



Foreign &
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International Commitments and Priorities
for the 2019 UK-Hosted International
Conference on Gender-Based Violence
and the 20th Anniversary of
UNSCR 1325 in 2020:
Nigeria consultation

April 2019

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Introduction and background

Women for Women International partnered with Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA), a non-governmental organisation that promotes the enforcement of all human rights for women in Nigeria, and the British High Commission in Abuja to conduct a national consultation workshop with Nigerian civil society organisations and experts on Women, Peace and Security. The consultation workshop took place in Abuja on Tuesday 16 April 2019.

The consultation focused on developing recommendations on the following: the 20th anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 in 2020; the 2019 UK-hosted International Conference which will focus on forms of gender-based violence (GBV) – particularly Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict (PSVI) – in November 2019.

This report is part of a series of eight consultations that Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS), its members and national partners are working on with the UK Government.

Local level consultation

Ahead of the consultation, Women for Women International also conducted a local level consultation workshop in Jos Town, Plateau State, with 28 civil society organisations and other stakeholders, including 30 women from the communities of Pankshin, Riyom and Jos East who are graduates from the Women for Women International year-long programme. Participants felt that while the efforts taken so far to promote women's engagement in peace and security in Nigeria is commendable, steps could be made to bridge some necessary gaps:

- More needs to be done to raise awareness and increase involvement of women and girls in rural communities on the Women, Peace and Security agenda;
- Many civil society organisations contributing to this work are based in cities and towns, rather than in rural areas where survivors of conflict mostly reside – which means that more collaborations and partnerships need to be formed in rural areas to develop proper understanding of Women, Peace and Security at a local level;
- Proper feedback mechanisms from different communities need to be put in place to enable more systematic participation from women and girls affected by conflict.

Recommendations

Recommendations – Women, Peace and Security

- 1. Support the implementation of policies, programmes and legislation:** The international community should better support the internal capacity of the Nigerian Government to implement the Women, Peace and Security agenda. This includes: more meaningful implementation of existing legislation at state level, such as GBV legislation; the harmonisation of relevant laws such as the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act and the National Action Plan on Woman, Peace and Security; increased awareness of Women, Peace and Security among both national and state government officials, as well as among grassroots communities; and empowering the Nigerian Ministry of Women's Affairs to lead on the implementation of gender-specific laws and to lead an inter-ministerial committee for engagement on Women, Peace and Security.
- 2. Public awareness raising:** The international community should fund and support targeted public, civil society awareness raising programmes on Women, Peace and Security (and gender equality more widely) across Nigeria. This awareness raising should focus particularly on:
 - a. The community level, where the consultations found that understanding of the Women, Peace and Security agenda is particularly limited;
 - b. The need to minimise women and girls' exposure to vulnerabilities through more holistic programmes for women and girls (education, skills training and financial aid).
- 3. Long-term civil society funding and support:** The international community should fund and support Nigerian civil society organisations, specifically women's rights organisations, with accessible, flexible, long-term funding for them to implement their self-defined priorities. This should include support to strengthen

monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms for efforts to advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

4. **Technical support and long-term capacity strengthening for Nigerian Government representatives and security and justice sectors:** The international community should invest in Women, Peace and Security training for legislators, prosecutors, judiciary and the police. This would include the development of a standardised protocol for government representatives and an accountability framework to monitor progress on the efforts of key stakeholders. Any training, technical support or capacity strengthening should be long term and mainstream a gender-sensitive approach.

Recommendations – PSVI and GBV

1. **Ending impunity, improving accountability and promoting justice:** The international community should support existing work to increase the prosecution of perpetrators of GBV and ensure any commitments made to ending GBV include implementation and accountability plans. This includes:
 - a. Supporting the implementation of institutional reforms to address issues of corruption, weak legal frameworks, bureaucratic management and access to justice for survivors;
 - b. Supporting the review and amendment of relevant legislation in Nigeria such as the Evidence Act, the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, and the State Penal Codes to ensure they reflect local realities;
 - c. Using diplomatic efforts and technical support to ensure Nigeria not only passes but commits to the full implementation of legislation to protect survivors and prevent GBV.
2. **Rights, empowerment and survivor-centred support to end stigma:** The international community should support an increase of survivor-centred protection services, including:
 - a. Funding for civil society organisations, including women’s rights organisations, to provide refuges, shelters, support centres and other services which survivors need to access;
 - b. Long-term training for security and police personnel and support centres on gender-sensitive approaches, the development of protocol, and policies for the prevention and response to GBV;
 - c. Promoting a more holistic approach to the prevention of GBV through the funding of women’s economic empowerment programmes;
 - d. Investing in long-term social norm change and equipping communities to take ownership for ending the stigma affecting survivors of GBV through the development of community support and reintegration systems;
 - e. Supporting survivors of GBV to report where they feel safe and comfortable to do so through creating holistic protection systems. Such systems should include access to justice as well as psychosocial support and economic opportunities.

Discussion

Discussion – Women, Peace and Security

1. **Support the implementation of policies, programmes and legislation:** The international community should better support the internal capacity of the Nigerian Government to implement the Women, Peace and Security agenda. This includes: more meaningful implementation of existing legislation at state level, such as GBV legislation; the harmonisation of relevant laws such as the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act and the National Action Plan on Woman, Peace and Security; increased awareness of Women, Peace and Security among both national and state government officials, as well as among grassroots communities; and empowering the Nigerian Ministry of Women’s Affairs to lead on the implementation of gender-specific laws and to lead an inter-ministerial committee for engagement on Women, Peace and Security.

Consultation participants discussed the potential for the international community, including the UK Government, to provide technical assistance for strengthened implementation of policies, programmes and institutions that support the Women, Peace and Security agenda in Nigeria. The main areas of focus were reviewing relevant laws and advocating for the harmonisation of their implementation, raising awareness of the law and empowering the Nigerian Ministry of Women’s Affairs to lead on this where relevant.

Participants felt strongly that the Penal and Criminal Codes in all states in Nigeria need to be reviewed to ensure that current legislation does not inhibit progress on the implementation of UNSCR 1325. Nigeria has statutory, customary

and sharia laws in place, and there are a number of instances where these laws are not aligned. For example, the age of consent to marriage in Bauchi State is eleven years old – this law inevitably obstructs efforts to end child marriage in the state and has both direct and indirect impacts on minimising violence and discrimination against women and girls. The international community could support a review of such laws to assess whether they are fit for purpose, ensure that instances of contradiction are avoided and that they meet international legal standards. Participants also suggested that introducing other policies such as a formal register of perpetrators of violence, which should be updated regularly, would support implementation.

The lack of awareness of relevant policies and legislation was noted as a challenge to the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Laws and policies should be translated into local languages and communicated to people at community level in order to increase awareness of the current protections in place for survivors of GBV, as well as of accountability and justice mechanisms for perpetrators of GBV. Efforts to improve the understanding of relevant legislation among both national and state government officials should also be made.

In Nigeria, there has been a poor state domestication and lack of implementation of laws such as the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, Child Rights Act and Chapter 4 of the Nigerian Constitution; and of international commitments such as UNSCR 1325, the National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security and the Protection of Civilians Policy with the Human Rights Commission. Their implementation, particularly of the Nigerian NAP, could be supported with an annual budgetary allocation and a formalised implementation structure coordinated and led by the Nigerian Ministry of Women's Affairs. The UK Government should provide funding and technical support to the Nigerian Ministry of Women's Affairs to lead an inter-ministerial committee for engagement on and involvement in discourse relating to Women, Peace and Security, with a clear monitoring and evaluation structure.

- 2. Public awareness raising:** The international community should fund and support targeted public, civil society awareness raising programmes on Women, Peace and Security (and gender equality more widely) across Nigeria. This awareness raising should focus particularly on:
 - a. The community level, where the consultations found that understanding of the Women, Peace and Security agenda is particularly limited;
 - b. The need to minimise women and girls' exposure to vulnerabilities through more holistic programmes for women and girls (education, skills training and financial aid).

There were in-depth discussions around the need to raise more public awareness of Women, Peace and Security programmes specifically, as well as promoting gender equality more widely across Nigeria.

As highlighted by the local level consultation workshop conducted in Jos Town – Plateau State, awareness and understanding of the Women, Peace and Security agenda is particularly limited at the community level. In addition to focusing specifically on issues relating to Women, Peace and Security, participants discussed how gender inequality generally can increase women and girls' vulnerability to human rights violations. In light of this, there was a clear recommendation that wider, holistic efforts to promote and uphold women and girls' rights (including through skills training, education, and financial aid) would directly support the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Nigeria.

Two types of awareness raising activities are recommended: on Women, Peace and Security programmes for grassroots civil society organisations and how the Women, Peace and Security agenda can be integrated into their programmatic and advocacy work, particularly at a community level; and public awareness raising on gender equality that addresses harmful social norms. This should be supported by holistic programming (as outlined in the preceding paragraph).

Programmes should maximise their reach through social media, television and radio. Participants pointed to examples where social media has been used during times of crisis, with hashtags such as #BringBackOurGirls and #ArewaMeToo. This kind of social media activism can be used to amplify the Women, Peace and Security agenda and galvanise public support. Participants also recommended that success stories can be documented in poetry, drama and music, not just in academic journals and news articles. It is important to note that any media programmatic approaches should be based on a thorough risk assessment given the backlash on women and girls' rights, particularly the use of social media to attack women and women human rights defenders.

- 3. Long-term civil society funding and support:** The international community should fund and support Nigerian civil society organisations, specifically women's rights organisations, with accessible, flexible, long-term funding for them to implement their self-defined priorities. This should include support to strengthen monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms for efforts to advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

In Nigeria, there are limited resources allocated within the Federal budget to address issues relevant to the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Lack of funding also means that work by civil society organisations on Women, Peace and Security is often carried out in siloes, with limited funding that is short-term and difficult to access. Participants outlined the extensive need to provide long-term funding and support to Nigerian civil society organisations, particularly women's rights organisations. This should also support grassroots awareness raising and advocacy on Women, Peace and Security and gender equality, as well as programmatic work. Funding should be combined with long-term capacity strengthening support.

Participants noted the low participation of women in the formal peace, security and justice sectors in Nigeria as a result of both social norms, resistance from cultural and religious leaders, and a lack of commitment from both state and national governments. Women's participation should be prioritised through strengthened efforts to include women and increase their capacity to participate meaningfully at all levels (from grassroots to international) in the implementation of UNSCR 1325. Participants recommended formally recognising and raising awareness of women who are already playing essential roles in government security, justice and peace sectors to increase their role in advocating for justice for GBV and participation in peacebuilding efforts. Participants also highlighted that men often act as cultural gatekeepers in Nigeria, and so men who advocate for women and girls' rights should be engaged as male champions for women's meaningful participation.

Women and girls' access to gender equality programmes in peacebuilding is based on their various intersectional needs. Through civil society organisations, support should also be given to women outside of cities in Nigeria, in rural areas where conflict is most acute. Support should be based on their specific-contextual needs. It should include accountability and have feedback mechanisms in place (town hall meetings, trade unions and women's groups) designed to increase women's representation.

- 4. Technical support and long-term capacity strengthening for Nigerian Government representatives and security and justice sectors:** The international community should invest in Women, Peace and Security training for legislators, prosecutors, judiciary and the police. This would include the development of a standardised protocol for government representatives and an accountability framework to monitor progress on the efforts of key stakeholders. Any training, technical support or capacity strengthening should be long term and mainstream a gender-sensitive approach.

Consultation participants outlined the need for technical support and capacity strengthening for representatives of the Nigerian Government and Security and Justice sectors (such as legislators, prosecutors, judiciary and the police). The main areas of focus were the development of a standardised protocol for government and security and justice sector representatives; an accountability framework to monitor progress on the efforts of key stakeholders; and the adoption of a gender-sensitive approach to training and capacity strengthening. This support should be long-term and not designed to provide one-off trainings, which are short-term and do not deliver the systemic change required.

Technical support from the international community in establishing and improving accountability measures for key stakeholders within the judicial system is required and should be designed to ensure their progress is monitored. For example, a key issue was the regular rotation of staff within the government departments where one-off-training had been provided on handling cases of sexual and gender-based violence, leading to an ongoing lack of capacity and continuity.

The international community should support the long-term training and capacity of key actors through taking gender-sensitive approaches. Recommendations included long-term support and training for the Nigerian judiciary in initiating special courts for the prosecution of sexual and gender-based violence cases, policy reform, the funding of

a specialised police unit and training on how to effectively document, preserve, store and transport evidence of sexual and gender-based violence using the available technology.

There are contradictions between legal frameworks and process, and cultural norms. For example, when prosecuting rape, government representatives tend to examine the survivor reporting the crime as opposed to focusing on ensuring the perpetrator is held accountable. Police and the judiciary need to be trained and sensitised so that they are better able to identify, investigate and hold to account perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence. It is important to dispel the notion held by many key actors in the legal system that sexual and gender-based violence is a family issue. The international community should invest resources into the mainstreaming of these gender-sensitive issues in the training of key actors. Such training should be long-term.

Discussion – PSVI and GBV

- 1. Ending impunity, improving accountability and promoting justice:** The international community should support existing work to increase the prosecution of perpetrators of GBV and ensure any commitments made to ending GBV include implementation and accountability plans. This includes:
 - a. Supporting the implementation of institutional reforms to address issues of corruption, weak legal frameworks, bureaucratic management and access to justice for survivors;
 - b. Supporting the review and amendment of relevant legislation in Nigeria such as the Evidence Act, the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, and the State Penal Codes to ensure they reflect local realities;
 - c. Using diplomatic efforts and technical support to ensure Nigeria not only passes but commits to the full implementation of legislation to protect survivors and prevent GBV.

The international community could better support efforts to end impunity, improve accountability and promote justice through various means. The main areas of focus were: the provision of technical support for improving judicial processes which support institutional reform; supporting the review and amendment of legislation that relates to GBV, including sexual violence in conflict; the need for proper implementation of legislation to ensure the protection of survivors and prevention of GBV; and long-term training for security and justice personnel on gender-sensitive approaches (*as outlined in WPS recommendation iv*).

The judicial system in Nigeria could be improved through better links between witness protection, prosecutors, judicial and security system processes (including decreasing delays to the prosecution process), and the implementation of stringent penalties. The international community should use its diplomatic leverage to advocate for the Nigerian Government to classify the prosecution of cases of GBV as criminal (as opposed to civil) and to reduce the number of cases withdrawn prematurely.

The current legal frameworks are not fit for purpose to deliver for women and girls' rights and end GBV, including sexual violence in conflict. For example, laws such as the Evidence Act, the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, and state Penal and Criminal Codes should be reviewed to address issues such as: the high level of burden of proof places on cases of sexual and gender-based violence; the lack of gender-sensitive provisions for women and girls; the low protections for women from their intimate partners. The international community should use its diplomatic leverage to advocate for gender-sensitive legislation and ensure that women and girls are more systematically considered in legislative development and renewal.

Some participants outlined the need for more fundamental institutional reform of the Nigerian judicial system to address issues of corruption, weak legal frameworks, inconsistencies among legislation, bureaucratic management resulting in delayed prosecutions, improper allocation of resources and underfunded institutions such as the Legal Aid Council. These issues result in a lack of access to justice for those who have faced sexual or gender-based violence. The UK Government should engage the Nigerian National Assembly to advocate for changes that lead to redressing these issues, and encourage better oversight and management of the affairs of security agencies, with a specific gender lens.

- 2. Rights, empowerment and survivor-centred support to end stigma:** The international community should support an increase of survivor-centred protection services, including:
- a. Funding for civil society organisations, including women’s rights organisations, to provide refuges, shelters, support centres and other services which survivors need to access;
 - b. Long-term training for security and police personnel and support centres on gender-sensitive approaches, the development of protocol, and policies for the prevention and response to GBV;
 - c. Promoting a more holistic approach to the prevention of GBV through the funding of women’s economic empowerment programmes;
 - d. Investing in long-term social norm change and equipping communities to take ownership for ending the stigma affecting survivors of GBV through the development of community support and reintegration systems;
 - e. Supporting survivors of GBV to report where they feel safe and comfortable to do so through creating holistic protection systems. Such systems should include access to justice as well as psychosocial support and economic opportunities.

The international community should support the upscaling of women and girls’ rights and empowerment programmes and survivor-centred protection services. Funding for civil society organisations, including women’s rights organisations, is essential to not only provide counselling, refuges, shelters, support centres and other services, but to also take ownership for ending stigma affecting those who have faced sexual and gender-based violence in the communities where they work.

Participants outlined the need for programmes to account for survivors’ intersectionality, particularly the relationship between sexual and gender-based violence and other social categorisations (such as their socio-economic status), which led to the recommendation to provide long-term funding for wider and more holistic gender equality programming, including women and girls’ rights programmes. This should include programmes that address harmful social norms and/or focus on economic empowerment. The international community should upscale efforts to support survivors of sexual and gender-based violence to contribute to ‘bridging the knowledge gap’ and raise awareness around these issues. Participants identified a clear overall recommendation on the need to support parents, teachers, religious and cultural leaders to play their role in ending stigma, noting that the international community has a key role to play in engaging authority figures to join the fight against GBV.