam seedlings. Some Fulani men attacked her, took her into the bush and raped then shot and killed her. We brought the corpse to our traditional ruler. The DPO in Kadarko also saw the corpse, but nothing was done about the case. The police did not even go to the scene of the killing. When we complained, the traditional ruler and the police did not take action, they told us to be patient.

An adult female FGD participant revealed that:

The day before yesterday, certain Fulani men raped two of the wives of my step sons . In addition, the Fulani beat them and confiscated everything they were fleeing with; that was on Thursday, 27/02/2014. As the other woman has mentioned, my daughter was killed on the farm the previous day, and the following day intense shooting by Fulani continued, so they were trying to flee.

One of the rape victims told her story:

I was raped by two men. When the second group met me they told me to look at the sun; they said they will kill me. I knelt down and begged them to spare my life. He then raped me. After he finished he told me run without looking back. As I was running, his colleagues were calling me to come back but he [rapist] told them to let me go.

There are several other stories such as this 16 year old girl from Gwadanye who was attacked in their hut on their farm and mercilessly beaten by the herdsmen, and then raped. In the words of the rape victim, including further details at the validation meeting:

We were in the farm harvesting guinea corn; at night the Fulani came and started beating us. They hit my mother, she fell down; they hit me and I too fell. When my father



came out [of the farm hut] they shot him in the forehead. They said they must sleep with me, then they beat me. I wore a pair of trousers, they tore it; they brought a knife. I asked what I had done that they wanted to kill. They beat me with the cutlass [before] they raped me. I sustained injuries on my back. When they finished raping me, they inserted a stick into my vagina. When they heard the villagers coming to our rescue with guns, they removed the stick from my organ and ran away.

The sad experience of this young girl's ordeal is well known in the community and she is now highly stigmatized. Many people refer to her as matan Fulani or the wife of Fulani. She faces an uncertain future as the stigma might scare away suitors.

In Gwadanye, Alogani, and Kadarko rape victims or their relations told gory stories of what happened. They also know some other girls or women who had been raped. However, there is some reluctance in discussing rape, possibly because of the stigma. There is some unease and hence in Assakio, adult female denied that rape occurred in the community. Afterwards, they accepted that rape happens but is rare.

When the rape involves the "other", respondents were more forthcoming. There have been several cases of rape of local women by herdsmen in Kadarko, Gwadanye, and Angba-Iggah. The number of rape cases has escalated since the recent violence. Some of the rape victims are suffering physical and psychological trauma. A woman at Kadarko stated that "there was a woman that was raped by this same men (Fulani) during the last crises and the woman has emaciated, she may be suffering from a psychological trauma".

Usually, the rape victims do not receive adequate medical attention. They only receive medication for bruises and there is no form of counseling. While some respondents believed that the herdsmen use rape as a weapon of war, others said the herdsmen commit rape because they are out for war and have left their wives in distant places. The local people cannot punish the rapists because the latter are usually not caught. Secondly, the herdsmen have left their wives in other places and their women cannot be accessed even if the locals wanted to revenge.

Rape cases were also recorded at the IDP camp at Mada Station. These were not committed by the herdsmen but by Eggon and Mada youths. Those who were caught in the act were thoroughly beaten but no further action was taken. There are also cases of rape and defilement of young girls by their close relations or neighbours. At Alogani, an uncle defiled his two-month old niece for ritual purposes. The baby did not survive the ordeal. In this case there was no action, not even the community trial.

Most of the rape victims, during the crises, do not get justice because the offenders escape. The cases are hardly reported either. For those cases that are reported, the police sometimes do not conduct serious investigations. A senior serving officer with the Nigeria Police stated that the conviction rate for cases of rape in Nasarawa State is high. However, available data from the Police prove otherwise as shown in the table below.

**Table 3.1: Cases of Sexual Violation of Women and Children in Nasarawa State, 2012 – 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2014**

Date of offence	Complainant	Complainant's Residence	LGA offence committed	Suspect's Name	Suspect's Residence	LGA	Suspect's Age	Victim's Age	Status of Case
21.02.2012	Commissioner of Police	Lafia	Awe	Emmanuel Antsa	Tunga	Awe LGA	20 yrs		Pending in court
24.02.2012	Commissioner of Police	Lafia	Uke Dev. Area	Sunday Peter	Uke Dev. Area	Uke Dev. Area	22 yrs		Pending in court
02.06.2012	Maria Ugwumba	Mararaba	Karu	Stanley Aniako	Mararaba	Karu	32 yrs		Pending in court
22.02.2013	Abdulkarim Abubakar	Lafia	Lafia	Musa Dogara	Lafia	Lafia	35 yrs		Pending in court
02.03.2013	Muas Sule	Wakwa	Lafia	Isa Musa & Ishaka Useini	Gandu	Lafia	30 yrs		Pending in court
					Gandu	Lafia	23 yrs		
15.06.2013	Ngozi Obi	Karu	Karu	Anthony Onoja	Force Hqtr, Abuja	Karu	31 yrs	2.6 yrs	Pending in court
16.08.2013	Mary Eje	New Nyanya	Karu	Naroka Olambo	New Karu	Karu	18 yrs		Pending in court
14.09.2013	Abdullahi Ibrahim	Auta Baalefi	Karu	Mohammed Salihu	Auta Baalefi	Karu	20 yrs		Pending in court
05.10.2013	Cpl.Jibril Malum	Ebonyi Police Cmmnd.		Danjuma Ishaku	Gwadanye	Jenkwa Dev. Area	30 yrs		Pending in court
27.11.2013	Ogiri Christopher	Ombi one	Nass. Eggon	Godwin Paul (homo offence)	Ombi one	Nass. Eggon	40 yrs	14 yrs	Pending in court
15.01.2014	Anthony Udozor	New Karu	Karu	James Adegbe	New Karu	Karu	58 yrs	7 yrs	Pending in court
18.01.2014	Isa Udo	Ajiga	Nasarawa	Hassan Ibrahim	Ajiga	Nasarawa	20 yrs		Pending in court
23.01.2014	Gift Ame	Oke	Karu	Gambo Idris Moh'd	Oke	Karu			Pending in court
05.02.2014	Emmanuel Ajayi	Karu	Karu	Joseph Nwori	New Karu	Karu	18 yrs		Pending in court
10.02.2014	Commissioner of Police	Lafia	Lafia	Monday Achimugu	Mararaba	Karu	30 yrs		Pending in court
11.02.2014	Zaidu Aliyu	Agyaragu	Jenkwe	Rabiu Moh'd	Agyaragu	Jenkwe	20 yrs		Pending in court
28.02.2014	Sophia Aga Tibebi	Mararaba	Karu	Okoye Onun-Iwara	Mararaba	Karu	18 yrs	2.6 yrs	Pending in court

Source: Nigeria Police Force, Nasarawa State Command, March 2014



According to the police, many rape cases are pending for several reasons. First, it takes time to complete investigations. Secondly, many of the witnesses who would strengthen the cases may develop cold feet and not show up. Third is the question of evidence. In the words of a Police officer:

If we are aware of case of rape immediately it occurs, it can easily be handled, but if the victim has had a bath, it is difficult to establish a case of rape. Even if you take her to hospital, it is difficult to establish the truth about the rape. So there is no way we can charge the offender to court. Even if you found semen on her or realized that she has been dis-virgined, it difficult to establish whether the semen is that of the accused or that the accused is the person who has dis-virgined her.

The rape narrative is the same—victims are overpowered by the rapist and women are violated. In most cases, the offenders disappear, while in others the offenders are tried or the trial is stalled. There are issues about the conception of rape which do not include child marriages or forced marriages. As a result, rape as currently perceived in the community is only limited to forced sex.

**3.8 Normal relations and love affair between boys and girls:** Different from the criminal act of rape, there are traditional ways of conducting love affairs between boys and girls. This normal process is based on mutual consent and involves the boy making the move. The girl would normally ask for time to reflect on the proposal and this can last a few days, weeks, or months. Young girls in Assakio said a troublesome boy could pester one for up to a year. According to young girls in Kadarko: For boyfriend, if man loves you he will come directly and say babe, I love you and from there if you like the boy the relationship will start, and you people will continue. If you like the girl, you can marry the girl. But if its friendship, the boy will take care of you, they will be buying soap, cream, Indomie [a common brand of noodles].. from there you start to follow the guy. Some guys, they may not talk but the gifts will speak for him..after you will know what to do.

The boys confirm that gifts are a necessary part of the process: You will call the girl, talk to her. She will tell you she needs some things before we can start love. She may say to buy her cloth, soap, cream and some money before she will start love with you. That's how we start love

According to young girls in Angba-Igga, they scare away boys by insisting that the boys should see their parents: "we normally tell them to come and see our parents to start marriage process. When boys hear that, they usually run away".

When the girl accepts, the two become friends and others in the community will be aware. Then, visits are allowed. The friendship could lead to marriage, many others do not. In some instances, there would be soyaya—holding hands and necking to the discomfort of the girl's parents. During visits, the boy may demand sex, but when the girl is unwilling she may be forced. This action is not termed rape "because they are friends and because you have been chopping his money". Indeed as young girls in Ipusu Tiv expressed it, "You don't have anything to say, after all you have been eating from him, from his pocket. Even though you don't like it you have to endure and keep quiet". Consequent upon this, what begins with mutual consent may introduce betray some traces of force in which a violated girl can do very little. Such is the nature of patriarchy in the communities and its definition of rape.

**3.9 Wife capture:** There are cases of wife capture in Nasarawa state. However, wife capture is not a common practice among the Mighili, Alago, and Eggon. Among the Tiv it still happens. Typically, a man who admires a girl would arrange to capture and bring her to his house. He and his parents and friends would report to the girl's parents usually within a week after the capture. This preliminary contact is then followed by marriage procedures. Thus, parents on both sides legitimize the act.

Wife capture is perceived as a mark of masculinity and becomes the resort when the resources for marriage are not immediately available, or there are multiple suitors. Male youths in Brum-Brum said "juju" could be used to make the girl stay. According to one of them, "she may be pacified through the use of charms. She will stick to the boy and hate her parents' house". Some community members alleged that such capture could be in connivance with the girl. There are also a few cases when the captured girl escaped. However, this is hardly possible because the boy's friends would often mount a 24-hour vigil around the house. Participants at the debriefing and validation meeting were silent about wife capture.

**3.10 Other sexual offences and conflicts:** There are other sexual offences besides rape. The herdsmen are more noted for various acts of sexual violence and there are several instances especially around the communities of Angba-Igga, Gwadanye and Kadarko. At Kadarko a girl who was returning from school was attacked by a set Fulani men who wanted to rape her. When she resisted and cried out for help, her captors inflicted injuries on her with machetes.

Different explanation have been advanced for the escalation of sexual violence in the state. While some respondents associated the prevalence of sexual violence with women being the weaker vessel that men ride upon mercilessly during crisis, others thought that sexual violence was inevitable in times of crisis. A staff of an NGO in Lafia argued that,



In times of violence, sexual violence is inevitable. Usually, people flee from their homes for safety and they congregate in camps where nobody cares. In the process anything happens. I remember during Azara crisis when people fled to camps in Benue state, issues of rape and teenage pregnancy came up. So I believe that when there is crisis and people migrate to camps there could be a lot of sexual hazards.

Sexual violence against women and girls is on the increase especially in parts of the state that experienced or are still experiencing crisis. Some respondents noted that sexual violence is common because girls who fled to town from the villages are usually exposed to sexual exploitation because they will need money to keep life going. In Lafia, a staff of an international women organization observed that, Conflict has a tendency to leave people impoverished, homeless, desolate, hungry, and vulnerable to such an extent that they are ready to do anything to improve their lot in life. Hunger makes young girls vulnerable and open to attack.

The police and the military operatives take advantage of the circumstances of women and girls affected by crises to sexually violate them either in IDP camps or other places they might have fled for refuge. Sexual violations of girls who go out to hawk wares are also common in Nasarawa State. Because they are more involved in hawking, muslim girls are mostly the victims. Such girls are usually lured into the act by much older adults.

It must be said that most of the violations against women happen in spite of the laws and statutes which prohibit them. Central here is the Child Rights law which has been in inception in the state since 2005. If the law were to be enforced, cases of wife capture and early marriage would ease. The challenge is therefore the extent to which this piece of legislation can be enforced to protect the girls.

### 3.11 Violations by Security Agents

Evidence emerged during the field work that security agents who were deployed to protect the communities were also involved in rights violations of girls and women. They usually start with young girls in the community who might just be passing through a roadblock. Indiscriminately, supposed security personnel stopped girls for interrogation. On some occasions the girls may be asked to wait.

According to some female youths in Kadarko, the mobile police routinely stopped them to ask for phone numbers. The unwilling ones may be made to frog-jump. The girls related a story of one of them who was asked to frog-jump because she would not give out her phone number. Instead, she began to undress. The police then asked her to leave immediately. Also the head of a community based organization said that the security agents who came to protect the communities during the crises also violated the girls, especially in the IDP camps. “..Yes, in camps, girls were violated; the military who came to rescue took advantage of the [general vulnerability of IDPs] vulnerable”.

The chapter illustrated the various sexual and gender violations in Nasarawa state. The roots of these violations were also discussed. The underlying reasons are the general nature of gender relations, practices which remain in the cultures as well as poor access to justice by the violated.

# Chapter 4

## Seeking Redress From Sexual And Gender Violence And The Limits

This chapter discusses the various avenues available for seeking redress from sexual and gender violence in Nasarawa State. In doing so, it explores available opportunities for citizens to seek redress for rape and other violations.

### 4.1 Unchanging context of gender and Justice

To a large extent, the subordinate position of women in the society has a great influence on the judicial system. Women and girls have difficulties accessing justice. They are discriminated against in every facet of the society: religious platforms, inheritance and education. Women have been socialized to take directives from men rather than use their initiative. Thus, when they are wronged, invariably by the same male dominated structures, not many would think about appealing to higher levels, or to the modern criminal justice system. In the communities, virtually all cases of gender violations are addressed in the communities by the village heads. There is hardly any woman in the male-dominated traditional structures.

The inter-relatedness of the different forms of discrimination is imperative when examining women's chances of seeking redress. The roots of violence against women lie in the manner the society perceives the woman. This gender discrimination becomes part of the socialization process such that boys become phallogentric. Thus they feel that they have power and control over women and young girls, culminating in physical and sexual violence. In addition, there is some culture based licentious feeling of male sexual entitlement which makes them think that the girls are just there for them to use or abuse as the case may be.

The respect for and protection of girls' and women's rights can only be guaranteed with the availability of an effective system of redress. Indeed, justice is only meaningful if it can be assessed. Access to justice is therefore also an essential component of rule of law and a means for women to actively claim the entire range of rights provided for in



the Convention against All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) the Nigerian constitution and the action plan on UN Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. In practice, elements of discrimination and challenges remain in many instances when women seek justice, both within the traditional and within the modern justice systems. This is because in spite the UN proclamations and Nigeria's constitution, the contemporary social space continues to be discriminatory against girls and women. Indeed, little has changed in the daily lives and experiences of women.

One expressed objective of this study is to understand how accessible the traditional and informal justice systems are to women with particular attention to rape. Access here is not cumbersome, however the committee of the village head which hears the case is exclusively male. There is therefore what amounts to structural violence against women. In the modern justice system on the other hand, the process imposes a very high burden of proof on victims.

Women in Nasarawa State are confronted with a plurality of legal mechanisms: customary, traditional, religious, ethnic, informal justice system. In most cases, these legal systems are not CEDAW compliant. In some other instances, women are discriminated against and given unfair sanctions. When they are even adjudged right, they are hardly compensated. In the rural settings of Africa, judicial institutions, both formal and informal, are central to the legal protection and enforcement of human rights. Despite the recent expansion of women's legal entitlements, women still experience discriminations and gender biases within the infrastructure of justice – the police, the courts and the judiciary. Structural inequalities also impede access to justice (Swaine, 2003).

Also recognizing the peculiar impact of armed conflicts on women, it became expedient for the UN Security Council to adopt Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325, the first resolution on women, peace and security. This has since been supported by other resolutions highlighting other specific areas such as sexual violence in conflicts (SCR 1820 and 1888). The United Nations Charter on Human and People's Rights as well as the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria have provisions for enjoyment of rights and liberties irrespective of sex, creed and religion of the individual. However, in Nigeria these provisions are often violated especially in the case of the less privileged and less powerful groups such as women, children and the poor. Such violations may be worse where the individual is female, and even much worse for woman of poor economic standing in particular. Most of the women in the study fall into this latter category.

An analysis of the data gathered for this report shows that women have difficulties in seeking redress and access to justice. This is mostly because women hardly occupy leadership positions in the communities in focus. In cases of violation too, they only follow the men. With particular reference to rape, action depends largely on the victim's father. In 2011, the UN technical committee on CEDAW, in pursuance of article 12 of the convention, strongly recommended that girls and women should be given unobstructed access to justice.

At the 57<sup>th</sup> UN Session on the Commission of the Status of Women, member nations made various commitments, all aimed at preventing violence against women and girls in conflict, and to guarantee the provision of ample support to victims and thus ending impunity for sexual violence in conflict:

- The Commission urges States to strongly condemn violence against women and

girls committed in armed conflict and post-conflict situations, and recognizes that sexual and gender-based violence affects victims and survivors, families, communities and societies, and calls for effective measures of accountability and redress as well as effective remedies (p2. 13).

Ensure that in armed conflict and post-conflict situations the prevention of and response to all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence, are prioritized and effectively addressed, including as appropriate through the investigation, prosecution and punishment of perpetrators to end impunity, removal of barriers to women's access to justice, the establishment of complaint and reporting mechanisms, the provision of support to victims and survivors, affordable and accessible health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health, and reintegration measures; and take steps to increase women's participation in conflict resolution and peace building processes and post-conflict decision-making (p7, 1).

In recent years, UN has featured sexual violence prominently in its many General Assemblies for Women, CSW (Commission on the Status of Women). Series of international instruments now exist to tackle the unwholesome violence encountered by women and girls. The 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women is a major breakthrough in helping women seek redress. Several years after the ratification of CEDAW (2000), Nigeria is yet to domesticate it. The Domestication of CEDAW is complicated by a lack of political will. However, it is gratifying to know that some states, like Ekiti State, have taken a bold step to enact the Gender and Equal Opportunities Law. This is a positive step in the right direction. The law domesticates the UN Convention on CEDAW, the African Union Protocol and the provisions of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the rights of women.

In Nasarawa State, there are multiple mechanisms for seeking justice. These can be categorized into formal and informal. In the urban areas, the tendency is to use the formal legal system. In the rural areas, the researchers here found that men and women rely on a variety of traditional, customary, religious and informal justice systems. However, these systems tend to suffer from systemic gender biases, with men dominating the decision-making processes. This is despite findings that women have minimal and often superficial participation in justice hearings, and that rulings are often based on the biases and cultural beliefs of administrators of justice regarding women's status in society. Women in the communities covered by this research use the traditional justice systems because the formal system is too far away. Besides, there is also pressure to keep it all within the community.

Women and girls are violated in different ways. Some of the women and girls are denied access to education, inheritance, and subjected to harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation, and dehumanizing widowhood practices. Others are raped or sexually violated. These practices that put women and girls at greater social disadvantage are prevalent largely across the state, while others are restricted to some ethnic or religious groups.

The local structures for dealing with some of the issues of violations of women and girls among the various ethnic groups such as the Alago, Eggon, Tiv, and Mighili are similar although there are few variations. Among the ethnic groups, most of the rights issues of women do not receive much attention as sexual violation. Consequently, there are no structures for handling such violations. For instance, women and girls who are denied





access to inheritance or education do not have structures at the community levels to protect their interests and rights. There are also no community structures to protect women and girls from early marriage or female genital mutilation. Instead, some of the cultures encourage such practices as part of what women ought to go through. In effect, the violations are not recognized and thus girls and women continue to suffer these in perpetuity.

#### 4.2 No Redress for wife capture, early marriage or hawking

Violence against girls in the state also include wife capture, early marriage and hawking. There is no redress for wife capture among the ethnic groups where it is practiced. Instead, the violation is institutionalized with expectations on both sides. For the young man who captures, it is a symbol of his courage and masculinity all of which further strengthen the existing gender relations and power. A young man in Kadarko, a Tiv community, answered proudly when he was asked if there are still instances of wife capture in his community:

Wife capture is rampant and considered as normal practice, after capturing a lady, the third day a family member and others go to let the girl's father know that his daughter is with them, and they should not look for her. They carry a gallon of burukutu or palm wine along.

In the same community, another young man corroborated this affirming that "It is our culture to capture a wife. If you see someone's daughter and you love her you can capture her as wife". The situation in all the other communities except Assakio is the same: it is done, it is proper, it is part of the culture. The narrative reinforces gender superiority.

Early marriage is also widely practiced in all the research sites in which girls as young as 12 are pulled out of school for marriage. The girls' physical and emotional immaturity is discountenanced by parents and suitors. The former show more interest in the material benefits which may accrue therefrom. Early marriage is not even recognized as sexual

or rights violation as the fact that the girl is under aged and cannot give informed consent is immaterial. Similarly, the risk of becoming pregnant at teenage age and thus running a high risk of maternal mortality is not mentioned. Often too, in these communities, many girls marry shield the likely shame of sudden pregnancy. Since early marriage is condoned in these communities, there are no litigations nor is this recognized as any form of violation. In Angba-Iggah, an elderly male informant lamented:

Cases of early marriage are rampant in Angba – Igga and within the age range of 14 – 15 when girls run from schools to marry. This is often as a result of lack of sponsors. Another example is a man who struggled hard to sponsor his daughter, but she chose to be pregnant. The daughter of the Mad---i daughter is an example; she became pregnant at the age of 16 and [now] married:

In Kadarko, another of the respondents said:

It happens here, from 11 or 12 to 15 years of age. It is not about age, but suitors come to ask for her hand in marriage and sometimes, the parents force the girl because they need the money. They will force the girl to marry the man. Worse, when the girl is from a poor family, when a rich man comes to ask for her hand, they force her to marry him. The parents collect money to take care of the other children

Hawking, popularly called *talle*, is largely regarded as the girls' turf. The process takes them to all parts of the community and sometimes beyond, and thus exposes them to sexual advances. Many girls of school age hawk during school hours indicating they are not in school. Hawking is not regarded as a violation of rights and there are no mechanisms for redress. According to some participants at the validation meeting, hawking is regarded as the contribution of the young girls to families. They are relied upon to sell what the mothers (some of whom are in *purdah*) produce. Even the Ministry of Women Affairs does not go beyond counseling.

The head of a CBO in Lafia, in discussing the prevalence of rape observed:

This is very common with Muslim children who go hawking. Most of them are defiled sexually before their first menstrual cycle. This is caused by lack of education. Economic status of the parents also expose girls to being victims of sexual assault.

The real challenge is the alternative to hawking. According to the young girls interviewed, people in their age bracket engage in several income generating activities such as knitting, hair dressing and sale of food items. However, it is not immediately certain if these activities can replace hawking especially because mothers (some of who are in seclusion) rely on their daughters for sales earnings. The solution must therefore include finding alternative marketing outlets for the mothers.

#### 4.3 No Redress for denial of Inheritance

Across all the ethnic groups, women do not inherit property. For the respondents, it is part of culture and tradition as handed down through generations. Among Muslims, some concession is made to women who get only a third of what the male children get. In other places, women may have some property only as *toseyi* or on compassionate grounds. In most other cases, women are denied and may end up being inherited as wives. Sometimes their consent is sought for this widow inheritance (together with the children), sometimes not. The Project Manager for NGO for the Vulnerable said: Traditionally, in many places in Nasarawa State, women are considered part of the

family properties to be inherited. So, women do not inherit properties. However, Islamic culture allows for women to inherit although not the same proportion as men.

There is no mention of court option in many of the communities, possibly because of lack of awareness, or the intimidation from the men. At the validation session, it was suggested that community members should be encouraged to write wills while they are alive. With wills, it as argued, no one will be excluded or discriminated against.

#### 4.4 Redress for rape and sexual offences

There are two avenues for seeking redress for rape. One is located within the community structure a while the other is through the police and the courts. There are conspicuous indications however for the peoples' preference for the community option. There was no mention of any case(s) of rape reported to the Police.

##### 4.4.1 Addressing rape in the community

In the communities, the accused is taken before the village head. There are however no permanent structures for handling such cases among the Alago, Eggon, Tiv, and the Mighili. Among the Eggon, rape cases are handled by the traditional rulers such as the Mai-Angwas (ward/village heads) who would then constitute an ad hoc committee to hear the case or decide whether to report to the police or not. Male elders, who are part of the ad hoc committee mediate between the families of the victim and the offender. As male youths in Alogani put it, "there is no specific structure meant to address rape cases as all cases are heard by the village head. The girl is called to testify, but her mother won't be".

The elders administer sanctions on the offender. As a kind of penalty, they request him to bring a female goat, alcohol, cash and some cloth. The goat is slaughtered and the meat shared out among community members together with the alcohol and the cash. The decisions of the male community members on cases of rape are final and binding on the parties involved. Occasionally, in Angba-Igga, the offender is required to compensate the rape victim with a wrapper or dress. In some cases, offenders receive strokes of cane as punishment. At Alogani, the offender pays a victim may be invited to give evidence.

The offender is usually asked to pay a fine of N2-3,000, a goat or pig. The girl receives the wrapper and pants, apparently because these may have been torn off during the assault. She may be taken for medical test for HIV/AIDS and pregnancy. Women are not represented on committees that try rape cases. Sometimes a mother whose daughter was raped may attend the proceedings but the decision is taken by the men. According to a male youth at Angba-Igga "the elders are usually not biased in handling cases of rape. The victims usually receive justice, and the perpetrators are usually punished. Consequently, people understand that if they rape a girl or woman, they will be punished"

In most instances, cases of rape are resolved by elders by bringing the two families together. Such resolution does not go beyond pleas for forgiveness to make for continued for harmonious co- existence in the community. Respondents were generally satisfied that the structure the Eggon have in place for seeking redress for sexual violation is effective. A male adult at Angba-Igga observed that "If such a case is reported, even if it is already night they must find way to sit that night, and if the case was not resolved, they adjourn till next morning so that they can continue together".

Respondents were convinced that in the case of rape, the victim is sure of getting justice even if the perpetrator runs away for 10 years. Therefore, the general attitude is that "Cases may only dry but they don't rot".

As earlier noted, the community system of redress comprises only men. Even in the two locations where women are Magajiya there was no indication that any of them ever sat on any committees. Even when they do, it would be a lone voice against many and louder voices of male elders.

Some of the female respondents were not satisfied with the male-only constituted structures that handle sexual violence among the Eggon. For them, there are the crucial issues of female under-representation and why most items levied as fines go to the men. Many women who were interviewed expressed disaffection with the situation. They believe that the girls and women do not get justice. One woman in Angba-Iggah said: "Women are not represented in this committee--the girls do not get justice but the perpetrator gets some punishment". In a similar vein, in Agba-Iggah, the women chorused: "Victims can hardly get justice through this structure".

Women experience double assault in these communities: from the rapists and also from the traditional institutions. Corroborating this, the Sarinkin Noma in Asakio said: "In the case of rape the men are the main perpetrators. The victim can only get justice only when the perpetrator is caught in the act".

Reasons advanced for the exclusion of women include perception of women as being very emotional and susceptible to compromise. According to a respondent, "Rape is a serious offence. Male community elders are the ones who try the offenders. Cases of rape are not left to women to try the offender because women have soft minds".

In Kadarko, a Man was emotional when asked if the girls get justices, and he shouted, "victims of sexual violence in the community do not and cannot get justice, and the perpetrators are usually not punished". The Tiv people in Kadarko report cases of sexual violation of women and girls to the traditional ruler or the Nigeria Police. When rape cases are reported to the traditional ruler, he advises the complainant to proceed to the police to file a report.

According to the secretary to the Chief of Kadarko, the traditional institution refers cases of sexual violation to the police because they are criminal cases. Many respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the way the traditional ruler and the police handle cases of sexual violation. They were convinced that the existing mechanisms for seeking redress from sexual violence in Kadarko do not function and they are not effective. A male adult in Kadarko noted that the structures "do not act, and they do not report to anyone". Another male adult observed that "the existing structures for dealing with sexual crimes are not effective because they are not willing to take action on cases that are reported to them".

Some of the respondents believe that the police and the traditional institutions in Kadarko do not take action on issues of sexual violence because it is happening to the Tiv people. A male adult, a Tiv man, stated that "We do not know why they do not take action, but I suspect that it is because these things are happening to our own women, not theirs, that is why the law is not seen in action". The majority of the women also doubted the effectiveness of the structure for seeking redress from sexual violation.



















## Chapter 5

# Making The Social Space Safer For Girls And Women

This chapter presents the suggestions made by the community members and other stakeholders in the Access to Justice study. Further suggestions were made at the debriefing and validation meetings. As earlier indicated, the focus is on the violations of rights of girls and women in Nasarawa State especially in the communities which experienced violence in the 2012/2013 period. Before proceeding to the suggestions for making spaces safer, it is only appropriate to summarize the main findings. The research team have outlined the following: situation of peace; gender relations; rape and sexual violence; wife capture; early marriage; denial of inheritance.

### 5.1 The Situation of Peace

There was some general peace in the communities studied. Out of the six, only Alogani did not experience violence in the wave which engulfed the state in the 2012/13 period. However, it received IDPs who were fleeing from conflict locations. In all the other areas, hostilities have ceased and most of those who fled had returned. There was however some unease between erstwhile enemies. Furthermore, in the February/March 2014 period, there was raging violence in neighbouring Benue state close to the Nasarawa state border. This clash between the Fulani herders and Tiv agriculturalists was causing mass internal displacement. Majority of the Tiv fled southwards to Benue but some moved northwards to Nasarawa. In essence therefore, while there was not active violence but some of the communities were under pressure from the deluge of IDPs. There was also the challenge of obtaining food because community members fled during the previous planting season for fear of insecurity from the marauding Fulani gunmen and rapists.

### 5.2 Gender Relations

In all research locations, gender relations followed the traditional mode in which the spheres for men and women were different. Men exercised power and control in the





house, while the women take directives from their husbands. The man is acknowledged as the boss who is in-charge of the household as no decisions can be taken without him. In many instances, husbands beat wives when the latter are perceived to be rude or to have stepped out of line. Some respondents accept that unequal power relations between men and women lead to violence against women. In the community, the men preside over affairs under the overall leader of the village head. This village head and his committee hear most cases of violations, including rape, and women are not part of this committee.

### 5.3 The Offence of Rape

Rape was widely acknowledged in the various communities as a serious offence. Sometimes the victims are babies in the first 1-6 months of life. However, there is a general consensus that it is a rare offence between community members, usually amongst the youth. Rape is regarded as a serious offence and the perpetrator is held to account. There are two types of rape: between members of the community, and between a female from the community and the Fulani.

Irrespective of the ethnic group, rape is handled mostly in the community through the existing power structure which at the community level ends with the village head. Cases of rape are reported here and the village head constitutes an ad hoc committee to address the case. The committee comprises only of men and women may only be invited to give evidence. In general, female community members do not have a voice in how rape cases are resolved.

In some cases, the female victim is sent to the clinic for examination. There is however no assurance that the clinic is well equipped to screen for HIV, and STDs, the emphasis being tears (loss of virginity) and presence of semen. There was also the mention of pregnancy, as if it were possible to detect cases immediately. There is usually a fine levied on the perpetrator: a female goat in apparent symbolism of the victim, some cloth (wrapper), some money and some alcohol. Except the wrapper (because the rape attacks often devastate victims' dresses) and the money, all the other items are for the male community members. Who benefits from the fines is thus some further indication of how difficult it is for women to get justice for crime committed by men and where the trial is conducted by an exclusive male village committee. Surprisingly, there is unanimity that justice has been done and what is often touted as evidence is the punishment meted out. There were no mentions of the trauma or the uncertain future the victim has to face because of the stigma.

The second type of rape is when the victim is not identified, and mostly associated with the Fulani. Before the recent violence, the Fulani had generally good relations with the communities except when cattle vandalized farms. Rape was rare. However across all communities except Alogani and Assakio, there is rising incidence of rape by the Fulani. When the women, in fulfillment of gender roles, go to fetch firewood and water, they are violently attacked and raped at gunpoint. In some instances, three to four men take turns to hold the gun and rape a woman. None of the herdsmen has been caught leading to high animosity with prognosis of reigniting the cycle of violence. In the Angba-Igga area, the Fulani are said to have sent their wives away to safety and this is a possible reason for the increase in cases of rape. There have been meetings and the Fulani are urged to bring their wives back. This had not happened by the first week of March 2014 when this study was conducted. So the problem remains, posing more dangers to the peace of girls and women.



#### 5.4 Normal relations and love affair between boys and girls

Boys and girls become friends and may fall in love. This relationship is based on mutual consent and involves the boy making the move. The girl would normally ask for time to reflect on the proposal and this can last a few days, weeks, or months. In some locations the boy brings gifts such as soap and cream. Once the girl accepts the two become friends, some of which may lead to marriage. The girls may visit the boys and in the course of such visit the boy may demand sex. If the girl is unwilling, force may be used and this is not considered as rape, because "they are lovers".

#### 5.5 Wife capture

As happens elsewhere in central Nigeria, there is an accepted practice of "wife capture" through which a young man arranges the abduction of a girl he likes but may not even have made his intention known to the girl. In some other circumstances, there may be many suitors demanding the girl's hand in marriage. One of these could jump the gun rather than wait for the girl to make a choice. He arranges to capture the girl and after 3-5 days reports to her parents. This practice is a long standing one in which there are established procedures about what to do. There are indications that in few cases, the girl is able to escape but in many others this is not possible because the boy's friends often support this by providing full time, all-day, all-night security. Where the girls does not escape, it is assumed that she has accepted the "proposal" and marriage processes may begin. This is an institutionalized violation in which the boy's and girls' parents, and indeed the community, in general are implicated. Ability to capture a wife is seen as sign of masculinity and boosts the ego of the perpetrator.

#### 5.6 Early marriage

In all the communities, marriage of teenage girls is practiced. Girls as young as 12, most of them pulled out of school, are married off. Respondents say when a girl's breasts grow and her hips are big, and she has commenced menstruation, these are indications that she is ripe for marriage. This marriage follows the normal procedures among the ethnic group in question, except that the girl is not of legal age and therefore not well placed to make an informed decision. In some instances, the girl's parents may

encourage or even arrange marriage when the suitor is well to do. The sense here is that such marriage will help their own situation and hence the teenage girl is being traded as a commodity to hopefully uplift the economic status of the family.

As the deal is struck, there are few questions asked about the physical and mental maturity of a 12-year old to marry (and the likely aftermath of pregnancy and child birth). However, community members acknowledged in a previous study that such a girl would not be mature enough to take proper care of children and would also end up poor because she has little skills. They recommended that she must have wayo (some savvy) to knit and make things for sale (Alubo, 2007) to avoid poverty. Early marriage has a double edged implication for schooling as she is withdrawn, as well as on her health in which as a married teenager, the risk of maternal mortality increases.

### 5.7 No redress for early marriage, wife capture and hawking

In all communities, early marriage, wife capture and hawking were not recognized as violations of the rights of girls and women. Instead, the practices are seen as normal and approved by the prevailing culture. With particular reference to early marriage, parents look forward to signs of physical maturity so they can now accede to any suitors. Early marriage is seen a way to bring in revenue through bride price. Wife capture is seen as normal and a sign of masculinity of the bold suitor. There are practices on both sides which point to how it is normalized. Hawking is also regarded as normal and not seen as a violation of the concerned children's rights as provided for in the law. The challenge is therefore how to first change this perceptions before the violations can be addressed.

### 5.8 Denial of inheritance not seen as violation

An important aspect of gender violations in the communities in Nasarawa State is the question of inheritance. In all the communities, there is virtual exclusion of women from inheriting property. When the husband dies property is inherited by uncles and male children. The wife does not receive any share of the estate. The situation is the same when the father of the wife dies. His property is shared to male sons only.

However among Muslims in Alogani and Assakio, respondents said daughters could receive some share on a formula of 2:1 with the male children receiving more. It was also indicated that daughters must not be allowed to inherit houses or land because they may pass these on to husbands during marriage. Here again, there is gender violation based on the operating patriarchy which also translates to preference for male children. There is therefore institutionalized discrimination against girls and women. At the validation session, a representative of the Jamatul Nasril Islam (JNI) explained how Islam was different in this regard. According to him, Islam has provision for everyone—children, fathers, mothers- as far as inheritance is concerned. He therefore advised community members to seek counsel of religious leaders.

### 5.9 Violations by security Agents

Some of the sexual violations are perpetrated by security agents deployed to protect the communities during outbreaks of violence. This could take the form of harassment at roadblocks or in the IDP camps. According to respondents, security personnel exploited the vulnerability of IDPs.

In summary, the findings show widespread violations against girls and women. There is what is here called individual violations such as rape on which the male dominated system of trial makes it difficult for the female victim to get justice. The other forms of

violence and rights violation have become institutionalized and regarded as normal. These are wife capture, early marriage and denial of inheritance. These are part of cultural and institutional violations of the rights of girls and women.

### 5.9 Suggestions For Safer Space

Respondents spoke of the misery which accompanied the crises and expressed preparedness to do whatever is possible to avert a recurrence. However, while they spoke about the violence, only a few mentioned rape and other gender based violations, let alone proffering solutions to making the social space safer for girls and women. The suggestions made for safer space stretched through the entire gamut of this study and may be classified into six clusters as follows:

— In the community, it was suggested that more awareness about conflicts and conflict prevention is necessary. It was suggested that the community needs to be mobilized to become more aware about insecurity as well as the need for peaceful coexistence. In some communities like Anga-igga, there are already tips about what to do when in distress. In this community, women now go out in groups to fetch water and fire wood.

- It was suggested that community should hold meetings. Such meetings should involve all residents and should become regular.
- Girls in the community should be encouraged to speak out about their rape attacks rather than remain silent.
- Village heads should employ the services of a functional secretary from the community who will record minutes of meeting for the purpose of reference as there may be the need to cite these as evidence.

#### 5.9.2 Cluster 2: Suggestions about security issues—These have two dimensions.

The need to have armed police and army in the communities. The idea is for the security personnel to intervene promptly and nip any crisis in the bud.

- The second dimension is about the conduct of the security personnel. There are allegations that the security personnel are uneven, treating some more politely than others. They were also alleged to patrol only one section of the community instead of the whole community. Similarly, it was alleged that the Fulani can brandish guns in the open without any challenge but others are even questioned for carrying a cutlass, which is major farm tool.

#### 5.9.3 Cluster 3: Suggestions about the role of government—there were frequent references to government by which is meant the state government, specifically the Governor and House of Assembly.

- Respondents want the government to intervene to curb the incidence of rape and to ask the Fulani to bring back their wives
- The government is also expected to deal with the issue of illegal immigrants and mercenaries. It was alleged that many of the Fulani fighters were non-Nigerians and government should do what is necessary to repatriate them
- Stricter law enforcement- there is the allegation that criminals are let off the hook and walk the streets free. Some persons therefore advised that rape cases being settled at home should be discouraged. There is also the need for better training for law enforcement to appreciate the gravity of rape.
- In one location it was suggested that the Governors of Benue and Nasarawa States should dialogue about ways to bring peace
- Government should prohibit hawking as a way of avoiding situations in which women get subjected to attacks.
- Government must become proactive by setting up peace committees made up all



ethnic and religious groups. It is a way of giving people the opportunity to preside over their own affairs.

- Government should recruit more women into the police force as women and girls who have been violated may be more comfortable dealing with female officers having been raped by men
- Government should enact a law prohibiting trial of rape cases in the communities
- Government should take every step to stop the killings as well as sexual violence in Nasarawa State.

**5.9.4 Cluster 4: Social amenities**— It was suggested that government should provide social amenities especially bore holes which will both make life easier as well as protect the women from the risk of fetching water in the bush and thus running the gauntlet of attacks by Fulani rapists. Others suggested schools and good roads, clinics which were not articulated in resolving any aspect of the crises or sexual violations.

**5.9.5 Cluster 5: Need for fasting and prayer**—Suggestions also contained strident calls for divine intervention through fasting and prayer. The Muslim respondents rendered this as need for addua and alwala. Others were specific that God will intervene and bring reconciliation. There is a generally accepted position that "prayer will change everything".

**5.9.6 Cluster 6: Resolving gender discrimination**—a few suggested a reversal in gender violence in form of wife beating and more attention to training of the girl-child. Some also suggested skills acquisition to make girls and women less dependent. Others suggested girls and women should be given rights to participate in decision making in the communities. Women congresses should be encouraged as this would help women gain confidence to speak and be heard.

#### **5.10 Limitations Of The Suggestions And Challenges**

The various suggestions by community members and other stakeholders as summarized above indicate the challenge of sexual abuse and gender discrimination are recognized problems in the communities. While everyone recognizes rape, other forms of abuses such as wife capture and early marriage are condoned. Similarly, women's exclusion from inheriting property is not recognised as any form of abuse.

The first challenge is how to educate the community to appreciate that wife capture is an abuse of the girl's sexual and reproductive rights as well as her right to make a choice. Until such educational campaigns are initiated and sustained, the community may not be prepared to tackle what is perceived as normal.

A major challenge encountered in the field was the inaccessibility of rape victims who were a difficult population to reach, as a result of fear of stigmatization and rejection.

Other challenges relate to security and government. While with adequate education and mobilization, the communities can take action in awareness creation, formation of security committees, it would be more difficult to get security personnel to change their ways. Perhaps, this study can pave the way for dialogue with security, including invitation to subsequent meetings arising from this research.

There is also some uncertainty about expectations of government. Past experiences indicate that the government does not always fulfil pledges. This is not however to



suggest that efforts should not be made. Perhaps a starting point is inviting representatives of the state government to meetings in relations to this and similar studies of violence and rights violations.

### 5.11 Conclusion

This study has shown that sexual violence and gender discrimination are widespread in Nasarawa state but more common in some locations than in others. In all communities, and among the Eggon, Alago, Tiv, and Mighili ethnic groups, rape is recognised as reprehensible behaviour and some punishment is meted out to the offender. However, the current punishment in the community is not much more than a slap on the wrist as the needs of the violated girl are not addressed. The structures of patriarchy ensure that the perpetrators get off with only light punishment and community committees which settle cases have an all male membership. This indicates structural violence. Worse still, there are other forms of sexual abuses which are not recognized as such. Among these are wife capture and early marriage.

Both practices exist in all communities and ethnic groups (except wife capture among the Alago) and rather than take any steps to correct them, the prevailing cultural practices permit these practices. Here are indications of cultural violence. A fundamental challenge therefore is how to make the community appreciate that these practices are harmful for the wholesome growth of girls, violates their sexual and reproductive rights and—in the case of early marriage—may increase their risk of maternal morbidity and mortality. There are also concerns over the nature of inheritance which excludes women. It is important for the community to recognise violations of all forms.

Community members and stakeholders do not lack suggestions about how the social space could be made safer for girls and women. More efforts are needed to translate these suggestions into practice, especially as some of these go against existing norms of patriarchy and cultural practices deriving therefrom. This can be done using the

network of rights NGOs, women groups and associations as well as networks built by Actionaid and its affiliates. This report offers a most opportune document on which to base such actions and through which suggestions herein can see the light of day.

Although the report is based on the study of Nasarawa State, it resonates in many other locations. As in Nasarawa, wife capture is practiced in other locations in central Nigeria. In a similar manner, early marriage is wide spread especially in all of the Northern states. Consequently, the study has a wide applicability and this report can be used by campaigners for rights of girls and women and the entire struggle to make the space safer.

### 5.12 Recommendations

The following recommendations are proffered to make for safer social space for girls and women:

- Other ways of addressing rape such as within the law enforcement system must be found. This will require community education about what to do when rape occurs and the need to work with the police rather than "settle amicably". The network of the Bar Bench and Police, in collaboration with Child Protection Network, Ministry of Women Affairs should educate the communities on the dangers of rape and what to do when rape occurs.
- A more wholesome understanding of the concept of women's rights are necessary such that wife capture, early marriage, wife beating, and hawking which are de facto violations can be recognized and redressed. There is need for awareness creation and education of women and children using the child rights laws and the national gender policy to ensure proper understanding of the magnitude of abuse involved in these acts. Gender based NGOs and human rights activists can take the lead here.
- This broader conception must include decision making for women in the communities, and the general need to have women's voices in major decisions in the communities. There is need for the entire community to be sensitized on the need for a synergy between women and men and the importance of giving women a voice as well as the right to participate in the community decision making structures. The Ministry of women Affairs and women groups can take the lead here.
- The right to education of girls must be enforced and if this can be attained, it would also solve most of the problems of early marriage and hawking. A collaboration between the State Universal Education Board, SUBEB, Nasarawa State, Child Protection Network (CPN) and Nasarawa state Ministry of Women Affairs should be encouraged to sensitize parents and girls about the problems of early marriage and hawking.
- There is need for better relation between the communities and police/security. At the moment, there are allegations about sections of the community which are protected and sections which are not. Network of Bar, Bench and Police (NBBP) should be encouraged to sensitize the law enforcement agencies to the need to work in harmony with the communities they are assigned to, sensitizing them on the need to build trust.
- The entire process of inheritance should be raised with community members to enable them appreciate why the women too can begin to share in the estate of

deceased husbands or fathers. The Ministries of Women Affairs and Justice, in collaboration with NBBP, using the National Gender Policy and other legal instruments to sensitize cross section of communities about women's equal rights to inheritance.

- Many of these recommendations and the earlier suggestions from the communities about safer spaces will depend on how much equality can emerge between the sexes. At the present, the conception of the man as the boss and general ideology of patriarchy does not allow for exercise of discretion. It is time to consider women as partners in development. Current programmes of community engagement with NGOs and Women and Social Development can begin to address this issue.
- There is an acknowledged corruption in the criminal justice system leading to frustrations and delays in obtaining justice. This is a challenge to all partners especially the police and law courts. The new initiative that only high courts can hear cases of rape needs to be translated to practice by the Ministry of Justice and Police and communities to act in concert with the policy.
- Some schools in communities which experienced violence are still shut. Special appeals must be made to SUBEB as well as to the state and local governments to reopen all schools as a way of providing educational opportunities and as mark of restoration of peace and normalcy. The Ministry of Education, SUBEB and the Police should work together to assure the communities of safety and encourage them to reopen all schools.
- Some members of the communities disapprove of the very mild sanctions meted to rape offenders. The Ministry of Justice should take over the prosecution of all rape cases as well as facilitate the enactment of a law for the rehabilitation of sex offenders or rapists would help reduce future incidence of rape. The life



imprisonment jail term for rape offenders can be reactivated.

- There is need for increased awareness in which community members can work with FIDA, National Human Rights Commission, Ministry of Women Affairs and the Judiciary can facilitate this. Also, the appropriate professional bodies should be notified in all cases of unethical conduct such as the falsification of results.
- There is need for NBBP to continually train and retrain policemen on how to handle cases of gender violence, particularly sexual violence. Also, National Human Rights Commission, SUBEB and other relevant agencies should teach school children (boys and girls) sex education, and sensitize them to their rights.



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