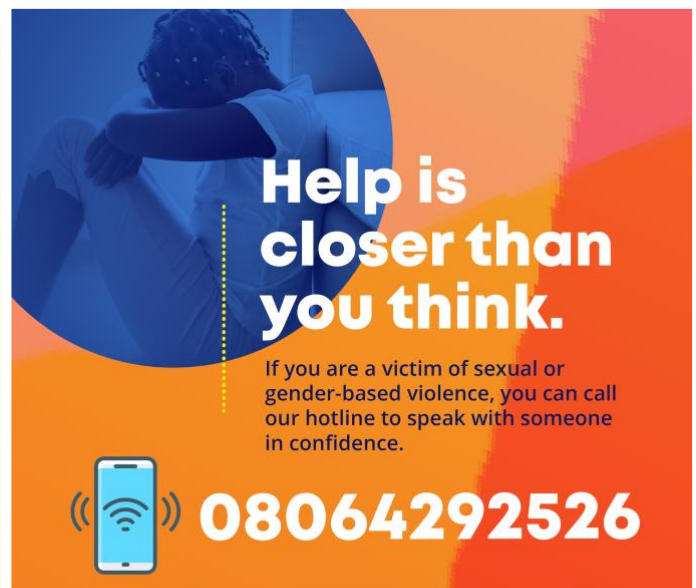


# SPECIAL BULLETIN

MANAGING  
CONFLICT  
IN NIGERIA

RULE OF  
LAW AND  
ANTI-CORRUPTION

## Compilation of Programme Activities: 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence



December 2021

Funded by the  
European Union

Implemented by  
the British Council



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence Campaign 2021

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an annual international campaign that kicks off on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and runs until 10 December, Human Rights Day.

The campaign serves as a time to raise awareness and increase momentum toward ending violence against women and girls worldwide. The global theme for the 2021 campaign was: "Orange the World: End violence against women now!"

### Tackling SGBV in Nigeria

The Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption (RoLAC) Programme and the Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) Programme - two European Union (EU)-funded programmes implemented by the British Council in Nigeria - have components of work designed to tackle sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

RoLAC has carried out extensive work on SGBV across many states in Nigeria, including supporting and promoting the establishment of Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) - an initiative pioneered by the British Council Programme in Nigeria. As of December 2021, there were 32 SARCs in Nigeria, across 19 states and the FCT, many of which were established by British Council Programmes. As of September 2021, the SARCs have assisted over 23,207 victims of sexual assault (over 70% of victims being under 18 years of age). The programme's efforts have also led to the establishment of the National Sex Offender and Service Provider Register in November 2019, thereby facilitating multi-agency coordination to strengthen the justice delivery process: from the point of reporting of sexual assault, through the process of investigation, prosecution, conviction, and capturing details of convicted perpetrators of sexual assault on the Sex Offenders Register. RoLAC advocates for the implementation of key legislations to address SGBV, including the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act and the Child Rights Act. RoLAC's advocacy campaign, HerStoryOurStory, seeks to challenge the persistent cycle of sexual and gender-based violence in Nigeria.

MCN has worked collaboratively with RoLAC to ensure access to SARCs by survivors of sexual assault in the north-eastern states: Borno, Damaturu and Adamawa. Research has been commissioned by the programme to further explore gender relations in focal states, unpack the impact of COVID-19 on gender, and better understand the causes, types and trends of SGBV.

RoLAC and MCN joined the world in 2021 for the sixth time to commemorate the annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

**This bulletin highlights the activities undertaken by RoLAC and MCN in commemoration of the 16 Days of Activism from 25 November to 10 December 2021.**



End SGBV advocacy walk. Source: NAPTIP



Social media content to promote the SARC conference. Source: RoLAC



# RULE OF LAW AND ANTI-CORRUPTION (ROLAC)

## SARC Network Conference

The 7th Annual Conference of the Network of Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) was convened by the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption (RoLAC) Programme in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Justice, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, the FCT Judiciary, and the National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) in commemoration of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. The event took place on 25 November 2021 in Abuja.

Established in 2016, the network aims to promote best practice in the establishment and operation of SARCs to address an increase in sexual and gender-based violence in Nigeria. The network facilitates an exchange of ideas, shares lessons learned, and promotes dialogue among SARCs, government institutions, and other stakeholders to strengthen support services provided to survivors of sexual violence.



Panelists at the 2021 SARC Network Conference. Source: RoLAC

The theme of this year's conference was 'The Imperative for Special Courts for SGBV Cases'. The aim was to stimulate stakeholders' commitment for the designation of special courts for sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) offences as a mechanism for addressing slow trial and prosecution of SGBV offences; and, for improving access to justice for victims of SGBV.

Participants discussed opportunities, lessons learnt, best practices and processes for the establishment and/or designation of special courts for SGBV cases. The event was attended by the Chief Judges of Lagos and Adamawa states, senior government officials, SARC representatives, civil society organisations, and international development partners. The highlight was the launch of the Mock SGBV court trial by Nigeria's Chief Justice, Tanko Muhammad, who was represented by Justice Amina Augie.

**HAPPENING NOW!**

**7th Network Conference of Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) in Nigeria**



Join us Live on  
**Facebook @herstoryOSNG**  
**Zoom: <https://bit.ly/SARCsNetwork>**



Social media content to promote the conference.  
Source: RoLAC

**“The creation of special courts to handle cases of sexual and gender-based violence will improve the effectiveness of court service, ensure support for the victims, improve victim participation in the prosecution of their cases, and promote efficiency and better information sharing.”**

Minister of Justice and Attorney General of the Federation, Abubakar Malami (SAN)

**“The specialised SGBV court is a best practice. State governments should consider having as many courts in their states as possible.”**

EU ambassador to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Samuela Isopi

**“A victim-centred approach is key in the delivery of justice for victims of SGBV.”**

Chairperson of the Network of Sexual Assault Referral Centres, Prof Joy Ngozi Ezeilo

**“If a woman is violated, the entire society has been violated. That is why we must wake up and do more. We must invest in the investigation of SGBV cases.”**

Chief Judge of Lagos, Hon Justice Kazeem Alogba

### Media coverage:

[EU to support Nigeria in establishing SGBV courts](#), Premium Times, 24 November 2021

[Special courts to be established for sexual and gender-based violence, says Malami](#), Punch, 24 November 2021

## First mock court trial for SGBV cases

The Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption (RoLAC) Programme - in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Justice, the FCT Judiciary and National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) - organised a three-day mock court trial for cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in commemoration of this year's 16 Days of Activism campaign. The mock trial, held in Abuja from 29 November to 10 December, was organised as part of RoLAC's efforts to increase the demand for the establishment or designation of special courts for SGBV.

The trials were presided over by two judges from the FCT High Court, and an appeal panel made up of a Justice of the Supreme Court, a Justice of the Court of Appeal, and a Judge of the National Industrial Court. Attendees included the Minister of Justice, retired and serving judges, development partners, academia, and civil society organisations.

**“The mock court will provide the opportunity to model police investigations and prosecution scenarios that support or compromise justice for survivors.”**

Chairperson, Network of Sexual Assault Referral Centres, Prof Joy Ngozi Ezeilo

**“I am an advocate for special courts for different cases.”**

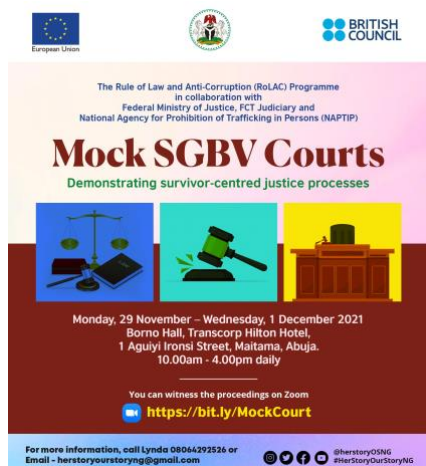
Former Minister of Justice, Prince Adetokunbo Kayode SAN



Participants at mock trials against SGBV. Source: RoLAC



Participants at mock trials against SGBV. Source: RoLAC



### Media coverage:

Nigeria govt commits to establishing special SGBV courts, Premium Times, 25 November 2021

RoLAC seeks special courts for SGBV cases in Nigeria, The Guardian, 24 November 2021

### Watch on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/pHrOTqXa5DU>

## Hear Word – A Stage Play

In commemoration of this year's 16 Days of Activism campaign, the European Union and the British Council supported the iOpenEye Africa Foundation to present a live performance of the renowned play 'Hear Word!' on 25 November in Abuja.

Hear Word! is a theatre production that puts to the spotlight on the issues affecting the lives of Nigerian women, and the factors that limit their potential for independence, leadership, and meaningful contribution in society. Combining song and dance with intimate portraits of resilience and resistance, the show celebrates women who have broken the culture of silence, challenged the status quo, and moved beyond barriers to achieve solutions. The play was inspired by multi-generational stories of inequality and transformation.

Social media content to promote the mock courts. Source: RoLAC

The play was held during the 16 days of Activism campaign to raise awareness and support advocacy on sexual and gender-based issues in an informal but entertaining manner using theatre. The content highlighted real social challenges and violations of rights faced by Nigerian citizens.

RoLAC galvanised its reach and encouraged partners to promote the play. The HerStoryNG campaign promoted the event on its social media channels. Over 1,000 attendees watched the play. The event received excellent reviews and served as an advocacy tool on SGBV issues in Nigeria.



Cast of Hear Word! Source: @hearwordnaija



## Social media coverage:

HEAR WORD! Happening Live art Chida Events Centre Abuja, @HerStoryOurStoryng

**“@hearwordnaija was absolutely fantastic! The stories, the acting, the dancing, the laughter... phenomenal job”**

Misspazzy – Instagram

## Free counselling and legal clinics: The survivor – centred approach

To commemorate the 16 Days of Activism campaign 2021, RoLAC collaborated with the Federal Ministry of Justice, the FCT Judiciary and the National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) to offer free counselling and legal clinics to survivors of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in the FCT.

The objective was to provide trauma-informed legal assistance directly to victims of sexual violence. Services focused on listening, believing and providing trauma counselling; supporting victims to make a police reports; and navigating the criminal justice system.

The clinics took place in two locations in the FCT and were accessible to the public. Lawyers, certified counsellors, and medical doctors were available to provide pro bono services to survivors. These services will continue to be provided to the public as wholistic support system for SGBV survivors.



Social media content to promote the clinics.  
Source: RoLAC

**“A good initiative. It should be sustained, and venues should be more accessible inclusive of follow up of old clients.”**

Head of Medical Services, FCT Hospital Management Board, Dr Osayande Osagie

## Community sensitisation on gender-based violence in Adamawa state

With support from RoLAC, the Federation of International Women Lawyers (FIDA) Adamawa State branch organised community sensitisation events on gender-based violence (GBV) in five local government areas: Mbamoi, Dowaya Numan, Lokuwa Mubi, Ganye and Jimeta. The purpose was to create awareness about the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Law 2021; promote the services available at the Hope Sexual Assault Referral Centre; and mobilise support from the public to join hands in the fight against GBV.

Public lectures were held in various locations including shopping centres, primary schools, and churches. Across five locations, over 245 people attended the events. FIDA facilitated the initiative and highlighted the role of community members and leaders in preventing GBV, promoting the rights of women and children, access to legal services, and the various referral services available in Adamawa state. Community members agreed to avoid anything that will expose their children/wards to GBV. FIDA will continue to follow-up and provide legal services or link survivors to other services whenever the need arises.



Advocacy posters. Source: FIDA

**“We are happy that the sensitisation is now coming to our doors. Before only few elites were gathered in the hotels to be sensitised. With the advocacy reaching the communities, we are sure people will now understand what GBV is and where to go to when it happens.”**

Chairman Gamzaki Traders Association in Yola, Lawan Auta

## Media coverage:

FIDA commence 16-day sensitisation to create awareness on VAAP law in Adamawa, News Hawk, 7 December 2021

## Community sensitisation on SGBV in Kano state

RoLAC, in conjunction with the Free Legal Aid Service Providers Forum in Kano state, organised a community sensitisation programme on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) on 25 November 2021. The initiative targeted members of the Rijiyar Lemo community, an underprivileged neighbourhood in the Ungogo Local government. The objective was to provide a platform for service providers and community leaders to interact, share ideas and provide solutions for eradicating violence against women and children; improve support to SGBV survivors; and raise public awareness on services of the GBV response team at the WARAKA SARC, and other service providers, and how to access these services.

A public lecture was followed by a legal assistance session held at Hisba Office Conference Hall. Representatives from the following organisations spoke at the lecture: FIDA; the Isa Wali Empowerment Initiative (IWEI), Prisoners' Rehabilitation and Welfare Action (PRAWA); and state coordinator of Legal Aid Council of Nigeria (LACoN). The speakers focused on the importance of the 16 Days of Activism; the rise of SGBV in Kano state, especially against children; and the need for parents and guardians to be vigilant. They also highlighted the need for survivors to speak out and get the necessary help, and for perpetrators to be apprehended. Contact details for support services were provided to the participants, including organisations such as the Nigeria Police Force, Hisbah, LACoN, the Isa Wali Empowerment Initiative, and FIDA.

Over 112 persons from the immediate community attended the event. An immediate impact was the support provided to a person with disability who needed the LACoN to provide legal support. Other participants were asked to come to the legal aid council for advice. Mediation was also provided to some of the participants on family matters.

**“The sensitisation should be a continuous, as it has given people awareness of where to go whenever the need arises.”**

Secretary, Hisba Office, Rijiyar Lemo, Alhaji Haruna Adamu Fagge

## Collaborating with traditional rulers to raise awareness on the norms fuelling SGBV

The Anambra State Child Protection Network, the Child Rights Implementation Committee and the VAPP Committees - in collaboration with Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and RoLAC - held a meeting with the traditional rulers of communities in Anambra state on 1 December 2021. The aim was to end negative practices affecting women in various communities such as rape, sexual harassment, forced marriage, etc.

Eighteen traditional rulers attended the meeting and expressed displeasure with the prevalent practices in some parts of the state. They pledged to help end these practices. They traditional rulers asked for the commitment of government to work towards ending harmful practices in their respective communities; to seek government intervention in cases of SGBV; and to address the rising drug use among youths that can fuel crimes like rape. The Anambra State Traditional Rulers Council committed to bringing the rising incidences of SGBV to the general council of Traditional Rulers for further discussions and informed decisions.

In a similar drive, the president generals (PGs) of the town unions in Anambra state have pledged to address issues of SGBV. In a joint meeting held in December in Awka, they signed a commitment to join forces to eradicate SGBV in their communities. The PGs pledged to take the issue to their umbrella body, the Anambra State Association of Towns Unions, where other president generals and community leaders could adopt similar strategies.

**“We the custodians of culture and tradition will work with you to ensure that practices that fuel gender-based violence will be frowned upon.”**

Chairman Awka South Council of Traditional Rulers, Umuawulu Community, Igwe Joel. M Egwuonwu

**“We feel honoured to be carried along in this fight. Armed with the knowledge gained today and knowing we are in this together, we will mobilise our women leaders to take this fight to the grassroots where the GBV incidences are very high.”**

Women's Coordinator, Awka North, Lady Favour Nworah

### Media coverage:

<https://orientdailynews.com/cityscope/gbv-stakeholders-join-forces-against-rape-others-in-anambra/>

## Hand over the microphone: voices of SGBV survivors

To commemorate the 2021 16 Days of Activism campaign, RoLAC supported an event named '*Hand over the mic*'. The event, held on 8 December, and provided an opportunity for SGBV survivors to share their stories. A documentary will be created with a compilation of stories and used as advocacy tool for government and other stakeholders.

Here are some snippets from the stories:

**“At 14 years old, I got pregnant and was thrown out by my family. Then my nightmares began when they called me back to forcefully marry me off to a fellow woman, who in turn practiced forced prostitution on me in the name of bearing children for her.”**

**“It’s not enough my daughter has been sexually abused. I have been ordered by my husband’s family to maintain the culture of silence or face divorce. The ugly part is that I live with the perpetrator and my daughter faces this sneer on daily basis and we cannot do anything. Even talking to you might land us to problem. PLEASE PROTECT US.”**

**“I am the mother of two girls (4 years old and 2 years old). I have been chased out of my matrimonial home for a crime against my children, which has been turned against me. A 76 year-old man continuously raped my daughters. When I reported the incidence, I was sent packing by our community instead of getting justice for my poor girls.”**

**“I am a child not a bride. I was married off to a much older man at age 13 because my family couldn’t take in the fact that I got pregnant in the course of being raped. Even my so-called husband does not have the slightest regard for me. His relations treat me like dirt right in front of him. I am voiceless in my home and cannot take the slightest decision.”**

## **MANAGING CONFLICT IN NIGERIA (MCN)**

### **Key legislations passed to address SGBV**

With support from MCN, the Borno State House of Assembly passed key legislation aimed at addressing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) to commemorate the 16 Days of Activism campaign. The bills included the Child Rights Act (CRA) and the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP).

A series of advocacy initiatives were held leading up to the campaign. A webinar was organised by the Gabasawa Women and Children Empowerment Initiative on the domestication of the laws. Over 40 participants were in attendance. Discussions focussed on how to ensure the effective implementation of the legislations aimed at addressing SGBV. The participants advocated to the State House of Assembly to make the passage of the bills during the 16 Days of Activism as symbolic significance in commemorating the day.

A Town Hall meeting was organised by the National Human Rights Commission and the Gabassawa Women and Children Empowerment Initiative to engage the legislature and executive on the passage of the CRA and VAPP laws. When concerns were raised that the CRA may conflict with religious and cultural norms on upbringing and discipline of children, the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development informed participants that some of the controversial provisions have been reviewed to address stakeholder concerns. The Borno State House of Assembly also provided an update on the status of the two bills and highlighted that the House was set to pass them for onward transmission to the Executive Governor for Assent.

**“The Child Rights Act was a welcome development. It will help address the rampant withdrawal of cases of sexual assault and truncating of the judicial process. With the law, it would not be possible to withdraw cases where victims are children and underaged.”**

Fatima Usman Kida, Ministry of Justice

**“The town hall meeting was an avenue to highlight the issue of rape in the community to stakeholders. It should be a continuous exercise to allow for sustained action to deal with the situation.”**

Shehu Abba, District head, Kumshi, Bama, Borno State

### **Media coverage:**

[Gabasawa, British Council, EU, Borno Government Called On Community, Religious leaders to Stand Against SGBV](#), Daily Hint, 12 December 2021

### **Highlighting government actions against SGBV**

To mark the 16 Days of Activism campaign, the Borno State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development organised a press conference in Maiduguri to inform the public of measures being taken by the state government to address the rising incidences of SGBV. Falmata Gambo Hamza, Director at the Ministry addressed the media and reported that with the support of MCN, the state government has functional Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs), called the NELEWA Centres. The SARCs, which were established in 2018, have been responding to survivors of SGBV.

The Director noted that the SARCs and the Family Support Units (FSU) in divisional police offices have made a modest contribution in addressing SGBV. Up to 4,000 cases have been reported and treated at both the SARCs and FSUs during the

period. She also noted that with MCN support, the state will have two additional SARCs in Monguno and Biu. This will help address the challenge of access to services as victims in the north and south zones of the state will find it easier to reach the SARCs. Through the intervention of the ministry, UN Women has provided economic empowerment support for 92 survivors of SGBV who have received medical and psychosocial support from the SARCs. The Director commended all stakeholders and development partners who supported the efforts of the Ministry to advocate for the successful passage of the bills for the Child Rights Act and the VAPP Act.

**“I would like to take this opportunity to advocate for more sensitisation to dissuade victims and families from withdrawal of cases from prosecution. The prosecution of offenders, which would have served as a deterrent to offenders, has greatly been undermined by decisions of victims and families to withdraw cases due to community pressures.”**

Pogu Dama, Nigeria Police Force

**Watch the recording of the press conference:**

<https://youtu.be/fkpzlh7F0g>

## Awareness campaigns on SGBV by women journalists

Members of the National Union of Women Journalists (NAWOJ), Yobe State Chapter, organised a community sensitisation programme on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in commemoration of the 16 Days of Activism campaign. The events were held in public places in Damaturu including the market, motor park and Emir's Palace.

The campaign was organised with support from MCN. Community members were educated on all aspects of SGBV, how to detect abuse, and actions to take in case of SGBV. Special prominence was given to raising awareness about the services offered at the Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) and the availability of support to enable victims get justice.

**“We have been supporting all efforts to ensure protection of women and girls within our domains, we shall continue to do that. I want to inform you that we'll also add our voice to see to the executive assent of the VAPP and Child Protection Laws in Yobe State.”**

Emir of Damaturu, Alhaji. Shehu Hashimi II Ibn Umar El- Amin Kanemi

**Media coverage:**

[NAWOJ Marks Int'l Day For Elimination Of Violence Against Women In Yobe](#), Independent, 30 November 2021

[Women journalists seek end to gender-based violence in Yobe](#), Daily Post, 1 December 2021

## Raising SGBV awareness in vulnerable communities

The Othman Memorial Foundation, with MCN support, organised a series of sensitisation activities in Kasaisa and Pompomari communities in Damaturu. The activities were held as part of the 16 Days of Activism campaign. The Foundation engaged traditional rulers and women leaders to raise awareness on risks factors of SGBV and support services available to victims and survivors in SARCs and FSUs. The targeted communities were selected on the basis of high prevalence of SGBV, and speakers spoke on dangers of culture of silence.

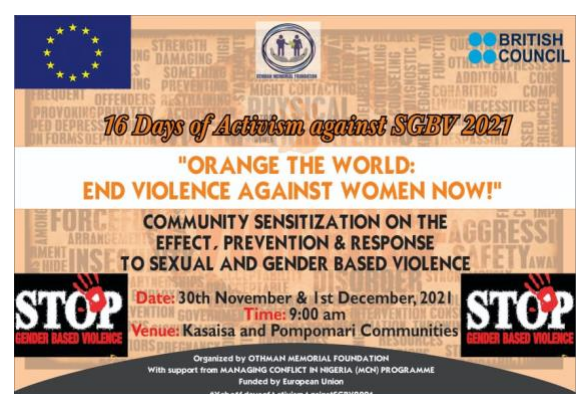
**“We now understand that peacebuilding, and especially eliminating SGBV in our communities, should not be left to the men alone. We are closer to our girls and boys and we must stand up to protect them.”**

Fatima Mohammed, event participant

**Media coverage:**

[SGBV: MCN Takes Sensitisation Campaign To Rural Communities In Yobe](#), News Net Global, 3 December 2021

[EU, Yobe Take Fight To 178 Communities Against SGBV](#), Northeast Star, 5 December 2021



Poster advertising the sensitisation events. Source: Othman Memorial Foundation



## Youths engage traditional rulers to promote access to justice for victims of SGBV

The Youth Network for Advancement and Development (YONAD), with support from Managing Conflict in Nigeria (MCN) Programme, organised an outreach session with traditional rulers on enhancing access to justice for victims of SGBV. The events targeted traditional rulers in the Bade, Fika and Potiskum Emirate councils. During the engagements, YONAD raised concerns about the weak legal framework which has affected the effective prosecution and conviction of perpetrators of SGBV.

The traditional rulers were encouraged to support efforts to strengthen the legal framework as well as promote behavioural changes that would help victims access to justice. One major change was to discourage the practice of seeking resolution of SGBV cases through mediation and compensation outside the criminal justice system. The Emirs made commitments to address the culture of silence by ensuring that traditional rulers do not compromise investigations and the prosecution of SGBV cases. They also promised to engage political leaders to ensure the speedy assent of key legislations, including the Violence Against Persons Prohibition, Child Protection, and the Administration of Criminal Justice Bills.

**“In the past, some of our traditional rulers were mismanaging cases of sexual violence, especially in trying to cover up the situation and shielding it from public attention. However, we are gradually moving away from that with more awareness and trainings from the MCN Programme.”**

Mai Bade, HRH Abubakar Umar Suleiman II

**“This sensitisation has reminded me to take the issue of signing the VAPP law to the executive governor.”**

Emir of Fika and Chairman of Yobe State Council of Traditional Rulers, HRH Alhaji Muhammadu Abali ibn Muhammadu Idrissa

**“I am now more knowledgeable of dangers associated with GBV and will step down this knowledge to the Council of Ulama.”**

Chief Imam of the Fika Emirate, Muhammad Imam Kalli

## Addressing human trafficking and SGBV

The National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) and the Yobe State Ministry of Women Affairs organised a roundtable on the implications of trafficking in persons for SGBV. The meeting was held in Damaturu on 3 December 2021 and brought together key government officials, stakeholders, and members of civil society organisations to brainstorm on issues related to trafficking, particularly women, boys, and girls in the state.

Participants discussed the SGBV risks posed by insecurity and weak border control on vulnerable populations in Yobe, which borders neighbouring Niger Republic. The roundtable meeting - facilitated by MCN as part of the 16 Days of Activism - agreed on the actions required to ensure that responsible institutions are supported and monitored to deliver on their mandates of ensuring that vulnerable persons are protected.



Roundtable on the implications of trafficking persons. Source: NAPTIP

## Creating awareness on SGBV and dialogue on access to justice for victims

The SARC Steering Committees, with MCN support, were busy during the 16 Days of Activism. The committees coordinated various stakeholders to raise awareness on SGBV and stimulate actions to prevent it.

In Adamawa state, the committee organised a sensitisation event at the Government Girls Secondary School in Yola in December with over 55 people in attendance. Addressing the students, the chairperson of the committee described SGBV as a violation of the fundamental human rights of individuals and their families. Committee members educated the students and teachers on the various dimensions of SGBV, and the measures required to address them. The students and teachers were informed about the need to report SGBV cases to help in addressing a culture of silence. The Manager of the Adamawa Hope Centre informed teachers and students of the availability of medical and psychosocial support at the centre and encouraged them to refer victims and survivors for care.



Advocacy to stop human trafficking. Source: NAPTIP

In Yobe state, the committee organised a similar stakeholder dialogue on access to justice for victims of SGBV in Damaturu on 6 December 2021. The event was attended by the Criminal Investigation Department of the Nigeria Police Force, the Director of Public Prosecution in Ministry of Justice, and Managers of the Sexual Assault Referral Centres, among others. The participants reviewed efforts to strengthen the investigation and prosecution of SGBV cases and proposed solutions to addressing obstacles to access justice for victims.

## Young Women Positive Voice against SGBV launched in Yobe state

In commemoration of the 16 days of Activism campaign, MCN supported the public launch of the Young Women Positive Voice against SGBV at Yobe State University on 9 December 2021. The initiative was facilitated by Al-Iman, a local civil society organisation that works with female students and members of staff from four higher institutions (Yobe State University, Federal Polytechnics, College of Nursing and College of Agriculture) located in Damaturu. The facilitators made a presentation on the identification of SGBV and the importance of speaking out and reporting abuses amongst students in tertiary institutions and their host communities. It was noted that breaking the culture of silence in such contexts would likely have a positive spill over effect on communities. Although the main target was female students and lecturers, the facilitators invited some male positive voices to join the effort to prevent and fight SGBV on their campuses.

## Promoting girl child education to address SGBV

Speakers at a radio discussion programme have canvassed for the promotion of girl child education as one of the antidotes for SGBV. The speakers featured in Safiya - a programme of the Yola-based GOTEL, which aired on 8 December 2021. The panel was made up of the National Council of Women Societies, the Adamawa State Muslim Council, and the Jamial Hakeem Foundation. The speakers identified out of school children to be among the most vulnerable to SGBV. Their involvement in street hawking, domestic chores and other forms of child labour exposed them to risks of SGBV. The speakers called on community and religious leaders to do everything possible to encourage girl child education in the state. The event was organised by the Jamial Hakeem Foundation with support from MCN to commemorate 16 Days of Activism.

## Four Special Courts designated for the trial of sexual offences

The Judiciary of Adamawa state has designated four courts for the speedy trial of sexual offences. This was disclosed by Honourable Justice Nathan Musa, the Chief Judge of Adamawa state, during a visit by the SARC Steering Committee, an MCN initiative. The visit was conducted in commemoration of 16 Days of Activism to update the state chief judge on the progress and challenges in addressing SGBV. The Chairperson of the SARC Steering Committee, Barr Jibril Jimeta, informed the Chief Judge that one of the main challenges was the poor result of prosecution and conviction of accused persons. In response, the Chief Judge confirmed that SGBV cases were not being handled well because the state has 127 area courts and 47 magistrate courts. He said that the Judiciary has started addressing the challenge by designating some courts for the trial of sexual offences. The special courts are situated in Guyuk, Gombi, Ganye and Yola.

## SARC Steering Committee visits new commissioner of police

The Adamawa State SARC Steering Committee took the opportunity of the 16 Days of Activism Campaign to visit to the newly appointed state police commissioner: CP Mohammed Ahmed Barde. The Chairperson of the SARC Committee briefed the commissioner on the various interventions to address SGBV in the state, including the efforts to domesticate the VAPP Law, Adamawa Hope Centre to support victims with medical treatment and psychosocial support, and the Family Support Units in police stations to attend to victims of SGBV. The committee informed the commissioner of the challenge of effective reporting and investigation of SGBV. Notable in this respect is the referral pathway challenge of getting reports from police to the SARC Centre and the office of the Director of Public Prosecution.

The police commissioner pledged his support for efforts to address SGBV in the state, particularly the investigation and prosecution of sexual offences. He challenged the committee to continue to raise awareness in communities and support behavioural changes that will curb social vices.

## CONCLUSION

The initiatives highlighted throughout this special bulletin demonstrate that many interventions and structures initiated by RoLAC and MCN are now being embedded in partner institutions and structures are working effectively. More SARCs have been established across the country, enabling more victims of SGBV to access relevant support services. State governments have started making annual budgetary provision for the SARCs, particularly those located in government facilities. Programme support to the Network of SARCs and the SARC Steering Committees has enabled peer learning and experience sharing by Nigerian stakeholders and ensured that there is a standard of service delivery among the SARCs.

Significant work has been made to connect the various institutions - across the justice sector, the health sector, civil society and development partners - to ensure they are all working together to strengthen the response for survivors. SGBV response teams established at the state level have been created - aligned with the SARCs - thus creating a robust mechanism for coordinating and supporting responses to SGBV by various institutions.

Relevant legislation such as the VAPP and the Child Rights Act are being adopted more widely, as well as criminal procedure laws that strengthen penalties for sexual offences. The implementation of these laws is expected to create a more effective enabling framework for addressing SGBV.

Whilst there is still a long way to go eradicate SGBV in Nigeria, the footprint from RoLAC and MCN will be everlasting – effective structures are being established, initiatives are being embedded and replicated, and most importantly, more Nigerian stakeholders are joining the fight against SGBV.