

RESEARCH REPORT

# MANAGING CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

## Gender Relations in Yobe



August 2019

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## RESEARCH REPORT

### AUTHOR

This report was written by Chitra Nagarajan.

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### PHOTOGRAPHS

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Acronyms</b>	<b>03</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>04</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>07</b>
<b>Conflict and security context</b>	<b>09</b>
• Fighting between armed opposition groups and the state	09
• Criminality and extortion	10
• Conflict over land and water use	11
• Intra religious tensions	11
• Displacement trends	12
<b>Gender dynamics</b>	<b>13</b>
• Association with perpetrating conflict and violence	13
• Continuing physical and psychological impacts of violence	14
• Livelihoods and economic conditions	16
• Participation and voice in decision making and peacebuilding	17
• Gender-based violence	19
• Changing gender norms and realities	25
<b>Policies and programmes</b>	<b>27</b>
• Results	27
• Challenges	29
• Lessons	33
<b>Conclusions and recommendations</b>	<b>37</b>

# ACRONYMS

<b>ACJA</b>	Administration of Criminal Justice Act
<b>ADR</b>	alternative dispute resolution
<b>AOG</b>	armed opposition group
<b>CAF</b>	Community Accountability Forum
<b>CAN</b>	Christian Association of Nigeria
<b>CID</b>	Criminal Investigation Department
<b>CJTF</b>	Civilian Joint Taskforce
<b>CPSP</b>	Community Peace and Security Partnership
<b>CSO</b>	civil society organisation
<b>DPP</b>	Department of Public Prosecutions
<b>FSU</b>	family support unit
<b>GBV</b>	gender-based violence
<b>IDP</b>	internally displaced person
<b>IMN</b>	Islamic Movement of Nigeria
<b>IOM</b>	International Organisation of Migration
<b>ISWAP</b>	Islamic State West Africa Province (Wilayat al Islamiyya Gharb Afriqiyyah)
<b>JAS</b>	Jama'atu Ahl al-Sunna li-I-Da'wa wa-I-Jihad
<b>LGA</b>	local government area
<b>MCN</b>	Managing Conflict in Nigeria
<b>MDAs</b>	ministries, departments and agencies
<b>MHPSS</b>	mental health and psychosocial support
<b>MNJTF</b>	Multi National Joint Task Force
<b>MoJ</b>	Ministry of Justice
<b>MoWASD</b>	Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development
<b>NDLEA</b>	National Drugs and Law Enforcement Agency
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organisation
<b>NSCDC</b>	National Security and Civil Defence Corps
<b>NSRP</b>	Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme
<b>SARC</b>	Sexual Assault Referral Centre
<b>SEA</b>	sexual exploitation and abuse
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>VAPP Act</b>	Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act
<b>VAWG</b>	violence against women and girls



# INTRODUCTION

This year (2019) marks ten years since the death of Mohammed Yusuf and some members of his Yusufiyya while in custody of security operatives.<sup>1</sup> These actions marked a turning point with the group, now known as Jama'atu Ahl al-Sunna li-l-Da'wa wa-l-Jihad (JAS, translated as People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad), recovering and returning to Maiduguri under Yusuf's deputy, Abubakar Shekau. Increasingly, JAS members engaged in targeted killing of security personnel and other persons they perceived to be agents of the state that they were opposed to.<sup>2</sup> In response, the Nigerian military initially engaged in mass arrests given lack of intelligence on members of the JAS, which had taken arms against the state with this approach leading to violations of human rights.<sup>3</sup> The impact on civilians of the escalation of violence perpetrated by both the JAS members and security agencies inspired the worst affected community in Maiduguri to form the *yan gora*, a community militia,<sup>4</sup> popularly known as the Civilian Joint Taskforce (CJTF),<sup>5</sup> which contributed largely to the effort to drive JAS insurgents out of Maiduguri.

Outside Maiduguri, JAS members reportedly turned their attention to towns and villages, preaching their ideology, increasing tensions between Christians and Muslims, killing government workers, security agents, community leaders and anyone opposed to them, and recruiting members. The group captured and declared control of territory in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states, was responsible for bomb blasts in Abuja, Jos, Kaduna and Kano, and spread into neighbouring Cameroon, Chad and Niger.<sup>6</sup> It engaged in forced recruitment and kidnapping, including of girls and women, attacks on schools, violence against women and girls (VAWG), killing of men of fighting age, and the setting off of bombs including through person borne devices.<sup>7</sup>

In 2014 and 2015, operations by the Multi National Joint Task Force (MNTJF), comprising units from the security forces of Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, together with community militias recovered much territory. The formation of community militias was one factor in turning the conflict from a war between the state and an armed opposition group (AOG) into more of a civil war.

All conflict parties have committed civilian harm. While the Nigerian military has failed to protect communities from violence, committed harm during operations and directly targeted civilians, including through human rights violations, community militias, CJTF members in particular, while taking significant action to protect civilians have also been involved in extortion, extra-judicial killings, recruitment and use of children and sexual violence.<sup>9</sup>

Always with different factions, two distinct groups emerged in 2016: JAS and Wilayat al Islamiyya Gharb Afriqiyyah (Islamic State West Africa Province or ISWAP). At the time of writing in 2019, analysts interviewed believed both groups had factions and commanders operating independently with considerable weakening of command and control from the centre and spoke of a potential third group operating around Lake Chad.

<sup>1</sup> Please note that in the interests of conflict sensitivity, this report will use the exact names of the groups involved where relevant and the term 'armed opposition groups' to refer to all those active in the northeast (as opposed to using the blanket term 'Boko Haram' which, rather than being the name of the groups themselves, is one given to them by the media and serves to simplify their message and aims).

<sup>2</sup> Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, 'Boko Haram and Politics: From Insurgency to Terrorism,' in Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos (ed), *Boko Haram: Islamism, Politics, Security and the State in Nigeria*, (African Academic Press, 2015), pp. 155-222.

<sup>3</sup> Amnesty International, 'Nigeria: Trapped in The Cycle of Violence,' AFR 44/043/2012, 1 November 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Militias are defined as armed groups that operate alongside state security forces or work independently of the state to protect local populations from armed groups: Corinna Jentsch, Stathis N. Kalyvas and Livia Isabella Schubiger, 'Militias in Civil Wars,' *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 2015 59(5) 755-769.

<sup>5</sup> Amnesty International, 'Our Job is to Shoot, Slaughter and Kill: Boko Haram's Reign of Terror,' AFR 44/1360/2015, 14 April 2015.

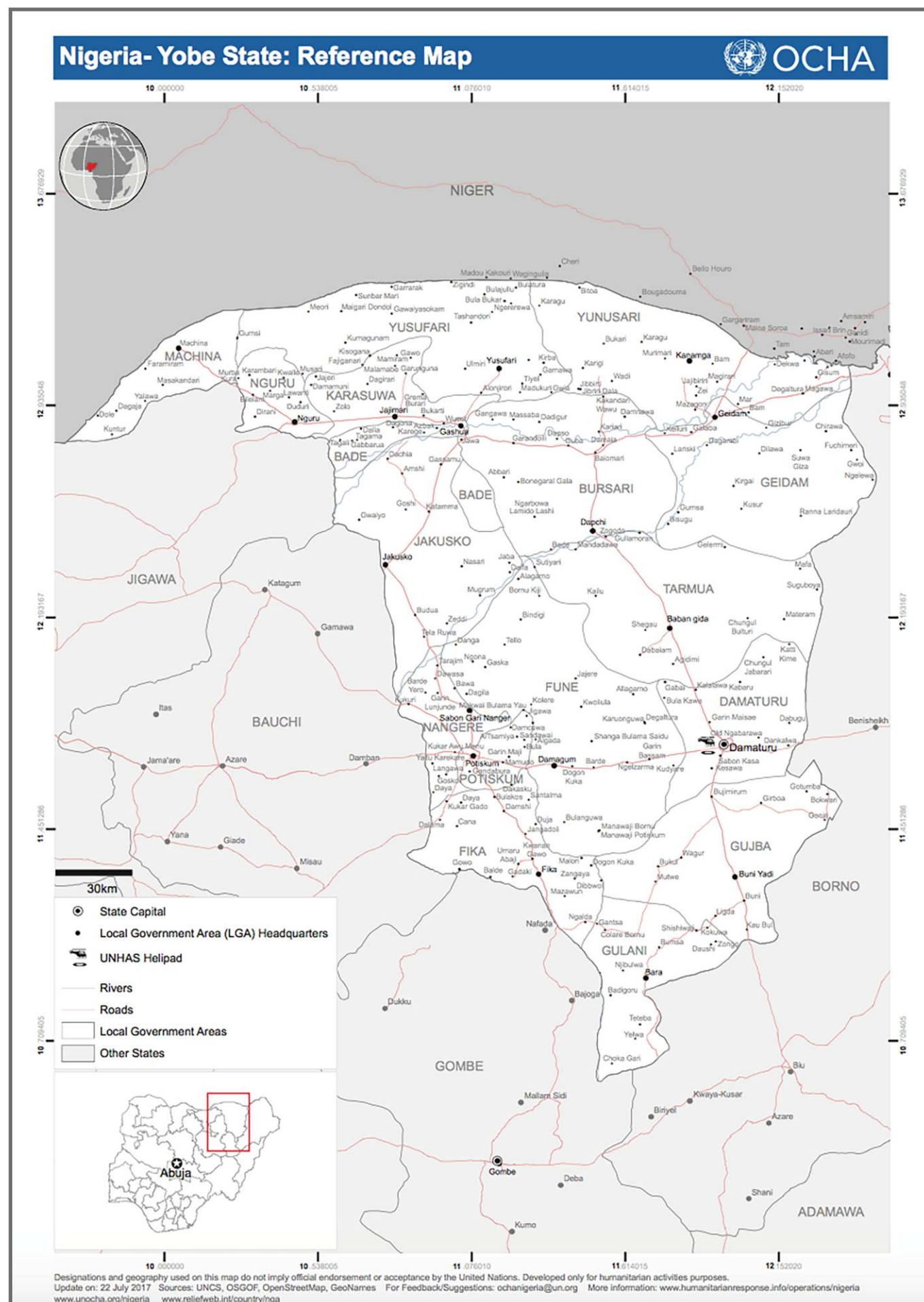
<sup>6</sup> Alexander Thurston, *Boko Haram: The History of An African Jihadist Movement*, (Princeton University Press, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> The people carrying such devices are often known as 'suicide' bombers. As the existence and level of agency of those who carry and detonate bombs is unknown, quotation marks will be used around the word suicide in the absence of another succinct descriptor. Reports are some people are drugged, duped or unaware of plans while others volunteer for the task, motivated by commitment to the group's ideals.

<sup>8</sup> Amnesty International, 'Our Job is to Shoot, Slaughter and Kill: Boko Haram's Reign of Terror,' AFR 44/1360/2015, 14 April 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Chitra Nagarajan, 'Community Perceptions of the Yan Gora (CJTF) in Borno State, Nigeria,' (CIVIC, 2018).

Figure 1: Map of Yobe State





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Yobe has been less affected by violence than neighbouring Borno state although the state has witnessed significant violence, presence of AOGs and displacement. It is the only state to have had its capital occupied by AOGs and has experienced destruction of homes, markets, government structures and places of worship as well as (forced) recruitment into AOGs. In addition, Yobe sees other conflict dynamics at play, notably conflict between fisher folk, pastoralists and farmers due to competition for scarce resources as well as political violence.

The Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) programme commissioned this assessment of gender, conflict dynamics and peacebuilding in northeast Nigeria. MCN's overall objective is to enhance state and community level conflict management capability to prevent the escalation of conflict into violence in selected locations in northeast Nigeria. Its geographical scope is Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states and its specific objectives are as follows:

- To strengthen community level conflict management mechanisms
- To enhance reconciliation and stability within communities, in particular those affected by displacement
- To both support the involvement of women in peacebuilding and address the impact of violence on women and girls
- To enhance the reintegration of young men and women (affected by and involved in insurgency and counter-insurgency operations)
- To influence key decision-makers and opinion-formers through targeted research

The main purpose of this assessment is to investigate the state of gender relations and implications for peace and conflict in northeast Nigeria. It follows a gender assessment conducted in 2017 at the start of the programme which provided situational analysis to inform interventions. Given the dynamic nature of the context, MCN decided to update the 2017 assessment to generate knowledge and information on the present-day state of gender relations and the results, challenges and lessons of interventions to date. This report does not repeat information provided in the earlier assessment. The two reports are complementary and should be read together for a complete picture, including historical perspectives, of gender dynamics in Yobe state. The analytical approach of this report is comparative, with attention paid to continuity and changes in gender relations since the previous assessment was conducted. MCN will share this report with policy makers and practitioners in federal, state and local governmental and non-governmental institutions. It will also integrate findings and recommendations into design and adaptation of its interventions to ensure they are still relevant and appropriate to the changing environment.

After presenting the methodology used, this report provides context by highlighting key conflict and security dynamics in the state. It then outlines the main gender dynamics, looking at association with perpetuating conflict and violence, continuing physical and psychological impacts of violence, livelihoods and economic conditions, participation and voice, gender-based violence (GBV) and changing gender norms and realities. It next examines policies and programmes implemented by government and non-government actors, outlining their main results, challenges and lessons. It ends with programming and policy recommendations for MCN and others engaged in programming as well as for government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs).



# METHODOLOGY

This report draws on a desk review of research reports and programme documents and the author's observations, research and programmatic work in Yobe since 2017. Since the aim is to uncover current contextual dynamics and how they have changed since the previous gender assessment in 2017, it focuses on research and assessments carried out from mid 2017 onwards. However, there persists large gaps in research and insufficiency of data, particularly on VAWG incidence and trends identified in the 2017 assessment. The author asked respondents questions on conflict and gender trends and assessment of programming and policy action to fill gaps in knowledge on gender and conflict.








The bulk of the findings in this report are drawn from interviews and focus group discussions conducted in Damaturu, Geidam and Gujba in July 2019. These locations were chosen to give a range of different dynamics including between the state capital and local government areas (LGAs) and areas still facing significant levels of insecurity. While the author would like to have visited more locations, particularly Yunusari which has increased presence of AOGs, it was not possible to do so given limitations of time and security considerations. Instead, the author interviewed respondents with good knowledge of these locations to elicit information about conflict, gender and peacebuilding dynamics there.

The author ensured that those who took part in data collection came from a range of ethno-linguistic and religious backgrounds and from different parts of the state in order to elicit as wide a variety of perspectives as possible. She led seven focus group discussions with 11 women with disabilities, seven non-disabled women and eight non-disabled men in Damaturu, Geidam and Gujba as shown in table 1. Given the different experiences and further marginalisation experienced by women with disabilities in conflict, the author held women with disabilities only FGDs in each location.



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**Table 1:** Focus Group Discussions

CATEGORY OF FOCUS GROUP	NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN FOCUS GROUPS			
	DAMATURU	GEIDAN	GUIBA	TOTAL
Women with disabilities				11
Non-disabled women	•			7
Non-disabled men	•			8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>26</b>

The author also interviewed 57 people (25 women and 32 men) who work for government ministries and departments, security agencies, Yobe-based and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), UN agencies and institutions of community leadership. Commissioners of ministries had not been appointed by the Governor after his taking of office in late May 2019 at the time of data collection so the author interviewed senior civil servants such as permanent secretaries instead.

Unless a reference is provided to reports, programme documents and assessments as source of information, all findings have been gleaned from interviews and focus group discussions. Research respondents were encouraged to be forthcoming and frank with their views and analysis and told their statements would not be directly attributed to them. Information provided in interviews have been verified by two or more reliable sources. The report clearly states where this was not possible.



# CONFLICT AND SECURITY CONTEXT

## Fighting between armed opposition groups and the state

Damaturu and many parts of the state have seen great improvement in security since 2016 and 2017. At the time of data collection, there had not been a major attack on Damaturu since 2015. In these locations, security force presence has lessened, the onset of curfew has been shifted until later in the evening and people are starting to rebuild their lives. Respondents said that human rights violations and incidental harm committed by military personnel had also decreased in many parts of the state due to increased security leading to less arbitrary detention and cordon and search operations. However, there are still areas of the state which see AOG presence and fighting between AOGs and state security agencies. There are seasonal patterns to attacks with reduction of attacks in July and August as the River Yobe is full and difficult to cross and an increase in attacks in January to February when the river dries up.

There are two distinct AOGs present in Yobe. Due to geographical patterns of where the different groups operate, ISWAP has more presence in the state and the only place with continued JAS presence is Gujba where members of both AOGs are present. Respondents saw ISWAP as having greater capability and a specific strategy to attack military personnel and bases while JAS engaged more in cattle rustling and abductions but had not attacked checkpoints or security force bases since the start of the year. There is said to be some informal communications between commanders of the two groups and also some fighting between members for example in Gujba where both groups are present. There is increasing ISWAP presence in Geidam, Gujba, Gulani and Yunusari and recent months have seen a number of attacks along the road linking Damaturu with Maiduguri, the capital of neighbouring Borno state. These areas see less government presence, fewer services and an absence of community leaders who have fled based on fears of being targeted by AOGs. In these LGAs, there are areas beyond LGA headquarters where ISWAP fighters are operating more or less freely. Even the military only goes there periodically on patrol or to conduct offensives. In Kanamma, the capital of Yunusari LGA, respondents say AOGs move freely with their families living inside the town. At the time of data collection in July 2019, Yunusari LGA was being run from another LGA and the police were operating from Geidam rather than Yunusari.

Respondents in Geidam spoke of AOG presence in areas outside Geidam town. There, AOG fighters target men with money, extorting money from them on threat of violence. Some wealthy men have moved into Geidam town but many remain in their villages as they do not want to become internally displaced people (IDPs) dependent on others. In Gujba LGA, farmers farming 3km east of Buni Yadi, its capital, meet ISWAP members who do not attack them but proactively engage them. They tell them not to worry, to continue farming as they will not hurt them and that their targets are security forces and community militias not civilians. Although some farmers no longer go to farmlands in this area, others continue as they have no other options and have been reassured harm will not come to them. Pastoralists also have been told they will not be attacked and stay in areas with ISWAP presence. The last attack in Buni Yadi took place before the elections earlier in 2019 but was focused on the military base.

Respondents said that, while there had been some instances of ISWAP harming civilians, ISWAP fighters tended to still focus on security force and community militia targets taking care to spare civilians while JAS engaged more in indiscriminate killings. ISWAP try to engage with local communities and recruit from them. All respondents in Geidam spoke of the impact of market closure on their livelihoods and on recruitment dynamics. The military closed down the market in late January 2019 after ISWAP attacked twice on market days, targeted military and security locations then proceeded to the



market to take food and to the petrol station to siphon fuel. Although they have led to death of soldiers, very few civilians have been killed in these recent attacks. This market closure has led to drop in children attending school as parents can no longer afford to send them, increased food insecurity, men leaving the LGA to look for work elsewhere, more cases of thefts of animals and goods and increased cases of fights due to frustration and unhappiness. It has also led to rise in cases of sexual exploitation and abuse as women and girls use any means at their disposal to get food and other goods for their families and an increase in divorce rates as men can no longer provide for families. People interviewed also spoke of the impact of market closure on recruitment dynamics. One community leader spoke of members of his community joining ISWAP which he said was due to reduced livelihoods due to market closure, anger at the military which people held responsible for their increased poverty and being persuaded by ISWAP teaching. As government officials and security agents are not present in the area and providing services, ISWAP members are able to preach their ideology and undertake campaigns of recruitment to persuade people to join them. Men in a focus group discussion in Geidam also discussed how many young people were joining ISWAP. Respondents also spoke of young people in other parts of the state, for example Yunusari, deciding to join ISWAP due to their economic vulnerability. These recruitment dynamics apply for women and men. Pastoralists move to areas under ISWAP control, paying money to graze and water animals, particularly in the dry season where water points can be difficult to find.

“

Respondents also spoke of some splintering among JAS and ISWAP with differences over strategy and tactics and some ISWAP commanders, particularly those still loyal to Al-Barnawi and Mamman Nur, holding onto the core value of not attacking civilians while others do not. Whether the 'armed bandits' present in insecure areas of Yobe are splinter groups seeking financial benefit is unknown. There is less command and control from central authorities with some commanders operating independently to some extent. ”

However, there are now incidents where ISWAP have targeted civilians. In the run up to the elections, ISWAP warned people not to vote in certain communities then killed 12 men in Degaltura and six men in Dekwa, both in Yunusari LGA because they had voted. Respondents further wondered if the killing and abductions of NGO workers in Borno was indicative of changed tactics. They also spoke of some splintering among JAS and ISWAP with differences over strategy and tactics and some ISWAP commanders, particularly those still loyal to Al-Barnawi and Mamman Nur, holding onto the core value of not attacking civilians while others do not. Whether the 'armed bandits' present in insecure areas of Yobe are splinter groups seeking financial benefit is unknown. There is less command and control from central authorities with some commanders operating independently to some extent. Despite the attempts by ISWAP to convince communities they mean no harm, residual suspicion remained. Respondents said there was no guarantee. In its early days, the focus was the police and military then, with time, the general public. Given this past experience, they didn't trust this shift to only targeting security personnel and not attacking civilians, pointing out that strategies and tactics could change at any time.

## Criminality and extortion

Heightened insecurity and absence of state authority in areas with AOG presence appeared to have contributed to a rise in criminality. Respondents in Geidam and Gujba spoke of the actions of armed groups who come into villages in insecure areas and threaten to kill people if they do not give them money. They also rob people of money and steal cattle using the threat of violence. This criminality is linked to the conflict. As a male community leader in Geidam said, “Armed robbery [has] increased since the conflict. It used to happen every year during the rainy season when the crops started growing as people can hide within the crops but it is more now than [it was] before [the] conflict.” Another respondent spoke of how hundreds of millions of naira were collected by armed groups last year. An attack occurred in Futchimiram community during the period of data collection. The community had been told it had one week to collect N3m to give an armed group otherwise everyone would be killed and animals stolen. When the armed group returned, they killed the one man who refused to give the money. This behaviour seems similar to the actions of AOGs. One respondent felt these groups were linked to AOGs with splinter groups engaging in cattle theft and armed robbery. However, other respondents could clearly distinguish between the two, saying AOGs focus on wealthy people in the community whereas these armed robbers are more indiscriminate.



Respondents also spoke of high levels of drug use as a way to cope with frustration and anger at unemployment levels, corruption and failure of leadership. Young people who lost their parents in violence are seen as searching for role models and able to be influenced by people who gets close to them and show them care. Although drug use was seen to be high among boys and young men, it also takes place among girls and young women. While there is no empirical evidence showing a connection between drug use and involvement in crime, in respondents' perceptions, drug use is linked to increased criminality. Conflict has increased drug use and made drugs more accessible, even in remote villages. Fulbe leaders are reportedly asking for assistance as many of their young people have started using drugs unlike before. Drug use is seen to escalate conflict into violence, for example between pastoralists and farmers. There have been successful raids on places drugs are sold but respondents believed major dealers are able to buy their way to freedom due to corruption in the criminal justice system. Further, the National Drugs and Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has low capacity and resourcing requiring police officers and soldiers to take part in raids which respondents felt was not appropriate. Although some NGOs conduct campaigns against drug use which reportedly have some impact, little sustained work on prevention or rehabilitation is taking place.

## Conflict over land and water use

Yobe also experiences conflict over land and water use between farmers and pastoralists. Increased use of grazing routes and reserves by farmers leads to conflict as pastoralists' animals can enter farmlands and destroy crops. In many cases, this conflict has led to violence. These conflict dynamics existed beforehand but have been exacerbated as grazing routes pass AOG camps. Clashes between AOGs and pastoralists have led pastoralists to no longer use these routes. The remaining routes which are relatively safe do not provide enough grazing land if they have been encroached upon by farming activities. However, community actors have tried to be proactive to mitigate the risks of violence. For example, the community peace and safety partnership (CPSP), a multi-stakeholder grouping of different sections of the community, security agents and government officials supported by MCN worked to demarcate already existing grazing routes and ensure no farmers plant along these. As violence took place last year, the CPSP acted before farming season to ensure no planting on grazing routes would take place. People in

Gujba hope that there is enough pasture on grazing routes for pastoralists now there is no encroachment and that, after harvest, animals can come and graze on farmlands. As a police officer in Gujba said, "The Fulani have grazing routes and if you do not tamper with them, they will not tamper with your farms." Some community leaders are also acting to mitigate conflict risk, often supported by MCN interventions. The emir of Damaturu has also set in place a mechanism that migratory pastoralists coming from Niger Republic should report to him. He will then allocate a place for them to graze and they will sign an undertaking to pay compensation if their animals graze on farmland. The emir of Fika visited all the wards within his jurisdiction to speak with district heads about letting people know they can only use dry wood or shrubs as firewood and that anyone caught with firewood from live trees will be punished. The state Ministry of Agriculture has written a memo to the state government on demarcating international cattle routes as much of this land has been taken over by farmers. Respondents spoke of need to enforce existing laws on grazing routes and forest reserves and the prohibition of cutting live trees to prevent desertification that affects farmers and pastoralists alike.

## Intra religious tensions

National level dynamics<sup>10</sup> are affecting relations between the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) and those of other religious backgrounds. People expressed concern that Yobe too may see national level protests leading to violence due to presence of Shia Muslims in some parts of the state and the potential for heavy handed security force response. To date, protests that have taken place in Potiskum have remained peaceful without security agents opening fire but some respondents spoke of being on alert in case this happens. They speculated as to whether the recent proscription of IMN by the federal government may have repercussions in Damaturu and Potiskum such as increased protests if they take place in the rest of the country. Respondents were well aware of how heavy-handed security force tactics including extra judicial killing sparked violence in Maiduguri and were concerned about some IMN members resorting to violence with time if current government action in terms of the proscription, killings and detention continues. Increased suspicion of and intolerance against IMN is growing with people pointing to mosque segregation along sect lines with Shia Muslims choosing to attend their own mosque. However, people are very conscious of the kinds of discussions that

<sup>10</sup> In December 2015, after members of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) refused to allow an army convoy to pass, the military killed hundreds of IMN members and arrested Ibrahim El Zakzaky and Zeinat El-Zakzaky, the spiritual leaders of the movement. Subsequent protests calling for their release and the medical care of Ibrahim El Zakzaky have led to security forces opening fire on protesters: Amnesty International, 'Unearthing the Truth: Unlawful Killings and Mass Cover-Up in Zaria' AFR 01/3883/2016, 22 April 2016; Human Rights Watch, 'Nigeria: Deadly Crackdown on Shia Protest,' 24 July 2019, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/24/nigeria-deadly-crackdown-shia-protest>, visited 14.08.2019.

take place and the risk of triggering violence by what they say. There is also a sense that all Nigerians have fundamental human rights and people saying that they have lived peacefully with Shia here, as opposed to the situation in Kaduna, so there is no point in starting a fire.

## Displacement trends

Gujba and Gulani LGAs were most hit by violence with people fleeing violence to Damaturu, Potiskum, Nguru and Bade which hosted high numbers of displaced individuals from these LGAs as well as from communities in neighbouring Borno state that border Yobe such as Damasak and Damboa LGAs. According to a respondent who works for the International Organisation of Migration (IOM), 133,000 people remain displaced in Yobe state with needs in terms of livelihoods, shelter, access to health and education. He characterised this displacement as being spontaneous and across all LGAs in Yobe. At the time of data collection in July 2019, there were no formal IDP camps in Damaturu although informal settlements remained. Many IDPs who returned to Gujba, Gulani, Geidam and Yunusari LGAs remain in LGA headquarters as they fear assistance will not reach them if they return to their communities which are hard to reach, inaccessible and insecure. Many people still remain displaced due to continued fear that prevents return. A woman NGO worker said, “There is a perception that [AOGs] have insiders living within the communities [in places like Gujba]. They were there for two to three years. They forced many people into accepting their ideology and marry them so those who left are afraid of going back as [they] feel [AOGs] still have sympathisers living there who can give information about them.” According to a woman who works for a humanitarian agency, “living conditions are sordid,” with no designated toilets and open defecation and no proper shelter, a particular need considering the present rainy season. As most agencies work on providing lifesaving interventions and there are not many development actors, interventions to support rebuilding of lives and livelihoods are insufficient. Women whose male family members have been killed or detained tend not to return but remain in situations of displacement as they will have to fight for homes and land that may have been occupied by someone else, including family members of the husband. While government officials said women did not face these issues around right to housing, land and property as they can

report to religious or community leaders or to the sharia committee, humanitarian agencies working with displaced women said this was one of the main reasons for their continued displacement.

The Yobe State Government has tried hard to restore government presence and services in areas where they were lacking in 2017 and 2018. During that time, health clinics, educational institutions and local government offices were shut down but the LGA administrations returned in 2018 and many parts of the state now have functional LGA secretariats, primary schools and health facilities. In places where schools and clinics were burned and personnel fled, these buildings have been reconstructed and personnel have returned with recent recruitment of health personnel and deployment to all LGAs. The state government has also tried to address the absence of women health workers in rural Yobe which limits the access of women and their children to healthcare. They have supported adolescent girls and young women to access education in health training institutes so that they can be nurses, midwives and community health workers in the future. However, coverage of health workers is not universal. In Geidam, the prison was burned by AOGs which mean that all suspects now need to be referred to Gashua which has an impact on dispensation of justice as police officers and the courts do not have the finances to transport people back and forth from Gashua. In Gujba, the General Hospital has not been renovated after parts were destroyed by AOGs and health personnel have still not resumed properly due to insecurity, fear of abduction and as staff quarters are not fully renovated. Skeletal health services are provided with personnel commuting in from other parts of the state on a rota. For example, midwives conduct antenatal clinics on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays which have very high turnout. Health services only run during the day and close at night. Any medical emergencies, including childbirth, need to wait until the morning by which time, it may be too late. As a senior health worker said, “If women come who are expected to deliver at night, some staff resident with families stay and look after labour if it will finish at 5 or 6 or 7pm. But if labour starts at night when the hospital is closed, nobody is there and they need to deliver at home. It is a major problem when there are complications – they will need to wait in morning. Sometimes, it is too late and the woman or baby may die.”

# GENDER DYNAMICS

## Association with perpetrating conflict and violence

Women, men, boys and girls are part of armed groups, although in different numbers and performing different roles. The context section discussed dynamics around recruitment and increasing numbers of women and men joining ISWAP's daula. Respondents spoke about many women particularly in the Kanamma area and other parts of Yunusari joining ISWAP in order to seek economic opportunities and as their husbands and fathers are joining. The attitude of ISWAP towards women and girls and their involvement in statebuilding remains unclear although respondents for the gender assessment believed they were “more enlightened” in their attitudes and strategic in their actions.

They cited the example of the girls from Dapchi who were kidnapped and subsequently released after negotiations as opposed to JAS who are less tactical. One respondent said, “JAS has a different approach when it comes to civilians for example the abuse of the Chibok girls when they were kidnapped but when ISWAP kidnapped girls from Dapchi, none of them reported any case of abuse or maltreatment.” As a result, it could be that ISWAP have particular roles for women and girls in their daula, more akin to Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. That attitudes and practices may be different between the groups and be evolving within each group is highly possible. According to some respondents, as the delineation of JAS and ISWAP became more distinct and ISWAP developed an economic strategy to fund itself including the creation of pull factors in government-controlled areas to the daula described above under the conflict and security context, women have been part of moving back and forth. The conflict dynamics around ISWAP is becoming monetised in this manner with people having economic and security incentives to join ISWAP's daula. ISWAP has seen a strengthening of its networks and control, women have been playing active roles in terms of economic activities, discussions around movement and passing information on to ISWAP fighters.

Respondents who were part of vigilante groups and had been involved in taking men associated with AOGs back to their communities after they surrendered said there had been no cases of surrender for over a year. After going through a military screening process, those who have surrendered go to a centre for rehabilitation, skills acquisition programming and trauma counselling. Military commanders then get in touch with community leaders and ask them to facilitate their return to the community.

This process for men is very different than that for women who do not receive any skills training, trauma counselling or programmes to shift their ideology but are instead simply handed over to their families. Many people formerly associated with AOGs feel they are not accepted by their communities and choose to disassociate themselves, not participating in community activities or leaving the area to have a fresh start elsewhere. Often women and girls leave the daula before men and boys and reject their husbands when they also come back to the community, not surprisingly as many women and girls have been forced into these marriages. Whether their children born of this abuse are handed to husbands who they were forced to marry is unclear. For the women and girls who have left AOGs, rejection and stigma are common as they are seen as continuing to support AOGs and fighters engaging in attacks. Communities shun them. They can shorten the usual wait of seven years of separation between husband and wife before divorce is automatic by going to court and getting a divorce letter but find marriage prospects very difficult as men are afraid to marry them. Sensitisation conducted has little impact with many in communities seeing these conversations as rewarding people who took part in or supporting fighting as opposed to victims who lost lives and livelihoods. Women in the focus group discussion in Gujba said that people abducted by AOGs brought back by soldiers found that “People do not want to communicate with them to show them that they think they are not good people. They tell them to go away from us, you know how to kill people.”

According to a male respondent who has worked in this area, “People believe ISWAP or JAS members do not denounce ideology from the bottom of the heart – so

[they] denounce but can still go back if they get the opportunity.” He went on to talk about how this suspicion had caused issues between the people of Kanamma in Yunusari LGA and a Nigerien town called Tam across the border which saw high numbers of people join AOGs. As the Nigerien government has a policy of reintegration of those linked with AOGs, people in Kanamma were blaming people living in Tam for their problems. They do not allow anyone from Tam to come to Kanamma and report to security agencies if they come as they see people from Tam as spies for ISWAP in advance of attacks. They say the reintegration programme of Niger is compounding dynamics around AOGs as what is needed is punishment even the death penalty rather than forgiveness and reintegration to deter others. There are similar dynamics for women and men when it comes to community rejection but life after leaving AOGs can be more difficult for women. Men find it easier to leave the community or are able to get a means of living if rejected. They are also more likely to earn or have money and this financial independence can garner less rejection and more acceptance.

Children associated with armed groups face different reactions from the community than adults. A number of children abducted by JAS were rescued by the military and taken back to their communities. They face lesser stigma and harassment than adults with none of the children released from the transit centre in 2017 and 2018 to Yobe complaining about mistreatment when talking with child protection actors. There has been a lot of engagement with communities to change attitudes which may account for community support. However, these children need economic reintegration and rehabilitation.

Women are also part of community militias, particularly in Damaturu, Potiskum, Jakusko and Bursari. In other areas such as Gujba, there are now women in hunters' and vigilante groups. Where they are present, women's roles in these groups have not changed since those reported in the 2017 report. They engage in crucial tasks such as searching other women and investigating cases involving women and girls.

## Continuing physical and psychological impacts of violence

As described in the conflict and security context section, Yobe sees fewer attacks on civilians with AOG tactics moving rather to more positive engagement and recruitment with them and targeting of security forces. Respondents said that the civilians that are injured in

attacks tend to be by mistake rather than deliberately targeted. Meanwhile, places with low presence of AOGs like Damaturu, Potiskum and Gashua see no injuries or deaths due to fighting between AOGs and security forces. People in these areas have been more able to rebuild their lives and found levels of trauma gradually reduce. However, people continue to live with the physical impacts of violence. The author spoke to a number of people who had acquired disabilities during the course of attacks. For example, one woman spoke of how a stray bullet entered her leg when Geidam was attacked in January 2019. She was on her way to the market to trade when the attack in Geidam took place. AOG fighters first targeted security locations before heading to the market to take food and other goods. During the course of exchange of fire between the AOGs and soldiers, this woman was injured. She went to the hospital then to a traditional medical practitioner, both to little avail. She was still unable to use that leg to walk or do other activities. She said, “Before, I was doing everything by myself but now cannot do anything by myself and need help from people. I still have pain in the leg and no money to go to hospital. I want a prosthetic leg.”<sup>11</sup> Violence has also added health problems to people who already had disability. Another woman in Geidam who already had mobility issues beforehand spoke about how she was pregnant with her first child when an attack came. During the chaos of running away, she fell down and others fell on top of her. Her uterus was injured as a result and took a long time to heal. A woman who was blind in one eye fell down while running and sustained a wound that got infected. Months later, it has not healed and her back continues to hurt.

People with disabilities found it more difficult to escape violence due to their disabilities. They were more likely to be injured and killed as a result as they cannot escape exchange of fire and bombardment. For example, one woman who has difficulty walking, interviewed in Damaturu, spoke of an attack in Goneri, where she was living: “At that point in time, those who were physically fit were able to get into their cars but people with disabilities, even with money, would struggle and be begging people to take you as everyone is saving themselves.” A blind man in Geidam spoke of how blind people faced difficulties, “Whenever you hear an attack, everyone will run and you do not know where to go to and we are left behind.” Women with disabilities in particular faced challenges. They are less likely to have money readily available to be able to pay their passage on vehicles or mobility vehicles that they can use to escape than men with disabilities as they are more likely to live in poverty due to the

<sup>11</sup> After this interview, the author spoke with people working on MCN interventions in Geidam who undertook to talk with humanitarian agencies providing medical services and ask them to provide the healthcare she needs.



intersecting axes of discrimination of gender and disability. As a result, people with disabilities are disproportionately represented among those who lived under JAS occupation. According a disabled man in Gujba, “When AOGs came, most of us did not have ability to go somewhere due to [to our] inability so many had no choice but to stay here.” However, people with disabilities were reportedly treated well: “When [AOGs] first came into Buni Yadi and saw people with disabilities, they would stay and talk [to us] and say we should be calm as they would not do any harm. They even help some by showing them the best way to escape.” He said this attitude had persisted with ISWAP: “Whenever they came to attack, we will run away for our lives but [they are] not after us and have never targeted people with disabilities during attacks but pass away and leave whenever they see us.” However, many people with disabilities, remembering how they were unable to escape, had to live in areas under AOG occupation and were in the crossfire as both AOGs and the military tried to gain control of territory, are less likely to return to communities. They continue to be displaced from their homes. Even if they decide to return, they live in fear. A young woman in Gujba said she continues to remain in Buni Yadi whereas her parents have returned to their village as, “If stay in [the village] and [AOGs] come, it is not easy for me to run so I stay here and beg money from people.”

Indeed, many people, with and without disabilities, particularly in Geidam, Gujba, Gulani and Yununsari, continue to experience psychological impacts, exacerbated due to continuing insecurity and as they do not know the whereabouts of their husbands, wives, children and parents or if they are even still alive. A women's focus group in Gujba spoke about how there are high numbers of unaccompanied and separated children in Buni Yadi whose parents have died or gone missing. A police officer in Geidam spoke about how people there were still traumatised due to attacks and dislocation and as they had lost loved ones and were unable to re-establish livelihoods due to market closure and restriction of movement. People in focus group discussions in Gujba and Geidam LGAs spoke of trouble sleeping, suffering from high blood pressure and/ or ulcers and experiencing fear, for example when planes are overhead. An agency that carries out mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services find lots of anxiety, hopelessness and distrust in Gujba and Gulani with people continuing to be stressed and not trusting their neighbours anymore. A senior health worker in the health facility in Geidam said that drug use linked to MHPSS needs and poverty had spiked with people taking drugs to escape their trauma. However, even in locations where people continue to live with continuing psychological impacts of violence, respondents reported increased feelings of safety and security than before. A

men's focus group in Gujba spoke about how fear levels were reducing as people there felt peace is returning. One man said, “Before, we would not have been able to sit down here and conduct an interview but now [we are] able to sit and discuss issues without fear or intimidation.” However, while fear may have reduced, people continue to experience trauma linked to their situations of poverty and inability to rebuild their lives. According to a psychological expert interviewed, “People are likely to overcome stress as a result of displacement, conflict etc with time. It is not likely to find people crying over the same house burned now, they have found mechanisms to help them build resilience and move on. But this is not 100% with everyone as people respond differently to different situations. You find people affected by [violence] but they do not show evidence of trauma and distress. Not everybody has been able to overcome but you do see a general improvement in psychosocial wellbeing in [the] aftermath of [violence]. You see people able to move on away from primary sense of being victims.” Doing so is more possible in areas where people have been able to rebuild their livelihoods.

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Women and young people are more likely to be affected by psychological impacts of violence than adult men. ”

Women and young people are more likely to be affected by psychological impacts of violence than adult men. Many men fled violence, were killed or are in other ways not around as they are either detained or fighting. Many women and children who have since grown to become young people on the other hand witnessed and experienced violence and continue to live with its consequence. This does not mean that men do not experience trauma – they do – but many of these men may not be present in accessible areas and the men who are present are much more likely to have escaped their areas prior to attacks. Respondents also spoke about how men are more likely to have social connections within society, for example interacting in majalisa groups whereas women are more occupied in keeping the family going and performing household tasks or in seclusion. People engaged in MHPSS work spoke about how more women than men are likely to break down, shed tears and show internalised distress. Men, perhaps due to gender norms of masculinity that ascribe strength – physical or mental – to 'real' men which means they do not feel able to break down, manifest trauma in different ways. MHPSS teams report men complaining of high blood pressure, hypertension and difficulties walking. Men who find their means of livelihoods cut off, for example as they have no

access to farms, also experience higher levels of distress as they have time on their hands which they spend thinking about what has taken place previously and the impossibility of their current situation. Conversely, women are more able to find to be engaged in income generating activities, keep busy doing these activities as well as household and childrearing responsibilities and have these activities to occupy their minds.

## Livelihoods and economic conditions

At the time of data collection in July 2019, Yobe had experienced the economic impacts of years of violent conflict and its attendant impact on cross border trade with neighbouring states and countries, disrupted livelihoods and food production and military restrictions. While livelihoods have started to recover in many LGAs in Yobe, increased urbanisation, partly triggered by displacement, has led to challenges. Respondent working for a NGO in Damaturu spoke of how it has become more difficult to make profits nowadays as people who have come from other areas has made the market very competitive. Those living in areas experiencing high insecurity are struggling to recover. Fulbe respondents spoke of high rates of theft of their animals that had affected their livelihoods, saying many in their community had lost all their animals. In areas with AOG presence, many people are either afraid to go to their farms despite ISWAP reassurances or because they worry that AOG members will harvest crops that they have struggled to grow. Alternatively, they find their livelihoods thwarted by military edicts. In Geidam, as mentioned above, not only are people afraid to go to farmlands and grazing lands nearby but they are suffering disruption caused by military market closure in late January 2019. As a result, traders who used to come from neighbouring states and across the border from Niger no longer come and people in Geidam LGA, including its rural areas, have no buyers of their produce. As people are no longer farming due to insecurity, there are likely to be adverse consequences come harvest season with low levels of harvest possibly spiking high food insecurity. In Gujba too, people are struggling to rebuild but, as many of them have seen their homes, tools and equipment, food stocks and businesses premises destroyed, doing so has proven to be very difficult.

Women said their economic livelihoods have drastically reduced since before the crisis. Moreover, families are now reliant on income women generate as husbands have been killed and detained, are no longer willing or able to provide or may have divorced wives. The changing gender norms and realities section will discuss how economic conditions have led to higher divorce rates. Respondents spoke of how women whose husbands had died would go out to beg

for money in the street to feed their families but how they are now increasing engaging in other income generating activities. Men in a focus group discussion in Geidam spoke about the inability of fathers to provide affecting household relations as they can no longer cater for their children's needs for food and education. They said some children as a result are leaving their homes with parents unable to find them. In Gujba, a man spoke about how men “cannot go and access farms but [are] left hiding here doing nothing.” Whereas gender norms before were that women were indoors while men engaged in activities to provide financially for the family, this division of labour is no longer possible. As many men have died, communities have higher percentages of women amongst adult populations with numerous women now heading households. As a result, several men actively want humanitarian agencies to distribute assistance to women. Respondents said, “Male leaders have no choice but to embrace activities and support rendered. Men will be bringing their relatives, those who lost husbands so they can benefit. As [this] relieves some burden for them, men are in support of women getting support from interventions.” While livelihoods have not changed significantly since 2017, women are more able to navigate and cope with their current economic realities. According to a woman activist, “Women are becoming more self-reliant due to [the] situation in which they find themselves since crisis. They have become heads of household and need to work hard to ensure family survives so engage in economic activities to make sure they are financially independent.” Respondents spoke of how women were more willing to adapt. Respondents working for a NGO said how some men, even if you give support for farming, can sell this equipment and seeds as this is not the type of farming they are used to do. However, women are more likely to be proactive and find ways to earn a living for example engaging in business, trade or farming to pay for school fees, buy learning materials and sustain the feeding of the family. As a respondent said, “It has shifted from men providing to women providing. Even on farms, you would see men being taken to farms to work but now [you] see a lot of women going to farms to work – they are doing so to support their families.”

Not all women have been able to do so however. Women with disabilities are less able to be resilient due to their stigmatisation, fewer social networks, low starting economic base and lack of support. They said there are more women than men with disabilities as families are less likely to prioritise the healthcare costs of their daughters so conditions with are treatable persist and worsen. They said further that men with disabilities were more economically privileged, more able to access humanitarian interventions and more likely to have or find capital. They

also spoke of how they have less options than non-disabled women who are able to engage in house work for pay or move from one area to another in search of work. Those interviewed spoke about how they used to do income generating activities such as selling pure water but no longer have the equipment necessary and receive no livelihood interventions from NGOs or government agencies despite seeing them reach other women in their communities. According to one of them, “They have women who they come and give support [to] but this does not reach us.” Networks of mutual support that used to exist between people with disabilities have been defunct since violence hit their areas. A blind woman who was born in Geidam but now lives in Damaturu spoke of how she sustains her living from begging for money. Her first husband is deceased and the second divorced her as he could not economically support the family. She used to sell firewood and charcoal but had to stop this business as all her profits went to providing for her six children. She spoke of the difficulties of having very little income and having to already pull out one of her children. Many women with disabilities spoke of wanting financial independence but lacking capital and support. Women with disabilities also face challenges in the household, especially in polygamous families. A woman respondent who is the fourth wife said how lucky she was to be in a separate home from the other three wives so she does not have to do all cooking and domestic activities for the entire household when it is her turn to have their husband in her room.

## Participation and voice in decision making and peacebuilding

Progress has been slow when it comes to women's participation and voice in decision-making in Yobe state. It tends to be restricted to community and informal spaces rather than formal and political spaces.

A number of respondents spoke of how women's representation in political and governance roles continues to be poor and unchanged. Recent elections in February and March 2019 did not see women's participation as political representatives improve. There are no women among Yobe's three Senators and only one woman (Khadija Waziri Bukar Abba Ibrahim representing Damaturu, Gubba, Gulani and Tarmuwa) among its six House of Representatives members.<sup>12</sup> Khadija Waziri Bukar Abba Ibrahim, who was appointed by President Buhari to be Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in 2016, was seen as having been able to succeed due to the influence of her husband who was a former Governor. There are no women members in Yobe State House of Assembly and no women

chairmen of LGAs. Commissioners had not yet been chosen at the time of data collection in July 2017 but respondents did not feel more than one or two women would be appointed into these roles, saying that women's participation in politics tends to be limited to voting. Even in the civil service, there are not many women at the level of Permanent Secretary or Director. Hauwa Maina, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development (MoWASD) and her counterpart in the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) are notable exceptions. A greater number of women came out to vote than in previous years due to sensitisation on the need to vote focused on them. However, respondents said women who came out to contest for House of Representatives seats were not given an opportunity due to “chauvinistic positions of men” and lack of financial and moral support. They spoke of one woman trying to contest but denied a form by her party so she was unable to stand in the party primaries. There are other means of discouraging women in politics too. According to a woman respondent who is active in civil society, “They call you so many names [like] harlot, say [that you] don't have responsibility as a responsible woman would not contest. The party has all male gatekeepers, asks women to vote but will not allow them to contest.”

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Women with disabilities are less able to be resilient due to their stigmatisation, fewer social networks, low starting economic base and lack of support. They said there are more women than men with disabilities as families are less likely to prioritise the healthcare costs of their daughters so conditions with are treatable persist and worsen. ”

Women are more active in civil society. Yet even here, although there has been improvement since 2015 in terms of proportion of women and men staff in civil society organisations (CSOs), there continues to be an imbalance and most CSOs in the state are led by men. There was a women, peace and security network, supported by the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP), that used to work together. It is less active now that NSRP funding ended but members still come together. They are now trying to form themselves into a network of women-led CSOs to work on GBV and peace and security, supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

<sup>12</sup> According to the website of the National Assembly: <http://www.nassnig.org>, last visited 23.08.2019.

Dynamics around women's representation in politics and civil society reflect women's lack of presence in public space with many women not allowed to go to markets, health facilities and other places to access services. This is changing now however due to awareness and sensitisation campaigns around gender inclusiveness with some increase in women's public presence and participation. To improve access to healthcare for women in rural areas who are not allowed by their husbands to go to health facilities where they will be treated by men, NGOs and government agencies have working on changing attitudes so girls can go to school and become the doctors, nurses and midwives of the future. While significant challenges remain, the conflict has also changed matters as many women are now left without their husbands, fathers and other family members to be able to provide for their families alone. As a result, community and religious leaders have started to advocate for women's participation, access to school and employment by government.

Women are better able to participate in decision making at the community level compared to 2017. Women are represented in committees with regards to peacebuilding and reconciliation as a result of advocacy around the importance of women's inclusion. When it comes to institutions of community leadership, the Emir of Gashua has promised to give titles to women so they can become part of his council and advise on decisions made. The sisters of the Emir of Damaturu play roles in his council representing the views of women they interact with. Religious leaders are also doing more to preach during sermons about how everyone has a stake in peacebuilding and reconciliation. Projects which have had active participation of women have demonstrated to men who may be resistant to change the importance of women's inclusion in the results they have produced. In the past two years, women have participated in training on peacebuilding following which they have launched several initiatives in their communities, identifying and resolving incidents of conflict. Women are active in community peace and conflict reconciliation platforms, championing areas such as the need for trauma counselling and engaging in dispute resolution. Women were playing these roles even before interventions but support from NGOs has strengthened their efforts, enabled to have higher skills and be more coordinated and networked. For example, they are not better able to refer areas of concern to other actors for action such as security agencies or community leaders because of their engagement in these platforms. Some younger women, who traditionally have been excluded from these roles, are now also playing this part in the community. Women are also reaching out to and training other women in these skills to spread knowledge

and ensure more people are engaged in conflict resolution, reconciliation and peacebuilding. Many people feel violence may have been able to be averted if women had more influence as they were prevented from speaking up, seeking resolution and acting when they noticed their children were starting to be recruited into AOGs due to patriarchal gender norms. They believe things need to change to mitigate present and future conflict.

However, barriers, particularly those which are cultural, remain. Social norms hinder women's active participation as women who speak up in public spaces and educate other women are seen as 'too exposed.' There is belief women who are not married who engage in this way will find it difficult to find husbands who prefer women to be more reserved. Not surprisingly, many women engage in self-censorship as a result, being reluctant to speak in places where men are present even if encouraged to do so. However, when interventions are designed in ways to support them, for example with women staff members holding women-only discussions beforehand to share information, undertake joint analysis and plan how to raise issues, women are more active in decisions in the community. That women's needs are insufficiently considered in community needs assessment which tend to only addresses the problems of men is a powerful motivation for women to speak and feed into these assessments, especially for activities that will affect them directly. According to respondents, women are now readier to come out and take part in initiatives as they see how their failure to do so means programmes and decision making does not bring positive results for them. Men's attitudes to women's participation have also partially changed as they see women playing more important roles in generating income for families and heading households because men have been killed and the impact that women's and girls' increased participation in public space, decision making and education can have. Men in urban areas in particular, such as Damaturu, Potiskum as well as LGA capitals, are now more likely to support women's access to education, livelihoods and community decision making as they see the concrete benefits doing so brings to their families and communities.

Programming by government and non-government actors has led to increased sensitisation, enlightenment, empowerment by broadening the horizons of what women think is possible, building their self-esteem and realisation they can contribute positively to change. They also see other women in their communities being involved which has a multiplier effect and means they feel they are also able to do so, in contrast to the ways in which society has indoctrinated them to believe about their own capabilities.



Unlike in Borno where there has been some backlash to women's increased power, there has been less backlash to these changes in Yobe with men welcoming any reduction in 'their' responsibilities that come about. However, intersectional approaches are still lacking. The increased participation and voice described above does not necessarily apply evenly to all women. There are significant differences between access and voice between older women and younger women. While younger girls may be able to participate in programmes aimed at children when they are unmarried and often engage enthusiastically in conversations, this changes with age. Many adolescent girls and young women find their prospects for involvement in community life diminish upon marriage due to additional restrictions and men's need to socialise their young brides into living under their power and control. These restrictions only ease with age. Another group of women that continue to be marginalised from decision making processes are women with disabilities. Even when gender and disability is taken into consideration when constituting platforms and committees, all the women tend to be non-disabled and all the people with disabilities tend to be men.

## Gender-based violence

GBV cuts across ethnic and religious groups. Mostly directed towards women and girls, respondents also spoke of a number of cases of boys who had experienced sexual violence. Forms of GBV raised were abductions, sexual violence, sexual harassment, domestic violence and abuse, early and forced marriage, denial of resources and witchcraft accusations. Perpetrators, while mostly known to survivors, spanned economic classes and came from different sectors of society. They were seen as “not just men in the community” but also family friends, intimate partners i.e. husbands and boyfriends, relatives or those who host IDPs. They included combatants such as AOG fighters and members of community militias. They also included government agents whether this be primary and secondary school teachers in Damagun and Ngergama who had been found to be raping students or soldiers who engage in sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA)<sup>13</sup> in Gujba. Respondents expressed shock that even religious leaders were involved in committing sexual violence and linked closure of IDP camps with increased levels of SEA as

women and girls have no option but to have sex with men who provide them with shelter. Survivors are less able to report when the perpetrator has money, power and status over them so most cases where cases have proceeded from the police station tend to concern poorer men. Some actors spoke of working on GBV prevention but messages tend to be focused on the behaviour of (potential) survivors rather than changing the attitudes and behaviour of (potential) perpetrators.

There are particular categories of women and girls among whom GBV incidence is higher. For example, women with disabilities were seen as “easily violated” and experienced higher levels of rape, assault, sexual exploitation and denial of resources due to lack of education, livelihoods and social networks as a result of societal attitudes. Studies from a number of other countries<sup>14</sup> show women with disabilities are two to four times more likely than their non-disabled counterparts to experience intimate partner violence, that disability also increases risks of non-partner sexual violence, that probability of intimate partner and non-partner sexual violence rises with higher severity of disability but stigma both compounds risk and reduces ability to seek help.<sup>15</sup> Yet, this assessment found no agency to be proactively reaching out to women with disabilities to increase awareness of rights or increase access to services. Another group who face higher incidence of GBV are adolescent girls who face not only high likelihoods of early and forced marriage but also can be sent out by parents to have sex with men for money and food. This section will further discuss early and forced marriage and SEA below.

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Many adolescent girls and young women find their prospects for involvement in community life diminish upon marriage due to additional restrictions and men's need to socialise their young brides into living under their power and control. These restrictions only ease with age. ”

<sup>13</sup> Sexual exploitation and abuse are forms of sexual and gender-based violence. Sexual abuse is 'the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. All sexual activity with a minor is considered as sexual abuse.' Sexual exploitation is 'Any actual or attempted abuse of position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.' IASC, 'Understanding the Differences Between Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Sexual Harassment and Sexual and Gender Based Violence,' October 2016, available here: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/understanding-differences-between-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-sexual-harassment-and>, last visited 27.12.2019.

<sup>14</sup> For example, Jill Astbury and Fareen Walji, 'Triple Jeopardy: Gender-based Violence and Human Rights Violations Experienced by Women with Disabilities in Cambodia,' AusAid Working Paper, (AusAid, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Kristin Dunkle, Ingrid van der Heijden, Erin Stern and Esnat Chirwa, 'Disability and violence against women and girls: Emerging evidence from the what works to prevent violence against women and girls global programme,' (What Works, July 2018).



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While GBV is present in all parts of Yobe state, dynamics differ according to locations. Estimating GBV prevalence is impossible due to lack of reporting or proper data collection in Yobe given there are fewer GBV actors on ground than Borno but respondents spoke of higher levels in areas of return and/ or with military presence. They said there were high numbers of cases reported in Potiskum due to its large population and there were lots of protection issues in Gujba and Gulani.

### Abductions

In March 2018, 110 girls were abducted from school in Dapchi, the capital of Bursari LGA. This abduction was a rare incident of a large number of girls being abducted in the last couple of years in Yobe and 101 of the girls were returned to town reportedly unharmed. Yet, these abductions have adversely affected girls' access to education in many areas which have JAS and/ or ISWAP presence with girls and their parents unwilling to attend school for fear of abductions. Some girls are sent to school in another LGA but many have dropped out of education. For example, many of the Dapchi girls who were abducted are no longer going to school. While abductions in Yobe have not made national headlines since Dapchi, they still take place although whether perpetrators are members of AOGs, groups of unaffiliated kidnappers or other unaffiliated armed groups is unknown.

### Sexual violence

Respondents spoke of many cases of sexual violence being reported. A woman who works with communities in Potiskum said up to two to three cases a day can be reported. In Geidam, the women's focus group talked about how incidence of young men and adolescent boys raping young women and adolescent girls had spiked recently. They shared stories of how they catch women and girls, put them inside a keke napep and take them to the bush to gang rape them. Most discussion centred on children who had experienced sexual violence at the hands of adult men but adolescent boys can also be perpetrators. In Katarko recently, a Fulani boy of 15 years saw a ten year old Fulani girl in the bush. He ran after her and raped her. The case was reported by a community leader to the police who took her to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) in Damaturu. In Gujba, a eight year old girl was sent to recharge a mobile phone by her parents when a 18 year old man came up to her, removed a knife and threatened to kill her if she did not come with him. He raped her and stole the phone. Again, the police took the survivor to the SARC for treatment. In both cases, the police actively investigating to bring the perpetrator to trial but they are not always so proactive. In Gujba, women in a focus group discussion said most girls who were raped were those whose parents had been killed. They were as young as four to seven years of age and some of them had been infected with chlamydia, syphilis or HIV as a result of rape. One young woman spoke about her uncle who, seeing a seven year old girl having difficulty walking and observing blood, took her to hospital in Damaturu.<sup>16</sup> The women said that often in these cases, the men concerned are able to bribe police officers who then "throw away the case."

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<sup>16</sup> The woman was about to show photos of the girl which she had on her phone to the group to show how young she was before the author intervened and spoke about the importance of anonymity and confidentiality in such cases. The women agreed that such photos should not be shown given the risk of survivors being stigmatised by the community but said this was the first time they had heard about such concepts and asked for widespread sensitisation in this area.

Survivors can be younger still. Women's rights activists in Damaturu told the story of a six month old baby raped by a 33 year old man who was a teacher to her sister. They retold that he was passing in a keke napep when he saw the girl carrying her sister. He stopped, took the baby from her and sent his student on an errand. After raping the baby, he put her in nappies which subsequently became soaked with blood, before giving her back to her sister. She was rushed to treatment where she underwent three operations. She survived but her internal organs have reportedly suffered serious irreparable damage. While some respondents could see no explanation for these young girls being raped apart from ritual purposes, other respondents believed these cases were indicative of a paedophilic culture in society with young girls sexualised. They linked these attitudes to the incidence of early marriage, pointing out men who marry 12-year-old girls can have decided to marry them when they are even younger and purposefully choose to marry girls of this age as they are socialised by societal prevalence of early marriage to find them sexually desirable. According to one respondent who works on GBV response, "Spiritual reasons are often given as motivation for an adult man to rape young girl as [people are] trying to understand why this would happen – but may be attribution to try to explain rather than reality... Spirituality [is] used as a veil for paedophilic culture." While reporting has increased, this increased reporting is not necessarily reflective of increased incidence. According to GBV actors, analysis done by the GBV sector shows an increase in awareness and people speaking out. A lot more people are now feeling able to at least access health services due to increased discussion in communities. A woman working on GBV illustrated this change by reference to a young boy who was raped by a man of around 50 years in early 2018. The protection team was called by an elderly woman in the neighbourhood, the survivor given treatment and the alleged perpetrator handed over to the police. The woman who reported the case said rape in the community was previously not reported. The same man had raped many children in the past but community members did not speak out for fear of stigma of the survivor and retribution by the perpetrator. However, she felt compelled to speak out as a result of community engagement the organisation had done.

The majority of discussion on sexual violence is about sexual violence against children, with a partial breaking of the culture of silence and relatively higher reporting here. However, people do not tend to talk about sexual violence against adults unless asked. Although sexual violence against women in particular, does happen (no information about sexual violence against men was forthcoming), it tends to not be reported or be discussed as much. Respondents said this form of sexual violence is more likely to happen within marriage and, as marital rape is

normalised, few women would report this. Moreover, adolescent girls and adult women are more likely to be blamed and face continued stigma and shaming than younger girls, a powerful incentive to remain quiet. If women and girls are in relationships with young men who rape them, the blame often falls on the survivor. She is often asked why she allowed herself to be alone with him if she did not want to have sex. Rumours can also spread that she consents to sex with many men and is saying she was raped because it was found out. Another form of sexual violence around which survivors, mostly adolescent girls and adult women, are stigmatised and blamed is SEA. Particularly in areas where families have found it difficult to rebuild livelihoods and do not receive adequate humanitarian assistance, many women and girls have no option but to have sex with men in return for food, shelter, protection and other goods. Women and girls whose male family members had been killed, detained or left the area were believed to be the most vulnerable to SEA as "men in a position to provide [them with] help, exchange this help for sex. Women are desperate, want to take care of children and do whatever they can to survive" according to a woman respondent who works with communities. A LGA official in Geidam said market closure had affected economic life and inability of husbands to provide had led girls and women to become family breadwinners through SEA and survival sex. Other respondents linked SEA to the recent national economic recession and continued impact of a decade of violent conflict.

Soldiers, particularly in Gujba where there is a military barracks but also in Damaturu and Goneri, were a group of perpetrators raised repeatedly. According to a woman respondent, "Whenever [the] military invade community in Gujba and Geidam, they rape women. Most violations happen when enter community for cordon and search." These cases were seen to have decreased as the pace of military operations has reduced but not only were male military personnel reported as committing rape but they were also seen as sexually exploiting and abusing women and girls. According to a young woman interviewed in Geidam, many girls there, particularly since the market closure, are staying with boyfriends including soldiers and rich men in the community who provide them with what they need. After one or two years or when soldiers are transferred elsewhere, these men end the relationship and the girls concerned have to go back to their families to be shamed by the community for engaging in sex outside of marriage. There are some cases where soldiers are brought to justice. For example, a police officer spoke of a case where a soldier raped a woman during the course of operation. His colleagues who went in search of him arrested him and he went through a court martial process. However, it is very difficult for survivors to speak up in such cases and for the police to act. According to one respondent, "Even if a private commits a crime, the DPO cannot arrest."



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While most people spoke of rape and sexual assault, respondents also spoke of sexual harassment which goes largely unreported. This sexual harassment happens in schools and religious educational institutions and in places of work, for example perpetrated against women who do labour on men's farms.

Referral pathways that exists for GBV are not very strong as most actors who implement GBV work have seen reduced financing and are unable to support survivors. What is on paper in terms of referrals is not always reflected by reality with organisations who are supposed to provide counselling, livelihoods support, healthcare and other services not actually able to do so. While the SARC in Damaturu provides healthcare and MHPSS services, serious gaps remain outside the state capital. MHPSS services were seen as being most accessible to services and then healthcare. Although many health personnel across the state have been trained in clinical management of rape, survivors may need to pay for some aspects of treatment such as medication and may not be given tablets to prevent pregnancy. In the absence of dedicated space, survivors also may not be assured of healthcare in a confidential space without other patients overhearing what has happened. Further, in some areas such as Geidam, infrastructure has yet to be renovated after destruction and many health personnel have not resumed their posts. Moreover, there seems to be some confusion as to if survivors need a police report before being treated. At least one health worker has been questioned and detained for not reporting rape to the police in line with the survivor's wishes. It took the intervention of senior personnel in the hospital for them to be released and, as a result of this detention, all health workers have been told to no longer treat survivors of sexual violence without referring them to the police. In cases where survivors do not want to report to the police, they need to pay for treatment that is provided free of charge to sexual violence

survivors. Needless to say, mandatory reporting reduces access to health for survivors who, for a number of valid reasons, may not want to report to police. It is also unclear if this is state policy with senior personnel from another facility saying a former edict that people with any injuries brought about by crime needs to report to police is no longer valid. Indeed, access to justice also remains a serious gap. In some cases, the MoJ undertakes alternative dispute resolution to bring at least some closure, for example if a man purposefully infected a woman with HIV as, according to a MoJ official, “If we do it in the more regular way, the victim will suffer much so [we] close eyes on so many things to allow victim to be better served.” Respondents spoke of alleged perpetrators also being more likely to bribe the police to not pursue cases in rural areas where there is less scrutiny and fewer actors working on GBV. MCN is considering opening up SARCs in areas outside Damaturu as it is difficult for survivors from these places to reach the Damaturu SARC. These plans were welcomed by all respondents with whom this prospect was discussed.

Survivors have some access to healthcare and psychosocial support but still do not wish to report cases to the police. Police officers interviewed spoke of some increase in the number of sexual violence investigations and prosecutions. The police has set up Family Support Units (FSUs) that aim to be more welcoming to survivors with police officers running them trained in trauma management, human rights, gender and GBV including referral processes, rape myths and stereotypes, stigmatisation, how to speak with survivors and how to refer to hospital. The state Criminal Investigation Department (CID), to which all police stations need to transfer cases of sexual violence, has received most reports from police stations in Potiskum LGA followed by Damaturu then Geidam and Bade then Nguru, Dapchi and Gujba. Police officers say their adoption of modern investigation methods has helped their work immensely and enabled them to secure convictions. However, financing continues to be challenging with insufficient funds to transport survivors and perpetrators and to buy forms and writing materials. In at least one location, the DPO who is newly transferred does not seem to know the FSU has jurisdiction over sexual violence cases and refers cases directly to state CID. Some police stations have no women personnel with the result that all officers running FSUs are men. Police officers running FSUs also said that despite steps having been put in place, most survivors of violence do not come to the police station. The relationship between the police and Department of Public Prosecutions also seems to not be running smoothly with police officers complaining of delays from the DPP side and the DPP blaming police officers for provision of bail



which means the accused is not present in court. With the amendment of the Penal Code which requires all perpetrators convicted of rape to be sentenced to 25 years in prison if the survivor is an adult and life imprisonment if the survivor is a child, rape cases now need to be taken to the High Court. However, there is a shortage of high court judges in the state. Moreover, the court process to secure a conviction is lengthy and subject to many delays and adjournments. Putting in place procedures to increase survivor ease in testifying seem to be at the discretion of the court with even young girls having to stand up in open court to give open evidence. The SARC steering committee spoke with the chief registrar about this matter. He undertook to contact the Chief Judge so a circular is issued that a rape case involving a minor can be heard in chambers. While this step would be welcome if instituted, the whole court process needs to be expedited and made survivor friendly.

Not surprisingly, people do not wish to take the matter to the police due to the length of time it takes for cases to go through court and lead to conviction as well as the ways in which survivors are treated during the process. Respondents spoke of survivors becoming fed up and wanting to move on with their lives and dropping cases after two to three years. Particularly, if the perpetrator is wealthy or powerful, they are likely to go free. According to one respondent, survivors' families say they are asked to report the perpetrator to the police then see them free in the community after a few days. In these circumstances, the case has been dropped and perpetrator laughs at survivors and their families. In one case, a woman who was raped and accessed SARC services wished to prosecute and the alleged perpetrator was already in police custody but her father, a pastor, was reportedly summoned by the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) who demanded that his daughter withdraw the case. The perpetrator can also threaten the survivor and their family with violence and societal marginalisation, particularly if they are security force personnel or men with power and influence in the community such as community leaders, religious leaders or wealthy. They can also offer money to settle the case which, in the context of the poverty in which many survivors and their families live and what they consider to be the impossibility in securing a conviction, is an offer many choose to take. Respondents also spoke of survivors and their families facing increased pressure and threats from perpetrators, their families and the community at large now as a result of increased jail terms provided for in

the amendment to the Penal Code as the stakes have now become higher. As a result, many more survivors are now dropping out of these cases before they come to trial.

Respondents also spoke of consequences faced by survivors. Despite organisations working to encourage GBV reporting and strengthen institutions, very little work has been done on challenging stigma, marginalisation and victim blaming with the result that survivors, not perpetrators, continue to face repercussions of violence they experience. Without concerted structures being put in place to support survivors including through case workers, survivors face other adverse consequences for reporting. There have also been cases where survivors who report violence have been forced to marry the perpetrator concerned. Activists are concerned about how they will be treated in such marriages given previous violence and disregard for right to bodily integrity and say some women and girls do not report violence because they are afraid they will have to marry the person who raped them. In at least one case where a male teacher raped a girl pupil, the girl concerned was suspended and could not come back to school because of the stigma. If support structures had been in place, an alternative school could have been found but this did not happen. Women and girls who report violence, because there is no support to leave their current situation where violence has occurred, often face repeated violence with respondents talking about seeing the same survivors coming back to access services. Communities also tend to blame survivors and their families for violence, for example blaming them for being in certain places at certain times, being friendly with the perpetrator or allowing their daughters to leave the house. Respondents spoke about how religious leaders bring up the matter of how women and girls dress and tell them of ways to 'avoid' being raped. These cautions not only blame survivors for the violence that happened to them but do not have any basis in reality given most perpetrators are known, abuse takes place within the home, workplace and educational settings and survivors engage in a variety of behaviour and dressing.

Rather than face these consequences, many women and girls who have become pregnant through rape act to terminate pregnancy with or without the knowledge of their parents.<sup>17</sup> According to a senior health worker in Geidam, "Abortion is very rampant in this area. Here, we consider it is taboo for a woman to deliver outside the marital house. So consider you to be a whore and nobody

<sup>17</sup> According to Sections 232 to 236 of the Penal Code and sections 228 and 230 of the Criminal Code Act, abortion is a felony only permissible when the mother's life is at risk. Islam is more permissive, allowing abortion until the foetus has been 'ensouled' at around 4 months. In practice, an estimated 2.7 million abortions are likely to take place annually, 65.6 percent done in ways that are least safe (81 percent for women with no education and 82 percent for the poorest women) and unsafe abortion is a leading cause of maternal death: PMA 2020 Abortion Survey Results: Nigeria, April-May 2018, available at [https://www.pma2020.org/sites/default/files/AbortionModule\\_Brief\\_111518.pdf](https://www.pma2020.org/sites/default/files/AbortionModule_Brief_111518.pdf), last visited 16.08.2019.

will agree to marry you as you have already spoiled your family name.” Women and girls who have money can access abortion in private health clinics or, alternatively take traditional herbs or over the counter drugs. Often, doing so runs smoothly. However, other women and girls can be too far along in the pregnancy or take more dangerous methods of termination. If they go to health centres, they are provided post abortion care. This health worker said cases of women and girls coming in after having had abortions had increased as a result of the conflict, estimating that whereas 10-15 cases a month would come in beforehand, now at least 40 cases or more are admitted. Moreover, many women and girls are unable to seek healthcare and die due to infection or excessive bleeding.



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This combination of stigma faced by survivors and perpetrators' impunity in addition to threats by perpetrators against survivors and challenging investigative and judicial systems mean there is little if any incentive for reporting to even family let alone to police and pursuing cases through the justice system. People working on GBV cases find it intensely frustrating when survivors drop cases and believe this continued impunity means there is no deterrence against committing sexual violence. However, this dynamic is unlikely to change without concerted campaigns that shift the shame and blame for rape from survivor to perpetrator so they have to worry about marriage prospects and community attitudes. It also needs case workers to accompany women and girls through the process beyond acting in legal capacities. Proper programmes of protection for survivors and witnesses need to be in place so they do not face threats, physical violence and economic consequences. Court processes should be survivor friendly with judges, lawyers and court personnel trained in handling GBV cases. The challenges and recommendations sections below will explore these areas further.

## Domestic violence and abuse/ intimate partner violence

While most conversations around GBV tend to focus on sexual violence, incidence of domestic violence and abuse is likely to be higher. Men in a focus group in Geidam discussed how economic hardship had led to increased disputes in the household which sometimes leads to increased incidence of men committing domestic violence. Other respondents spoke about cases where husbands have asked their wives to sell her business so he can pay costs of marrying another wife or as he is concerned she may become richer than him. They spoke of the perceived normality of domestic violence and abuse and continued cycles of violence. A respondent said, “It is accepted as a girl finds out [her] father beats [her] mother then finds [her] husband beats her and tells [her] daughter that is what happens.” This dynamic also applies for men with boys who grow up seeing their fathers beat their mothers also thinking this is natural when it comes to their wives. A primary reason given for an increase in domestic violence and abuse is men “wanting to feel relevance” and assert their authority, power and control in contexts where women are now taking on all household responsibilities, as discussed above in the livelihoods and economic conditions section. Here, men who feel unable to live up to norms of masculinity or control the household through provision of money and food as they were doing before, resort to violence to assert their dominance and power. As a respondent said, “Men don't know how to handle [the] situation and [their] change in family position from being a provider to being a seconder. So [they] tend to vent anger on women.” People interviewed also spoke about an increase in divorce rates as a result, which will be discussed in the changing gender norms and realities section below.

Intimate partner violence happens in non-marital relationships also. However, given societal disapproval of such relationships, they tend to be hidden which hinders the ability of women and girls to speak openly about violence they may be experiencing even further. Moreover, mechanisms by which society used to respond to domestic violence and abuse have broken down as a result of the disruption caused by violent conflict. Families may be split apart and living in several locations. Leaders also may not be present in communities experiencing high insecurity. Women and girls living in situations of displacement may not feel free to approach the leader of the community in which they live. Moreover, most government MDAs do not take cases of domestic violence and abuse seriously. A police officer talked of cases of domestic violence and abuse being settled via alternative dispute resolution (ADR) methods. Cases of physical violence can be

investigated and prosecuted in magistrates' courts if there is enough evidence but women, who are reluctant to approach security agents at the best of times do not feel able to go to the police in cases of domestic violence and abuse. Officers in the FSU tend to see their work as focused on sexual violence or missing children rather than also including cases of domestic violence and abuse and intimate partner violence.

### Denial of resources and links with poverty

Respondents also spoke of husbands abandoning wives or throwing them out of their homes. These cases have increased sharply due to hardship and poverty. For example, the sharia committee in Gujba spoke of a case that they had recently dealt with where the husband took his wife back to her family when she became sick with cancer. Her family supported her with medical treatment and reported this issue to the hisbah. They sat down with the husband and his parents to tell him of his responsibilities under Islam. He accepted he had made a mistake, apologised to his wife and promised to take care of her medical and other needs.

### Early and forced marriage

In 2017, many people felt they had to marry their daughters early to reduce family costs in a context of poor livelihoods. In areas where people have access to farmland and have been able to rebuild their lives, there has been some reduction of early and forced marriage. Change has been more noticeable in urban areas such as Damaturu with parents, especially mothers, seeing the need to send their children, including girls, to school instead of having them be married. The reason for this shift was given as increased awareness and exposure as people have seen the options and opportunities girls who have gone to school have in terms of jobs and incomes. However, it is important to remember that incidence of early and forced marriage was high in Yobe even before violent conflict. Any changes in incidence between 2017 and now tend to be in age of marriage, for examples girls being married at age 15 or 16 now rather than 12 or 13 as at the height of the humanitarian crisis, but this delay still constitutes early and forced marriage. Respondent said they had not seen as much change in early and forced marriage incidence as they had hoped, particularly in rural areas or locations still experiencing high levels of insecurity.

### Witchcraft accusations

There were two incidents of women being accused of witchcraft reported by the sharia committee in Gujba. In the first, an old woman was accused of being a witch after which she relocated to Gombi in Adamawa to escape rumours and any potential violence. Her husband reported what had happened to the sharia committee who called community members to explain their viewpoint. After the sharia committee found no evidence to sustain this

accusation, the woman accused came back to the community where she now lives. In the second case, a member of a vigilante group pointed a gun at a woman accused of witchcraft and commanded her to take off all her clothes to prove her innocence in front of a crowd of over 100 people. A girl was told to jump over the woman three times. When she failed to stand up after doing so, the woman was beaten severely by the crowd and had to be taken to hospital in Damaturu. The Sharia committee also intervened in this case. It was not possible to ascertain how widespread witchcraft accusations against women are, whether they occur across Yobe and if they have any link with the conflict. Respondents also spoke of other cases of witchcraft accusations in Gujba, Nguru and Gulani. They said most accusations are targeted at women and are sometimes linked to women being blamed for disease in a community or as a result of women hallucinating due to malaria and their utterances being taken as signs of communication with evil supernatural forces.

## Changing gender norms and realities

The sections above have outlined how realities for all genders have transformed in the past two years. However, while roles and responsibilities have shifted, gender norms are taking longer to transform. Although many women and men are adjusting to these changes and Yobe is seeing new models of femininity and masculinity emerge, there is still some backlash against these shifts as seen by dynamics around domestic violence and abuse explored above.

The majority of people in Yobe belong to the Kanuri ethno-linguistic group. Kanuri families tend to follow a model of breadwinner masculinity with men responsible for providing for the family through income generating activities and the women responsible for cooking, cleaning and physical and moral upbringing of children. Often Kanuri men and women spend their days apart in gender segregated groups, coming together at night at home. Yet, there are always differences between the ways in which people live their lives and gender norms. Gender relations are not static. There have been significant shifts throughout history. For example, women were prominent as advisers and leaders in the Kanem-Borno empire in the past with at least one woman having ruled the empire. Yet, Kanuri culture by and large required women to be 'respectful' i.e. not mix with men and keep quiet when men are around. Men are considered to be the head of the household who makes most of the decisions around the family with varying levels of consultation from family members. The ideal man is considered to be the breadwinner for the family, able to overcome challenges, be courageous and strong and keep absorbing pressure. As a result, men who have lost their livelihoods find their sense of identity affected. As a male respondent said, "He



knew himself as a big man able to go anywhere and spend money but [he is] no longer able to do this. He used to be breadwinner but now is not able to provide and [his] wife is the one who provides. He was a gatekeeper or community leader before but has lost [this] sense of leadership in new community. He withdraws to build a new identity – who am I to myself? What do people think of me?” This respondent linked commission of violence with a bid to reinforce men's original sense of self and 'prove' his controlled power over his wives and children. He said, “If being a man means providing and I can no longer provide, it means no longer a man – but I am not a woman as women are lesser.” As a result, violence becomes one of few methods left open to such men to not be feminised and distinguish themselves from women.

These dynamics are particularly so as women are playing increasing important roles in providing for their families as well as participating in community decision making. The roles women and men play have changed as a result. Many men have died, creating a vacuum in the family with women having to take responsibility for providing food, shelter, clothing, education and other family needs. Men, who cannot continue their old livelihoods, are less likely to shift into new livelihoods which they may see as 'beneath' them or women's work while women engage in cleaning people's homes, frying food to sell and other income generating activities. Respondents spoke about how these ideas of masculinity and femininity had contributed to increased rates of divorce as it is shameful for men to not be able to provide for their families. According to a woman in Damaturu, “If [a man is] not able to cater for [his] family, [he] cannot wait for his wife to provide so he chooses option of divorce rather than wait for the guilt of not being able to provide. Men always have excuses to give for divorce to the community – he knows it's because he cannot provide but does not say this. So, community does not know he cannot provide whereas they will if he stays married. Men give women's behaviour as reason for divorce – she was nagging him, troubling him etc. - rather than tell the true.” Marriages are particularly short-lived among young people with marital breakdown frequently happening after eight or ten months due to the economic situation. Bride price has also reduced as a result of hardship. Women with disabilities spoke of their difficulties in finding marriage partners even before conflict. If a man is interested, his family members will often question how she will be able to do all the household tasks required of a wife. They said men with disabilities face less difficulties as they tend to be more engaged in income generating activities and financially independent while women are more dependent on her husband's income and, if this is insufficient, on her neighbours' charity. They said that in families with multiple wives, they are often the first to be divorced if the family faces economic hardship as a result of violence as they are seen as providing less 'value' to the household.

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He knew himself as a big man able to go anywhere and spend money but [he is] no longer able to do this. He used to be breadwinner but now is not able to provide and [his] wife is the one who provides. He was a gatekeeper or community leader before but has lost [this] sense of leadership in new community. He withdraws to build a new identity – who am I to myself? What do people think of me? ”

Yet, there are changes in attitudes around gender roles. Many respondents spoke of men's increased openness to and gratitude for the work in which women and girls are engaged whether this be income generating activities or community peacebuilding and reconciliation. They proactively try to find ways in which their daughters and wives can benefit from such activities. As a respondent said, “Women contribute to family income. Some men come with women to meetings and say [your intervention] has helped us as she is taking care of school fees [or other family expenditure]. If you empower the women, you are helping him.” However, in other contexts, women have been pushed back into their previous roles, against their wishes, by their male relatives and family members after violent conflict subsides. Respondents in Yobe wondered if women will be pushed back into their gendered roles of home-makers and childcare when life returns to 'normal.' Roles and responsibilities have changed due to necessity and the need for family survival – how sustained this change will be is unknown.



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# POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

After having outlined the conflict, security and gender dynamics in Yobe State, this section now turns to examining the key results achieved and challenges faced of policy and programmatic interventions as well as lessons that can be learned. While the author spoke with a number of people working for government ministries and departments, security agencies, international and Borno based NGOs and UN agencies, asking each to reflect on results, challenges and lessons what follows is far from comprehensive as it was not possible to meet every MDA, NGO and UN agency working in the state.

## Result

**Improved policy and legislation:** Since 2017, Yobe state has amended legislation so perpetrators convicted of rape now face penalties of life imprisonment if the survivor is a minor and 25 years imprisonment if the survivor is an adult. The MoJ has a desk officer for gender and police stations have a FSU which means that not only is reporting easier but personnel staffing these positions have received training on gender, human rights and GBV. Respondents spoke of the receptiveness and engagement of some government stakeholders, including in the MoWASD and that the past two years had seen more commitment and results oriented approaches in the health sector in particular. Yobe's State Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security had some of its interventions included in the 2018 budget. However, a small percentage of this approved budget was released. The policy and legislative direction the new Governor will pursue is unknown although he has said that health and education are his priorities.

**Rising awareness of human rights, including those of women and girls, and (some) reporting of human rights violations:** Respondents spoke of how many communities showed higher levels of rights education due to a number of sensitisation campaigns on human rights, including the right to bodily integrity and freedom from GBV. These campaigns have taken the form of advocacy visits to religious leaders who then use their time in churches and mosques to preach about GBV, programmes on radio stations and in person sessions in communities. Activists have been informing women and girls in communities that they have a right to education and to bodily integrity in particular, that most perpetrators are within the family and they should report to their mothers if even their uncle starts to touch them in some places. People not only know their rights but are aware of where they can be supported

when violations have taken place. People are more aware of and able to respond to violence than was previously the case. The culture of silence is partially breaking in cases of GBV, especially when it comes to sexual violence committed against children. As a woman respondent working on the rights of women and young people said, "People are becoming sensitised about their basic human rights especially women, and when rights are infringed upon, they can report to where at least an effort will be made even if justice is not gotten." Women's rights activists spoke about how girls are now being able to acquire skills, are being mentored and coached. and that their mothers have hopes that their daughters will be more independent and face brighter futures than their own. Activists try to work on changing internalised sexism and beliefs and norms impeding progress, "telling them norms are cultures and cultures can change, are not static."

**More inclusive and effective community leadership:** MCN interventions have focused on training community leaders, scribes and women relatives on conflict management, human rights and record keeping. This intervention has helped participants improve mediation and reconciliation skills. Community leaders are required to engage in mediation, dialogue and conflict management processes but receive no training in how to do this. Community leaders, who play significant roles in their society, have been contributing to escalation of violence due to their non-inclusion and perceptions of bias, corruption and self-interest surrounding them and some community leaders are even seen as colluding and exchanging information with members of AOGs. This intervention aims to change this dynamic. It is early days however more inclusive decision-making processes and proactive responses to community challenges were already visible in some locations.

**People coming together to mitigate conflict:** In the last two years, some communities in Yobe have seen practices of individuals and agencies working together to solve community issues and mitigate violence. For example, in Gujba, there has been a history of violence between farmers and pastoralists during times of migration as farmers have encroached on their grazing routes and pastoralists' animals destroy these crops. The CPSP facilitated conversations with farmers, pastoralists and those who sell cows in the market to identify four cattle routes in the LGA following which the Emir proclaimed these are recognised cattle routes, farmers should stop encroachment on them and pastoralists should ensure they adhere to them. As of the time of data collection, there were no farming activities on grazing routes in Gujba. At the same time, institutions whether these be state security agencies or those of community and religious leadership have become more inclusive and responsive in their decision making. While many of these platforms are based to some extent on structures existed previously, levels of inclusivity are new. Now, civil society, representatives of government and security forces, including some women, people with disabilities and members of ethnic and religious minorities, come together to discuss issues and present solutions. Communities, government actors and security agents have really seen the value of this inclusive and multi-stakeholder approach. These changes are largely limited to areas where organisations such as MCN and others have supported civil society actors to bring together and support multi-stakeholder conflict mitigation and peacebuilding mechanisms but results are promising and such interventions could have wider ranging impact if implemented at scale. These systems not only take more proactive action than was previously the case. These NGOs have also increased peacebuilding capacity and mediation capacity among many individuals in the community who have helped better manage conflict in non-violent ways.

**Increase in youth engagement due to interventions:** NGOs have engaged with young women and men, particularly around livelihoods interventions and to teach peacebuilding skills so that they are supported in starting and sustaining income generating activities and engaging in community conflict resolution. They also support young people to design and carry out community interventions of their choice, for example installing fire extinguishers and first aid boxes in schools and market places. As a result of these interventions, young people report feeling more engaged in their communities and able to start up their own businesses.

**Interventions have supported women's increased resilience:** As described above, women show increased resilience. As well as the factors mentioned above, many actors have also focused their attention on empowerment programmes, particularly around women's economic empowerment. Several government and non-government

agencies support women headed households in particular with livelihoods programming. For example, agencies provide women with start-up capital, provide training that they need and help them form cooperatives and start savings programmes. As a result, participants of these programmes have been able to use capital and savings to start businesses and improve family nutrition and report increased levels of confidence and self-esteem. Women are also increasingly reaching out to other women to step down any training they have received to spread this knowledge and skills. According to a woman engaged in peacebuilding, they were very proud to do so.

**Changed attitudes towards people associated with AOGs and increased social cohesion:** There is now increased acceptance of people who have returned from a period of time spent with AOGs compared to a few years ago. Respondents said they saw frequent cases of suspicion previously for example people stigmatising and refusing to associated with those whose son or daughter was known to be a member. They believed these family members to be openly communicating and feeding information about what is happening in the community to their children or blamed them for not stopping their children from joining AOGs and committing violence. According to a woman respondent who works for an NGO, "In 2016/7, you could not tell people that you had been part of [any AOG] but want to come back to the community [as] they would kill you – but now, people are able to accept even BH ex-combatants." She attributed this change to a number of interventions taking place in the area of community dialogue and trauma healing.

**Changing attitudes around disability in locations of intervention:** Some people with disabilities interviewed reported seeing changes in societal attitudes. People stigmatised them, for example withdrawing from them in community gatherings, before but they now report more acceptance. They attribute this change to the actions and interventions of one NGO in supporting people with disabilities and engaging with stakeholders to change community attitudes and behaviour.

**Shift from early and forced marriage to desire and access for education:** In some areas, young girls are more able to delay marriage in favour of education. Early and forced marriage and denial of education is still widespread but increasingly, girls tell parents they want to continue their education and learn skills before getting married and mothers have been able to speak up for their daughters. According to a woman respondent who works with women and young people, "Before, women did not go to school but got married but now girls want to further their education and women who dropped out of school seek adult education or non-formal education to have

basic numeracy and literacy and life skills empowerment.” Where it is difficult to enrol girls in education programmes due to lingering attitudes against forms of education seen as ‘western’, respondents have seen engaging with mothers, who now have increased decision-making power compared to before, as yielding positive results.



**Women are more involved and visible in different arenas and there is reportedly more awareness, attitudinal change and action when it comes to women's participation.**

#### **Some changes in practices and attitudes around women's participation and voice:**

In many communities, women are more able to contribute to family and community decision making than was the case previously. Women are more involved and visible in different arenas and there is reportedly more awareness, attitudinal change and action when it comes to women's participation. Women are more eager to start and contribute to initiatives in their communities with the vanguard of women who first stepped forward into these roles having multiplier effects as more women and girls know doing so is possible and see these women as role models. The attitudes of some men have also changed. Community and religious leaders, some of whom were resistant to the idea of women's participation in community decision making beforehand, have started to say that women need to be involved, particularly due to the numbers of women headed households in their communities.

#### **(Limited) progress on GBV access to services and reporting:**

Although many challenges remain when it comes to GBV, as the challenges section below will discuss, many agencies have been working on strengthening GBV response. More survivors are now reporting violations and accessing services such as the SARC in Damaturu partly due to awareness campaigns that let the general public know that a place which free medical, psychosocial and legal support to SGBV survivors exists. Support structures in communities whether this be women's committees or community leaders who have been trained on GBV response are now in place in some areas that are able to refer survivors for services. Respondents spoke of increased reporting and some cases now being pursued through the criminal justice process. They also spoke of the need for increased monitoring, feedback and follow up,

better advocacy with security agencies, building capacity of service providers and change at policy and legislative levels. However, as the challenges section below will discuss, reduced funding levels severely hamper access to services for women and girls who report.

**Stronger coordination and collaboration, including on protection leading to joint action:** Respondents spoke of a fewer number of actors leading to easier coordination and less competition. Given resourcing for Yobe interventions is not sufficient to cover needs, agencies are incentivised to ensure little duplication. Coordination mechanisms are stronger as a result with agencies engaging in information sharing and joint strategising for action.

## **Challenges**

**Organisational bureaucracy and release of funds:** This challenge cuts across many organisations operating in Borno, including MCN. It was raised by respondents working for government MDAs, NGOs and UN agencies. When it comes to MCN, respondents spoke of how good progress was being made but then work stopped to wait for the next tranche of funds to be released. Not only are these delays affecting programme delivery but they also impact relationships with partners and communities in which MCN engages.

**Reduced and decreasing funding levels:** As of 31 July 2019, \$326.9m of the \$847.7m or 38.6 percent of funds required for humanitarian response for Adamawa, Borno and Yobe in 2019 had been received.<sup>18</sup> Most of this funding is for Borno which remains more conflict affected and in humanitarian crisis than its neighbouring states. Despite best efforts, protection, gender sensitivity, equality and mainstreaming in humanitarian response has suffered as a result. According to the latest humanitarian funding overview, only 12.4 percent of funds needed to work on GBV and 16.4 percent of the funds required for child protection in 2019 have been received over halfway into the year.<sup>19</sup> While there has been some new recent funding for Yobe, such as new EU funds to focus on improving resilience, in general, respondents spoke about lack of both resources and capacity when it comes to protection. As a result, high level advocacy and conversations are focused on funding and prioritising action rather than strategic engagement. Yobe has seen levels of humanitarian funding decrease as donors prefer to fund interventions in Borno where there are more IDPs. At the time of data collection in July 2019, UNFPA which had provided many GBV services had seen a reduction in its

<sup>18</sup> OCHA, 'Nigeria: Humanitarian Funding Overview,' 31 July 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

funding and there was no funding for child protection despite the high level of protection risks and needs. According to respondents, there are now very few agencies responding to GBV and providing services, particularly outside Damaturu which has the SARC. There is a vacuum when the GBV funding for agencies who were providing services ends with the government not taking ownership. Many of the agencies that were operational in Yobe have left the state as a result of lack of funding. More efforts are needed to bring together government MDAs, NGOs and UN agencies in the spirit of genuine partnership. Opportunities to rework relations between NGOs, UN agencies and the state must be maximised once Commissioners are appointed. Continued sustainability of interventions and government ownership have, so far, proved to be disappointing. Consequentially, there is an urgent need to rethink means of systems strengthening, capacity building and sustainability, particularly given reduction in donor funding and prospects for resources to reduce even further in coming months.

#### **Access and security hinder programming plans and**

**results:** All respondents spoke of how security risks had increased compared to early 2018. They said actors are unable to access certain communities due to high insecurity and military restrictions. Recent abductions in northern Borno had prompted reflection among NGOs and UN agencies about if areas with ISWAP presence are now safe to drive through on their way to locations where they work. One agency, having been present in Geidam during the January 2019 attack, had subsequently relocated to Damaturu and decided that staff would be based in the state capital and travel for Geidam for short trips.

#### **Overly militarised and heavy-handed approaches and poor civil-military relations limit the results of interventions and set them back and cause civilian**

**harm:** The above sections detail the human rights violations such as GBV committed by military personnel and the ways military restrictions and rules are hindering recovery. As outlined above, these restrictions can have severe impacts particularly on economic conditions. Respondents spoke of how military action and restrictions can limit results of livelihood interventions and set them back, for example due to market closure in Geidam. They said undue emphasis is given to militarised approaches rather than non-kinetic strategies that focus on ameliorating the situations of people affected by violence and winning hearts and minds. Not only do communities endure harassment and attempts at extortion and checkpoints and GBV committed by personnel, but the military also does not communicate reasons for its actions which, as a result, seem arbitrary. Other government and security agencies also say they are not told of military decisions such as when the timing of the closure of the

road between Damaturu and Maiduguri changes. These heavy-handed approaches are also backfiring as civilians are able to contrast them with ISWAP's efforts to gain acceptance from civilians, reassure them of their intentions and recruit them to join their daula. Yet this assessment found that there is no organisation that is concerted in engaging with the military in advocacy on civilian harm or training of personnel around human rights, gender, international humanitarian law and civilian protection and harm mitigation. Many respondents spoke about how important this work was, that they were unable to engage in it due to donor prohibitions but strongly recommended that another organisation should start this work.

#### **Insufficient political will and government ownership:**

Respondents saw the Yobe state government are more open than counterparts in Borno and wanting to maximise opportunities for improving the situation in the state offered by increased funding and actors. Some LGA chairmen have also been proactive in trying to improve the situation for the residents of the LGA, perhaps incentivised to do so as they are directly elected. However, respondents, including government officials, complained about the way that bureaucracy can sometime delay interventions and results. One respondent spoke about how Bursari LGA wants to give grants to support women to engage in business activities in order to ensure sustainability of a particular NGO intervention but that the LGA has to write to the appropriate ministry which needs to write to the Governor to approve this. Those involved fear that the project may have ended and opportunities to ensure sustainability lost by the time approval comes through. Many respondents also cast doubt on the extent to which the state government takes women's rights and empowerment seriously, pointing at low levels of women in the legislature, executive and civil service and lack of funding for MoWASD. Whether this will change with the new administration is unclear.

**Lack of domestication of human rights laws:** While Yobe has increased sentences for perpetrators convicted of rape, otherwise the legislative domain of Yobe when it comes to human rights related laws remains unchanged since the 2017 gender assessment. Yobe has yet to domesticate the Child Rights Act or Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPP Act), both passed at the federal level in 2003 and 2015 respectively. It has yet to pass a Gender and Equal Opportunities Act or domesticate the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa also known as the Kampala Convention. While President Buhari signed the Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act into law in January 2019 following nine years of advocacy by rights groups and activists, this law



has yet to be domesticated in Yobe. In the last administration, the Child Protection Act was waiting its third reading in the State House of Assembly. The Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) and legislation on disability rights were also on the floor of the legislature in the last State House of Assembly. However, since both of them were not passed by the legislature and assented to by the Governor, the process may have to start again. Other legislation where respondents indicated plans to engage in advocacy are the VAPP Act

#### **Intolerance is a concern in itself and makes**

**programming more difficult:** High levels of religious intolerance were seen to be bordering on 'fanaticism', making it difficult to call people together across religious lines for interventions. Respondents said committees headed by a Christian facing difficulties even if the person concerned is more qualified due to these views and as Muslims are the majority religion. Although this was starting to change with people talking about the need to embrace difference, respondents spoke of having to spend time in negotiating this terrain and finding solutions which everyone concerned found comfortable.

#### **Patriarchal norms hinder women's participation and voice without concerted efforts:**

Despite significant investment of efforts made to sensitise and change attitudes, patriarchal norms continue to be a barrier to realisation of the human rights of women. Two areas where this is most felt are women involvement in family, community and political decision making and ending GBV against them. Socialisation into certain beliefs prevents women from participating and sanctions them if they do. Women of all ages are not supposed to speak up in public, particularly if (older) men are present. Many times, women continue to be excluded from decision spaces which tend to be all-male affairs. As a result of this exclusion, women often lack the information necessary for participation even in spaces to which they are invited. While these norms are changing with women more represented in decision making spaces, they hinder meaningful participation as many women and men have internalised this taboo about women not being outspoken particularly in front of men. Similar norms prevent young people of all genders from taking part in community discussions. These norms are why holding separate discussions for groups of women and young people to spread information, articulate issues and plan to bring them to the table are so successful in increasing voice in community discussions. Unless concerted efforts are made to encourage and support women to speak and persuade men to allow women to contribute, women will not be able to meaningfully participate. Moreover, attention needs to be paid as to how selection is done. Respondents spoke about how if you ask community leaders to draw up lists of people to participate

in community meetings, dialogues or workshops, the women on the list will tend to be his wives, sisters or other female family members. As described under the results section, there is some improvement in this regard. Respondents said that while some progress has been made in changing attitudes and stereotyping by men, this has barely scratched the surface of what is needed: "If you get 2 out of 10, this is progress but there is more work to do to counter and change stereotype in men."

#### **Difficulties translating women's inclusion into meaningful participation and voice:**

Attention can tend to focus on making up numbers without looking quality of representation, either by supporting women to contribute for example through women only sessions before main meetings or by ensuring women who are invited have the skills and capabilities to reach out to other women and girls to hear their concerns and reflect this in their participation. For example, MCN trained women title holders, mostly the wives and sisters of community leaders so they would be better able to resolve disputes but has found it difficult to measure the effectiveness of this training. While some of these women play important roles in their communities, doing so is not automatic just because of their links to male community leaders. Although male community leaders were asked to fill in and submit training forms, keep records in record keeping centres of decisions made and provided with ongoing mentoring for months, there were no such systems put in place for women trained. A better approach would have been to map who are the women with power and influence in communities and to whom people turn, train them in leadership, conflict resolution, human rights and other skills and work with them to mobilise women in their communities to articulate concerns and reflect these into community platforms including the CPSP. While MCN has trained women involved in community groups in dispute resolution, this training was not as intensive as that provided to community leaders, on-going mentoring is not provided and there is no way of ensuring feedback and monitoring of activities.

#### **Male dominated security agencies hinder women's and girls' access to security and justice:**

Outside Damaturu, particularly in areas with volatile security dynamics, there are often no women security agents among soldiers, police officers or National Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) officers. These areas may have had women security agents residing there in the past but these women have often been transferred out due to conflict. As a result, many women and girls are unable to approach security agents with their security and justice concerns. This reluctance is exacerbated by incidence or fear of sexual violence including sexual harassment and SEA and rumours that surround women and girls who do approach security agents.

**Having partially broken the culture of silence, support is not present for GBV survivors who report:**

How reduction in funding has affected the provision of GBV services was discussed earlier. However, the amount of community engagement and sensitisation carried out to date has led to high demand for services. Community volunteers and mobilisers reportedly receive frequent telephone calls, sometimes daily, reporting GBV cases and asking for referrals for services which now have become more inaccessible. As a male respondent working on GBV said, “By doing all this work, we encouraged women to speak out – and now they have nowhere to go. We engaged volunteers for 2 years on referrals. They get a lot of phone calls from survivors wanting support and there is nowhere to support them as [there is] no funding. Demand is very high.” While people can be referred to the SARC in Damaturu, there is no strong coordination to respond to need of survivors outside Damaturu in the 16 other LGAs.

**Increased punishment for rape had led to more cases being dropped:** Although some convictions for rape were secured in 2017 and early 2018, respondents spoke of these numbers sharply dropped after the new law putting in place higher penalties for those convicted came into force at the end of 2018. In many cases, survivors and their families do not come to court due to increased pressure from the perpetrator, his family and the community at large who push them to rather settle in court. Perpetrators are also bribing police officers for ‘advice’ and to manipulate the charges brought so it will not be a rape case. A woman respondent who works for an NGO spoke about overhearing a police officer say to a suspect, “tell them you only fingered her” in order for charges to be reduced. As they are earning money from doing this, some police officers are not passing cases onto the FSU but settling them themselves. As a result of these small number of prosecutions, the promised deterrent effect of increased punishment has yet to materialise.

**Impunity for human rights violations including GBV for security force personnel:** Respondents struggled with ways to address and prevent human rights violations committed by military personnel, particularly as senior military officials do not respond to invitations for events and workshops. According to a respondent, “When a military person rapes a civilian, it becomes very difficult to address.” The military has set up a human rights desk to which complaints are supposed to be reported but, in practice, this process is difficult to follow. Survivors of rape and SEA are also more reluctant to speak out about what has happened to them if the perpetrators belong to security agencies. While some report to NGOs and gain access to treatment as a result, many survivors struggle to access health services and counselling let alone report to the military or access justice.



Community volunteers and mobilisers reportedly receive frequent telephone calls, sometimes daily, reporting GBV cases and asking for referrals for services which now have become more inaccessible. ”

**Lack of holistic responses makes progress on GBV difficult:**

The GBV section above addressed challenges currently faced by survivors. Although the SARC in Damaturu provides an easily-identifiable place for survivors to go for care provided at high quality and free of charge, service provision outside the state capital is weak. Survivors find it difficult to come to the SARC in Damaturu given lack of financial means. More locally, it can take hours to see medical personnel and doctors are reluctant to write up reports or testify in court as they do not have due to shortage of personnel. Medical staff, although often contributing personal funds to support survivors, were also reported to not have good attitudes to dealing with survivors. Even referrals from primary health centres involve cost implications including transportation, food and accommodation. While the provision of legal assistance has improved compared to 2017, other challenges remain. The gender-based violence section has already discussed barriers to survivors bringing perpetrators to justice through the criminal justice system. Most people do not have confidence in the legal process, cannot afford to hire lawyers and feel taking cases to court wastes their time with little benefit. Steps to incentivise reporting and pursuit of cases have not been taken. There are few interventions focused on removing survivors from situations of violence, for example if the perpetrator is a member of the family. In the absence of protection programmes for survivors and witnesses of violence and no safe house where they may stay, survivors face threats and attacks if they report violence and wish to pursue cases. Moreover, while some organisations engage in community sensitisation work that includes the need not to stigmatise or blame survivors, a general lack of work in this area means not only is the stigma survivors experience a form of re-victimising and violence in and of itself but survivors are disincentivised from reporting. Some agencies are engaging with communities to change attitudes but focus continues to be on restricting the movements of women and girls rather than potential perpetrators. Such work can be counterproductive as the focus is on the behaviour of (potential) survivors and the need for punishment of (alleged) perpetrators rather than

trying to change attitudes and behaviours that prevent survivors seeking help and lead to lower levels of GBV being perpetrated.

**Non-intersectional interventions mean all in communities, especially most vulnerable and marginalised do not benefit to equal extent:**

Programmes have also found it difficult to reach some of the most marginalised in society. This difficulty in doing so is partly due to lack of proper context analysis and wide community engagement processes. For example, many interventions focused on women's empowerment have also failed to reach adolescent girls and young women who face particular barriers and challenges as discussed above. As a result, while some older women are more able to participate in decision making and helped to rebuild livelihoods, these interventions have not benefitted a younger cohort with different needs and concerns who are often not able to articulate these fully to older women. Another group that has seen little change in their status and options are people with disabilities. Respondents spoke of no progress made despite a number of interventions in their localities. Respondents interviewed further spoke of a sense among the humanitarian community that reaching out to include people with disabilities in general, let alone thinking in ways that disaggregate age, gender and disability type and severity, is too difficult and expensive. There is increasing donor scrutiny on ensuring inclusion of people with disabilities in humanitarian response but results to date tends to be on including them as 'beneficiaries' rather than supporting their agencies. Moreover, while peacebuilding interventions have been better at including people with disabilities in decision making platforms, as described above in the gender dynamics section, most of these 'slots' tend to be taken up by men while the 'women's places' are filled by non-disabled women. Neither group has full understanding of the needs of women with disabilities and how discrimination on gender and disability grounds affects realities and prospects.

## Lessons

**Work at the institutional and structural level is slow and painful but necessary and needs to be balanced with individual and community level interventions:**

Supporting institutional change is a long-term process subject to setbacks. It can be immensely frustrating due to bureaucracy, rent-seeking behaviour and lack of political will, commitment and interest. While the potential is high, seeing any results at all can take time. On the other hand, interventions focused on individuals and communities, for example on providing livelihoods support to women to

restart businesses or working with communities to create child protection networks, although not without their own challenges, can yield quicker impacts. Given weak governance, individuals, communities and families tended to take responsibility for themselves even before conflict and welcome any assistance. Both sets of interventions, individual and community empowerment and structural change, are required to bring about positive change, particularly as has been shown by interventions not being sustained by government MDAs once funding for NGOs and UN agencies to do this work has been withdrawn.

**Longer-term engagement and proper analysis is required for sustained impact:**

Agencies who took the time to do a proper context and conflict analysis inclusive of gender and social inclusion dynamics and build community confidence, trust and ownership, found their programming went smoother, communities were engaged not resistant even when it came to potentially sensitive issues around women's empowerment and interventions were likely to have longer-term impact. There are large contextual differences across Yobe, even in neighbouring communities, so analysis needs to be specific to communities of engagement. For example, community leaders in Yobe vary in their effectiveness and the extent to which they are trusted in communities. While some community leaders were seen to have many people believe in them, always give people who come to them a listening ear and try to proactively solve issues, this is not across the board. Design also needs to build in flexibility so programmes can learn and adapt to changes. Respondents pointed to projects done quickly in finite timelines where results were not sustained and the extent to which regular analysis had led to more effective and conflict sensitive programming.

**Programmes need to balance demand and supply interventions:**

The previous section discussed challenges around sustainability of interventions. Many actors reflected that, alongside supplying services and infrastructure, they should have engaged with communities, civil society and media to make demand more visible to persuade government to act, either contributing to these interventions or really taking ownership to ensure continued sustainability.

**Collaboration, coordination and partnership rather than competition delivers results:**

Respondents from government, UN agencies and NGOs alike spoke of progress being more visible where actors came together rather than worked in siloes.

**Proper community engagement needs to be at all levels (not just top down):**

Good community engagement cannot rely on assuming those with relative power will spread information across the community including to

minority ethnic and religious groups that may be marginalised by dominant groups and to women and girls who often are excluded from information sharing as outlined above. Some actors who had focused on government officials and community leaders in community entry reflected the need to inform and ensure buy-in of the entire community. Doing so includes participation in town hall meetings, conducting regular information sharing sessions and talks to mitigate the risks of any misconceptions, including communities that are particularly marginalised in your intervention design and implementation, talking with people with disabilities and reaching out to women in the community. Otherwise, actors run the risk of elite capture and rumours and perceptions of their 'real purpose' taking hold.

**Adults speak for younger people but do not know their issues and have their own biases:** Young people, women in particular, tend to be excluded from meaningful engagement in community platforms and discussions. Even when present, they can feel and be discouraged to talk. As a result, adults can speak about adolescents and young people without actually knowing their issues or enabling them to speak for themselves. The young people interviewed spoke about how adults started from a biased perspective, for example blaming girls for rape because of the way they dress or talking about how unemployed young men will become a 'menace to society'. Actors need to find ways to directly engage with youth and support them to mobilise, advocate and be involved in peacebuilding themselves rather than have others speaking for them.

**Rights awareness and education needs to be the bedrock of all interventions:** Two years ago, there were very low levels of understanding of human rights particularly among people in more rural areas. While areas which have experienced interventions have seen some changes, rights awareness across the state continues to be low. Knowledge of human rights is the pre-requisite for many interventions ranging from good governance to GBV. While work in this area has been done, any new programme, particularly in a community in which not many actors have engaged or with groups unused to interventions should start basic programme of rights awareness and education alongside their interventions.

**Supporting communities to act works – and should have been done earlier:** People are eager to do work themselves rather than wait for assistance but can lack resources, especially in new areas and circumstances. For example, respondents reported people involved in committees set up to manage conflict very appreciative of these platforms as they were able to see results and feel a sense of pride and ownership. Respondents that work with

such groups said that once training on skills such as advocacy, leadership and conflict mapping is provided and people encouraged to believe they can do this work, individuals and groups act themselves, for example to mediate between conflicting parties. They also spread this work into neighbouring communities on their initiative.

Staff need to have direct contact with participants in interventions rather than via a third party so they can learn from and reflect this knowledge of community realities and suggestions into programming adaptation and design. Some agencies have shifted their approaches to increase community engagement while continuing to support partners to deliver.

**Interveners need to build capacity first before bringing livelihoods interventions:** Some respondents spoke of the need to strengthen financial skills and capacities before giving grants. They gave the example of engaging young people in cash for work programmes and then, during this process, find out from them which livelihoods had their interest and designing programmes accordingly. NGOs then supported young people to engage in these livelihoods using the money that they had earned from cash for work programmes which they ensured was enough to start up a business.

**Trauma healing interventions are important in themselves and a pre-requisite to engagement for effectiveness:** Interventions can have little impact if they work with populations with MHPSS needs that they do not meet. Respondents spoke of finding that most participants continued to live with psychological impacts of violence and, as a result, including trauma healing and counselling in their interventions. They said doing so not only meets participants' MHPSS needs but also increases results. Some respondents also spoke of the need for interventions to look at bringing entertaining, amusement and joy to communities as well as focusing on livelihood interventions, conflict mitigation platforms and access to services.

**Address economic needs alongside engaging in peacebuilding interventions:** Peacebuilding actors reflected that, given economic conditions are so difficult, interventions need to address income generation needs thereby gaining acceptance and trust as well as building resilience before or alongside peacebuilding work.

**Women are keen to participate in development and humanitarian activities in the state if supported but having women in the room is insufficient if organisations do not provide ongoing support alongside ensuring this inclusion:** Respondents spoke of women's receptiveness to being included in interventions but said it could take time for them to overcome their



socialisation to be quiet. They said when sessions are facilitated by women, particularly women from their own communities, who reflect on their own challenges and provides encouragement, dynamics can change and women's willingness to participate increases. When women are supported with building of skills and self-esteem, encouraged and are able to mobilise in safe spaces before engaging in mixed platforms, they play crucial roles in promoting good governance, managing conflict and mitigating violence, building peace and rebuilding their communities.

**Continued and sustained focus is needed to ensure women's participation and inclusion as (some) men tend to continue to exclude:** Even if interventions are designed to maximise the likelihood of women's inclusion and active participation, without continued focus, this outcome can slide. For example, government officials and community leaders, even if asked to send equal numbers of women and men, to participate in meetings, trainings and programmes, can provide a list of predominantly male names which, without attention, can go unchallenged. Even if there is good representation of women in community platforms, if their timing is changed to a time during which women have household and childcare responsibilities, women will not be able to attend.

**Expansion in women's roles without working on masculinities adds to women's responsibilities and burdens:** Across communities affected by violent conflict in Yobe, women and men said women were required to fulfil responsibilities of income generation, cooking, cleaning and childcare while men struggle to be as resilient. Women are increasingly burdened while men struggle with feelings of redundancy and inadequacy.

**Most work on GBV focuses on sexual violence against children, missing other types of GBV such as domestic violence and abuse, sexual harassment, early and forced marriage and sexual violence against women:** Commendable progress has been made on increasing awareness and improving response to sexual violence against children however, it constitutes just one type of GBV committed. It also tends to be low-hanging fruit for action. Condemning and acting against sexual violence against children is more likely to gain widespread support. If the violence occurs outside marriage, doing so does not challenge social norms. Yet, incidence of domestic violence and abuse, sexual harassment, early and forced marriage and marital rape is higher than that of sexual violence against children according to respondents who work on GBV but is not taken as seriously. These types of GBV tend to attract a form of fatalism as they are conflated with tradition and culture which people assume to be unchanging even though society has evolved considerably in other aspects.

**One-off sensitisation can improve access to services but has limited other impact:** The number of cases reported to the SARC increased substantially after programmes of sensitisation through community mobilisation and media discussion meant more people knew of its existence and how to access its (free) services. Yet barriers to access still remain, particularly for people living outside Damaturu who are largely unable to access either the SARC or services more locally available for which they need to pay money they do not have. Moreover, one off sensitisation events in the absence of campaigns led by people in the community themselves who have spheres of influence with different groups have little impact in preventing violence, combating stigma or ensuring convictions.

**Holistic interventions on gender-based violence are needed to make progress:** The assessment finds focusing on a few areas is insufficient to strengthen GBV prevention and response. As barriers and challenges have different drivers, interventions need to be multi-faceted and inter-linked. It flags a number of areas where interventions are required. The first is strengthening service provision, particularly beyond Damaturu. The second is case workers in place to support survivors (beyond court appearances) to recover and rebuild her life and seek punishment in court if she wishes it. The third is an anti-stigma campaign with the removal of stigma both preventing further violence and encouraging help seeking and reporting. The fourth is to strengthen police and court systems to be more responsive to survivors. The fifth is a proper programme of victim and witness protection including through provision of alternative accommodation, for example through a safe house. The sixth is changing attitudes, practices and norms so violence is prevented. The recommendations section will provide further details.

**Opening up conversations around changing gender roles and supporting individuals, families and communities through this change can mitigate backlash and violence against women and girls:** As outlined above, gender realities have changed significantly in Yobe while gender norms remain slower to shift. As long as norms perpetuate unequal power relations where men feel they need to have power over women to be valued persist, any movement in gender realities may have the potential to lead to increased violence against women and girls as men feel the need to 'prove' their power and control. Opportunities exist to talk about these issues and programmes that address engage women and men separately and together help individuals, families and communities to adjust are showing results.

**Interventions need to be designed in specific ways to facilitate the meaningful participation of women, youth, people with disabilities and other groups usually marginalised:**

Without focused programming, the most marginalised in society will not be included. Earlier sections have discussed how certain groups have not benefited from interventions to the same extent as others. Sustained engagement from design onwards is needed to ensure inclusion and benefit. Concrete ways of doing so is to set up separate feedback sessions with different groups for example women with disabilities during design and community entry processes. For livelihood projects, setting up separate women's and men's cooperatives is needed as women often get shut out in mixed groups. Facilitating discussions in groups segregated along age, gender and other lines of marginalisation first has also proved to be successful in engendering participation in community groups as discussed above, for example organising separate groups of women and young people to encourage sharing of information, analysis and concerns to bring to the main group.

**Strengthening community institutions can work with sufficient buy-in and ownership:** MCN interventions, while still at early stages, have led more people to be able to come to community leaders and reduced the impunity of these leaders to make arbitrary decisions in some areas.

**Importance of radio to engage people in hard-to reach areas with high levels of insecurity:** Respondents spoke of the potential of using radio to create awareness, share information and find out realities, challenges and ideas from listeners via call in programmes. Doing so, can help programmes to be community driven. One agency spoke about engaging with clusters of women in Kanamma who meet bi-weekly through radio programming and using this to design a programme on strengthening pre-existing methods of building social cohesion and trust and women's contribution to security at a time where it was not safe to travel there frequently.

**Put in places checks and balances to guard against diversion and elite capture of programmes:** Dynamics around elite capture have been discussed at length above. Respondents shared strategies for mitigating this while making power holders feel included and valued. One NGO worker said they asked community leaders to publicise details of selection processes for intervention without telling them selection criteria. The NGO then selected people who came based on these criteria and the community leader verified that these people live locally.



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# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After having examined conflict, security and gender dynamics in the state and outlined key results, challenges and lessons from policy and programming interventions to date, this final section turns to making recommendations for government MDAs and the MCN programme.

## To the Governor:

- Support speedy passage and assent to all outstanding human rights legislation namely the ACJA, Gender and Equal Opportunities Act, Child Rights Act, VAPP Act, Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act and domestication of the Kampala Convention once passed by the State House of Assembly
- Show leadership in and prioritisation for women empowerment and participation in discussions at the State Executive Council
- Provide leadership in developing non-kinetic responses to AOGs and facilitate joint working across MDAs in this regard through the development of cross- government approach and plan to mitigate the impact of insecurity on populations living in volatile areas

## To the State House of Assembly:

- Pass all outstanding human rights legislation namely the ACJA, Gender and Equal Opportunities Act, Child Protection Act, VAPP Act, Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act and domestication of the Kampala Convention

## To the Ministry of Health:

- Include the SARC in 2020 and future budgets, building in a mechanism in place for continued championing of this

## To the Ministry of Justice:

- Set up a Special Court on GBV that is a part of the existing High Court and operates in Damaturu and other judicial divisions with prosecution and defence lawyers, judges and court personnel trained in handling GBV cases, a practice direction sent out, procedures drawn up to protect survivors and suspects and outreach conducted to the police, NSCDC and communities.

- Set in place proper coordination mechanisms between police CID and DPP to bridge gaps

## To the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs:

- Set up a programme of training and retraining community leaders to build skills and knowledge in conflict resolution, mediation, leadership, gender and human rights through a cadre of qualified trainers with knowledge and training skills

## To the Ministry of Social Welfare:

- Set in place proper programmes for social reintegration of children associated with armed groups including access to livelihoods and education, working with child protection actors to do so
- Create a protection framework for the state which brings all MDAs, UN agencies and NGOs on board to develop a road map for response to protection risks

## To the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development:

- Set up a safe house for survivors of GBV and post and train people to run it
- Include interventions provided for in the State Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in annual budgets and push for release of funds

## To the military:

- (Re) train military personnel in the theatre on human rights, international humanitarian law, protection of civilians and community engagement
- Implement a zero-tolerance policy for cases of GBV which includes giving orders for military commanders to tell officers and soldiers that perpetrators will face consequences; reach out to

NGOs in the area to encourage (but not force) reporting even if this is of trends rather than specific incidents; and publicise court martials for GBV so justice is seen to have been done.

- Provide mixed military and community militia patrols in areas of insecurity to enable people to go to farm, graze animals and collect firewood

## To the Commissioner of Police

- Deploy women police officers to LGAs to enable better access to security and justice for women and girls living there
- Provide hazard pay to all police officers working in dangerous areas
- Increased outreach and sensitisation around the Police Complaints Response Unit to NGOs and via radio to reach communities so people are able to report if police officers are found wanting, for example if they do not forward GBV cases to state CID when reported
- Give clearance to the state CID head of gender to speak on radio programmes about the FSU
- Give instructions to DPOs in the state to work with officers posted to the FSU to increase awareness of the FSU among the general public through engaging in outreach
- Give instructions to the state CID to inform FSUs that report cases of how the cases are progressing so they can keep survivors and their families informed
- Set in place proper coordination mechanisms between police CID and DPP to bridge gaps and challenges
- Pass directive to all police stations to be forwarded to health centres that there is no requirement of a police report for treatment of sexual violence
- Institute a proper victim and witness protection programme and direct state CID and FSU officers to engage with survivors and witnesses about protection needs throughout the process.
- Provide adequate funds to provide materials and vehicles to ensure proper and timely investigation of GBV cases

## To the Commandant of the National Security and Civil Defence Corps:

- Deploy women NSCDC officers to LGAs to enable better access to security and justice for women and girls living there

## To MCN and other programme implementers:

- Improve financial and operations systems to make outstanding payments and mitigate the risks of future delays as they are having severe consequences on programme delivery
- Expand scope of work on GBV to look at other forms of violence beyond sexual violence against children through 1) reframing the SARC steering committee into a GBV response team along the lines of what exists in Lagos state; 2) including other forms of GBV within the remit of the FSU and re-training police officers with this in mind; and 3) integrating gender awareness including on different forms of GBV into training provided to CPSP members, facilitators of Community Accountability Forums (CAFs), community leaders and the voluntary policing sector
- Develop effectiveness of the current SARC by 1) providing refresher training for staff on how to interact with patients;<sup>20</sup> 2) setting up a system where requests for drugs and other items are made well in advance to ensure timely release; 3) expanding the SARC steering committee to include more GBV experts including representatives from INGOs and UN agencies and its remit to cover GBV in the state; 4) training SARC staff in how to engage with women with disabilities; 5) provide better disaggregated data on survivors that access the SARC in terms of age, occupation, households and type of violence
- Continue plans to create additional SARCs outside Damaturu with steering committee include all agencies working on GBV prevention and response as well as security agents, community women, members of child protection networks and any government officials and community leaders present. Community stakeholders should be sensitised and trained in handling GBV, a programme of community outreach including around anti-stigma and anti-victim blaming carried out and a multi-stakeholder steering committee established
- Fund women's rights organisation to do sustained community engagement through case work, anti-stigma and prevention work. In addition to ongoing case work to support survivors, this organisation should mobilise groups for example of adolescent girls, mothers, grandmothers and young men who engage in peer to peer campaigns, appear in radio programmes with wide listenership and engage men

<sup>20</sup> Some respondents praised the SARC for its work but said some staff required training as they were observed to be asking questions in a manner that suggested lack of empathy.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.whatworks.co.za/>



in positions of power such as religious and community leaders. It should map out the area and develop strategies to engage and reach out to women and girls usually marginalised such as women with disabilities. The focus of these community-led campaigns should be anti-stigma work and changing attitudes and norms to prevent all forms of GBV. MCN and its implementing partner can draw on a rich body of knowledge of what works to prevent violence to design, implement and evaluate<sup>21</sup>

- Explore alternative means of punishing perpetrators through increasing community censure and stigma and decreasing income generation and marriage prospects for men who commit GBV rather than relying solely on the criminal justice process to punish and deter
- Support the Ministry of Justice to establish a Special GBV Court through advocacy to the new Attorney General, training of prosecution and defence lawyers, judges and court personnel, drafting of a practice direction, drawing up of procedures to protect survivors and suspects and outreach to the police, NSCDC and communities. This Special Court should be a part of the existing High Court and operate in Damaturu and other judicial divisions
- Increase engagement in coordination structures around GBV and child protection
- Institutionalise training of community leaders through engagement with the Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs on a training of trainer model so all incoming community leaders in the future are trained in human rights, gender, conflict resolution, mediation and leadership before resuming their post
- Increase women's participation and voice across all MCN interventions by linking women only forum with CPSPs and CAFs and asking women what support they need to be able to more meaningfully participate
- Improve systems for increasing women's capacities for mediation and dispute resolution by setting up systems for monitoring and mentoring women title holders and women's groups trained in dispute resolution
- Support people with disabilities (women and men separately and together) to mobilise, build social networks, interact with platforms and demand change
- Support women's rights organisations to work on masculinities through encouraging and facilitating discussions among women and men of all ages, separately and together and using 'positive deviant' approaches
- Engage the military on human rights violations including GBV by working with other actors that interact with senior military leadership
- Start working on sustainability, learning from what has (not) worked for other organisations so the tempo of work is sustained after MCN ends
- Budget for parallel spaces for women, young people and people with disabilities to share information, analysis and needs ahead of community platform meetings, increase budget for refreshments to provide for children that women and girls may bring along and provide transport for people with disabilities such as arranging for them to be brought to meetings using keke napeps
- Support community stakeholders in Geidam to advocate for the opening of its market by the military
- Conduct regular context analysis integrating understanding of gender, conflict and social exclusion dynamics and update programmes to ensure continued effectiveness and conflict sensitivity
- Support partners to develop security and safety strategies given the highly sensitive nature of their work and potential for risk
- Put in place security assessments and procedures for community meetings such as CAF, for example having male and female members of community militias doing body scans of people before they enter and including payment for doing so in budgets
- Provide additional guidance and mentoring to MCN staff in technical skills including through on the job training and mentoring
- Build capacity of partners on conflict sensitivity so they do not inadvertently increase tensions through interventions
- Organise cross-state learning on engaging drug users and see if partner(s) in Yobe can learn from the model used by the University of Maiduguri Muslim Women's Association in Borno which has former gang members and drug users reach out to others
- Redress gender imbalance in the all-male MCN team by ensuring any further recruitment gives priority to women candidates



The Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) Programme aims to support Nigerians with conflict resolution, at both the state and community level. Our work focuses on reducing violence, promoting stability and strengthening resilience so that Nigerians feel more safe and secure in their communities. We work in North Eastern Nigeria in three focal states – Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe – some of the country’s most conflict-affected regions. The four-year programme (2017-21) is funded by the European Union and implemented by the British Council.

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