

Policy Brief



National Ethical and Religious Framework

for Preventing, Combating, and Mitigating Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Nigeria, Through Religious Institutions and Leaders.

Policy Brief

National Ethical and Religious Framework (NERF)

for Preventing, Combating, and
Mitigating Gender-Based Violence
Through Religious Institutions
in Nigeria

www.thekukahcentre.org



2024 © The Kukah Centre

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, or by any means electronic, mechanic, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the author who is the copyright holder.

Table of Contents

ACRONYMS

Executive Summary

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

1.2 Guiding Principles

1.3 Context and Rational

1.4 Framework Goal and Objectives

1.4.1 Leveraging the Influence of Religious Institutions

1.4.2 Importance of Engaging Religious Institutions

1.4.3 Collaboration and Partnership

1.5 Framework Targets

Section 2: Strategic Recommendations: Roles and Responsibilities

Section 3: Implementation Strategies

Section 4: Framework: Risks and Mitigation Strategies

Annex I: List of stakeholders engaged

Acronyms

CAN-Christian Association of Nigeria

CBOs: Community-based organizations

CSOs: Civil Society Organizations

CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

ECHR: European Convention on Human Rights

FBOs: Faith-Based Organizations

FGC/M: Female genital cutting/mutilation

GBV: Gender-Based Violence

GEWE: Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Africa

HTPs: Harmful Traditional Practices

JNI: Jama'atu Nasril Islam

ICCPR: International Convention on Civil and Political Rights

NAP: National Action Plan

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations

NERF: National Ethical and Religious Framework

SGBV: Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

SDG: Sustainable Development Goals

SV: Sexual Violence

VAPP: Violence Against Persons Prohibition

Executive Summary

This policy brief is a summary of the National Ethical and Religious Framework (NERF) which was facilitated by the Kukah Centre with the contributions and supports of religious leaders. The brief is intended to contribute to the prevention of Gender-based Violence in religious institutions. The NERF was designed to achieve four primary goals:

- Establish a comprehensive ethical and religious framework developed by and for religious leaders and institutions by which they hold themselves accountable for preventing GBV in their institutions.
- Serve as a guide for developing and reviewing their codes of conduct and constitutions to address religious narratives and stereotypes that perpetuate GBV.
- Promote ethical values and religious teachings that uphold the dignity and equality of all individuals, with a focus on preventing and combating GBV.
- Provide guidance and support to religious institutions and leaders in developing accountability mechanisms to address GBV such as codes of conduct and religious institutional constitutions.
- Foster collaboration and partnership between religious institutions, civil society organisations, and government agencies to create a coordinated and effective response to gender-based violence.

Thus, the NERF is a comprehensive approach that actively engages religious institutions and leaders in Nigeria to prevent and combat GBV and serves as an accountability tool. GBV is a pervasive problem in the country, driven by patriarchal norms and unequal power dynamics, leading to severe physical and psychological consequences for survivors. The NERF addresses this issue by raising awareness, promoting ethical values, and providing guidance and support to religious institutions and leaders. It proposes key strategies such as advocating and encouraging religious leaders to develop a code of conduct for addressing GBV within their domains, developing educational materials on GBV, conducting training to enhance understanding and support skills, establishing support networks and helplines, and advocating for the integration of prevention and response measures into religious practices. By fostering collaboration between religious institutions, Civil

Society Organizations (CSOs), and government agencies, the framework aims to create a coordinated and effective response to GBV in Nigeria.

Implementing the NERF may encounter certain challenges, including potential resistance from religious leaders, limited capacity, poor dissemination/popularization/adoption and a lack of resources to implement the framework. However, these challenges can be overcome through various means. The implementation of this framework includes activities such as engagements with religious leaders to gain their trust and buy-in, and also trainings for religious leaders to enhance their understanding of GBV and guiding religious institutions in domesticating a code of conduct or including strategies for addressing GBV within religious domains. It also involves engaging in advocacy efforts to raise awareness and garner support from religious communities in addressing GBV. Additionally, close collaboration between religious institutions will help mobilise resources and create a network of support for addressing GBV. By integrating religious perspectives and mobilising communities, the ERF aims to prevent and address GBV in Nigeria, fostering a safer and more equitable society for all.

The NERF recognises the significance of collaboration between religious institutions, CSOs, and government agencies in effectively addressing GBV. By working together, these stakeholders can leverage their respective strengths and resources to implement comprehensive and sustainable responses to GBV. Collaboration includes sharing best practices, coordinating services, and mobilising resources for prevention, intervention, and survivor support. The framework aims to provide religious leaders with a guide to prevent and address GBV in Nigeria by integrating religious perspectives and mobilising religious communities. By promoting collaboration, the NERF seeks to create a collective effort to combat GBV and create a safer and more equitable society for all individuals affected by this issue.

Consequently, this policy brief outlines strategic recommendations, in line with the aspirations of the NERF, on how to prevent and combat GBV through a religious approach by deploying an ethical and religious framework, already supported by religious leaders and institutions in Nigeria.

Section 1: Introduction



1.1 Background and Context

The NERF for Preventing, Combating, and Mitigating GBV in Nigeria, by Religious Institutions and Leaders, is needed to address the alarming rates of GBV in the country. For example, research from the first phase of the project indicates that in some parts of northern Nigeria, extreme religious ideologies continue to reinforce or justify early child marriage. About 54% of North West girls aged 15-24 were married by age 15, and 81% were married by age 18, this is in addition to economic violence women and girls in the region are faced with. Compared to the northern region, women in the southern part of Nigeria significantly suffer from harmful traditional practices such as harmful widowhood rights. This framework deploys a religious perspective and approach to addressing GBV. It leverages the influence of religious leaders to tackle GBV issues within their communities. The framework prioritizes creating awareness and accountability among religious leaders to ensure that they actively promote a culture of respect, justice, and equity within their congregations. They are expected to promote gender-sensitive theology that protects the rights of women, and set up self-monitoring policies and mechanisms within their institutions to mitigate GBV.

This NERF also highlights the need for religious leaders and institutions to endorse and comprehensively support services for survivors, including counselling, medical, and legal assistance. In the same vein, religious leaders are obligated by this to ensure that the law takes its full course in prosecuting perpetrators of GBV as a means of ensuring justice for the survivor. This framework does not only seek to protect vulnerable groups but also challenges deeply ingrained societal norms that perpetuate violence, ultimately contributing to a safer and more inclusive Nigeria.

1.2 Guiding Principles

The NERF affirms the commitment of religious institutions and leaders to ensure human rights, gender equity, non-discrimination, non-violence, moderation, and tolerance of differences



within their congregations and communities. It encompasses standards, strategies, and plans agreed upon by religious bodies, their leaders, stakeholders, and practitioners across the six (6) geopolitical zones of Nigeria, recognising the existing policies in their various institutions and harmonizing the best practices from the various religious groups to create this framework. As a guiding principle, this framework was drafted using conflict sensitivity, trauma awareness, Do No Harm, and an inclusive gender lens throughout the process of drafting, revising, and validating stages of this framework. It also enshrines mitigation strategies as proposed and agreed upon by the various religious institutions and stakeholders, which include but are not limited to sensitization, awareness campaigns, education, a robust code of conduct template, behavioural change in communication on harmful social norms, and neutralization of extremist ideologies on gender.

1.3 Context and Rational

GBV is a pervasive issue that demands comprehensive solutions. However, the absence of a strong religious approach to addressing or preventing GBV undermines the effectiveness of

mitigating GBV in dominant religious contexts. Most importantly, the seeming lack of support from religious leaders and institutions makes it necessary to engage them and obtain their buy-in to become active agents in the mitigation of GBV using their expertise, networks and influence. Therefore, this framework highlights the importance of incorporating religious perspectives into existing legislation, strengthening accountability mechanisms within religious institutions, bridging knowledge gaps among religious leaders, supporting religious institutions, and challenging extremist views that perpetuate GBV.

- The lack of recognition of the role of Religion in Preventing and combating GBV: While laws and policies exist to combat and address GBV, they often fail to recognize the role of religion in shaping societal norms and beliefs. Incorporating a religious component into existing laws enables policymakers to address the unique challenges and dynamics of GBV within religious contexts.
- Limited Accountability Mechanisms in Religious Institutions: Religious institutions often have a good governance structure, but they lack clear guidelines and protocols for dealing with GBV cases. This results in a lack of accountability for perpetrators and inadequate support for survivors. Strengthening accountability mechanisms within religious institutions is vital to ensuring justice, support, and prevention of GBV within religious communities. Clear guidelines for reporting, investigation, and disciplinary action must be established to hold perpetrators accountable and provide the necessary support to survivors.
- Religious leaders are influential figures within their communities, but many lack the necessary skills, information, and knowledge to effectively address GBV. Training programs that focus on gender equality, human rights, and GBV prevention should be developed and implemented to equip religious leaders with the tools they need. By empowering religious leaders, they can play a central role in challenging harmful gender norms, educating their communities, and supporting survivors.
- Extremist interpretations of religious texts and ideologies often contribute to the

perpetuation of GBV. It is essential to challenge and counter these harmful views through education, dialogue, and community engagement. Holding ideologues accountable for promoting GBV is crucial to creating a safe and inclusive environment that rejects violence and promotes gender equality.

- Extremist interpretations of religious texts and ideologies often contribute to the perpetuation of GBV. It is essential to challenge and counter these harmful views through education, dialogue, and community engagement. Holding ideologies accountable for promoting GBV is crucial to creating a safe and inclusive environment that rejects violence and promotes gender equality.

To effectively combat GBV within religious contexts, it is crucial to support and strengthen religious institutions and leaders with the necessary systems and skills to do so. Partnerships between religious institutions and GBV service providers can enhance support systems for survivors. Promoting dialogue and engagement with religious leaders can help challenge harmful gender norms and foster inclusive communities. To properly address these concerns, religious leaders will need to be equipped with materials and training on GBV prevention and response.

1.4 Framework Goal and Objectives

The ERF aims to prevent, mitigate, and respond to GBV in Nigeria by utilizing the collective vision of the various religious practices in the country to ensure love, peace, and justice for all. Through our implementation plan and the feedback collected across the six (6) geopolitical zones of Nigeria, we aim to provide moral guidance, educational awareness, and access to services in collaboration with religious institutions in preventing, mitigating and combating all forms of GBV in Nigeria.

Framework Goal: To deploy the influence of religious leaders and institutions to prevent, mitigate and combat GBV in Nigeria and to create a safe and inclusive environment where all individuals, regardless of gender, are treated with respect and can thrive without fear of violence or discrimination.

Framework objective: To establish a comprehensive ERF that helps religious leaders and institutions hold themselves accountable regarding issues of GBV. The framework will ensure that accountability comes with the responsibility to provide education and awareness, partner with constituted state agencies to report, support judicial processes, and provide evidence. Additionally, it incorporates moral guidance and religious tenets to prevent, address, and ameliorate GBV, while simultaneously striving for gender equity and equality, empowering survivors, and ensuring accountability for perpetrators. The following are the key objectives of the framework:

1.4.1 Leveraging the Influence of Religious Institutions

Religious institutions play a significant role in Nigerian society, with a presence in nearly every community across the country. The extensive reach and influence of these institutions, coupled with the proximity of religious leaders to citizens, present a crucial opportunity to address the issue of GBV. Religious leaders in Nigeria have played a significant role in addressing various social issues, including immunizations against polio, COVID-19 vaccinations, and HIV/AIDS. Notably, in 2003, there were concerns about the safety of the polio vaccine among religious leaders in northern Nigeria, particularly in Kano, Zamfara, and Kaduna states, which led to a temporary halt in the immunization campaign. The concerns centered on a conspiracy theory as to whether the vaccination violates Islamic codes and is targeted at reducing the population of Muslims. However, through constructive dialogue and collaboration between religious, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), these initial apprehensions were successfully addressed. This highlights the significant role that religious leaders played in reshaping public perception and facilitating the resumption of the polio vaccination campaign, ultimately contributing to the protection of children's health in the region. Furthermore, religious leaders were engaged in mobilizing caregivers against social norms that prevent families from vaccinating their children, delivering life-saving messages during sermons

and other religious gatherings to dispel negative attitudes toward vaccinations and other health services. Their influence has been crucial in shaping public perceptions, mobilizing communities, and influencing decision-making processes regarding these critical health issues. This influence has been observed in various states, including Plateau, Taraba, Kaduna, and others, where religious leaders have been involved in promoting peace, religious tolerance, and community awareness activities, further highlighting their significant role in addressing social issues in Nigeria.

1.4.2 Importance of Engaging Religious Institutions

Religious institutions serve as vital platforms for moral and ethical guidance, shaping the values and behaviours of their followers. With their vast network, religious institutions have the potential to raise awareness about GBV, challenge harmful patriarchal norms, and promote gender equality. Leveraging their influence, religious institutions can play a pivotal role in preventing and addressing GBV at the grassroots level, reaching individuals and communities that may otherwise be difficult to access. The extremist Salafi-Jihadi ideology asserts that the most genuine form of Islam is rooted in the practices and teachings of the Prophet (SAW) and early generation notwithstanding the current context. The teachings and beliefs of early Muslim generations perceive women as inferior. The strict male guardianship and the perception of female sexuality as dangerous create an environment where women's rights are severely restricted. This ideology portrays women as potential threats to male spirituality and family honour, indirectly fostering an environment where GBV may be justified. In some interpretations, the emphasis on women's submission and control can be exploited to perpetuate violence against them.

Similarly, in Christianity, the patriarchal structure sanctioned and ordained by some interpretations of religious teachings can contribute to an environment where GBV is tacitly encouraged. Certain biblical passages emphasizing women's submission may be interpreted in ways that perpetuate unequal power dynamics, leaving women vulnerable to violence. The notion of women being created from man's rib and the emphasis on unquestionable obedience can, in certain contexts, contribute to a climate where GBV may be implicitly condoned. It is crucial to

recognize and challenge these interpretations to promote equality, dignity, and the elimination of GBV in religious contexts.

1.4.3 Collaboration and Partnership

To effectively combat GBV, it is crucial to foster collaboration and partnership between religious institutions, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and government agencies responsible for handling GBV issues. By working together, these stakeholders can leverage their respective strengths and resources to implement comprehensive and sustainable interventions. Collaboration entails sharing best practices, coordinating services, and mobilising resources to support prevention, intervention, and survivor support initiatives. This approach ensures a coordinated and unified response to GBV, maximising the impact of interventions and reaching a wider audience.

1.5 Framework Targets

This framework recognises the pivotal role of religion, religious leaders, and their institutions in addressing the pervasive issues of GBV in Nigeria. Its targets include engaging religious leaders as advocates for gender equality, encouraging the reinterpretation of commonly misinterpreted religious texts that promote or reinforce GBV, and fostering collaboration between faith-based organizations and government agencies to provide support and resources for survivors. Utilizing the moral authority of religious figures and institutions, the framework seeks to challenge traditional norms that justify or reinforce GBV within Nigerian societies. To promote dialogue and educate communities on the principles of dignity and respect, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and just society.

Section 2: Strategic Recommendations: Roles and Responsibilities



This policy brief acknowledges the significance of the role of religious leaders and their institutions in the fight against GBV and seeks their active participation in prevention, combat, and mitigation efforts. This section focuses on the contributions of various stakeholders especially religious leaders engaged during the different project implementation processes leading to the development of this framework. Additionally, this section captures the recommendations made by religious leaders and other stakeholders on strategies from a religious perspective that can be deployed to prevent, combat and mitigate GBV within religious domains and communities.

2.1 The Role of Religious Institutions and Leaders

The role of religious leaders within the ERF in preventing, combating, and mitigating GBV in Nigeria is of utmost importance. Religious leaders hold significant influence over their congregations, communities, and vulnerable groups, making their active involvement essential in addressing the issue of GBV.

- **Fostering Accountability and a Safe Environment**

To promote accountability and safeguarding within religious organizations, religious leaders and institutions must develop or review codes of conduct and constitutions aimed at addressing GBV. These guidelines should encompass strategies for reporting and referring GBV cases, with a focus on creating a secure, inclusive, and respectful environment for all members, especially vulnerable groups. By upholding these principles, religious leaders affirm their commitment to promoting dignity, equality, and justice within their institutions. The engagement will include different hierarchical structures of the religious bodies such as CAN, the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, Jamaat al-Nasir Islam and the Justice, Development and Peace Commissions of all Catholic Dioceses.

Furthermore, the creation of a comprehensive safeguarding manual for religious institutions and leaders is essential. This manual plays a vital role in raising awareness about GBV,

establishing ethical standards, providing practical guidance, fostering collaboration, and emphasizing monitoring and evaluation. By equipping religious institutions and leaders with these comprehensive tools, the manual enables them to actively combat GBV and contribute to the creation of inclusive, respectful, and violence-free communities. It empowers religious leaders to challenge harmful attitudes and behaviours, support survivors, and create safe environments, thus promoting positive change and the eradication of GBV within religious contexts.

- **Moral Guidance and Advocacy**

Religious leaders, as moral authorities, are tasked with using their pulpits or places where sermons, teachings, or religious discourses are delivered to advocate for the eradication of GBV and to promote ethical behaviour and gender equality within their faith communities. Emphasizing the religious and ethical foundations for gender equality, equity, justice, and respect as instructed in their religious doctrines, they should advocate against GBV and promote gender equality beyond their congregations. Additionally, religious leaders have a responsibility to continuously educate their congregations and fellow leaders about the various forms of GBV and its consequences, incorporating messages about gender equality and condemning GBV in their sermons, speeches, and teachings. They are also expected to create and promote a safe and supportive environment for survivors, encouraging them to seek assistance without fear of judgment or stigma. Engaging with their communities, religious leaders should facilitate open dialogues about GBV, gender equity, equality, and the role of faith in promoting positive change, as well as organize community events, workshops, and seminars on these critical topics.

- **Establish Anti-GBV Committees or Gender Desks**

Religious organizations and institutions should set up anti-GBV committees or gender desks across their various branches at all levels. Within faith-based organizations, dedicated sub-committees in-line are established to address GBV issues. These committees actively engage in awareness campaigns, provide

support services, and advocate for policies within the religious community. This committee can also identify and refer cases of survivors of GBV to appropriate authorities either for medical care or for psychosocial support for survivors.

- **Gender-Sensitive Theology**

Religious leaders shall positively influence theological teachings to ensure they promote gender equality and respect for all individuals. They shall create and promote intra-religious dialogues among religious leaders that support a holistic approach to addressing misinterpretations of religious texts and practices that reinforce GBV. They shall provide alternative or counter-narratives to religious texts or practices that perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes or justify GBV. Religious leaders shall also address cultural practices within their communities that contribute to, support, or justify GBV and work to change harmful norms. Religious leaders must consistently advance cultural norms that honour and respect every gender.

- **Reporting and Reactions**

Religious leaders shall cooperate with law enforcement agencies and support survivors in reporting GBV to the appropriate authorities. Religious leaders shall also leverage the expertise of partners like NGO,, CSOs, and government agencies to enhance learning and ensure gender issues are addressed professionally. They should collaborate with NGOs and government agencies focusing on GBV prevention and support for survivors. In the same vein, they should actively participate in monitoring and evaluating GBV prevention programs within their religious institutions. They shall ensure that these programs are effective, sustained, and adjusted as needed.

- **Survivors Centered Support**

Religious leaders in Nigeria should make sure that their organisations comply with legislation that addresses GBV and gender equality. They are tasked with upholding accountability in local communities as well as advocating for survivors seeking justice inside Nigeria's judicial system. Religious leaders are vital in providing spiritual direction, establishing a secure environment for survivors to speak out,

pushing for criminal penalties for offenders, and denouncing the stigmatisation of survivors when it comes to assisting survivor-centred culture in religious groups. This multi-pronged strategy guarantees encouraging justice, respect, and all-encompassing assistance for GBV survivors.

- Religious institutions and leaders play a significant role in addressing GBV against people with disabilities. With their influential positions within communities, they can raise awareness about the unique vulnerabilities faced by people with disabilities and work towards dismantling stigmas and discrimination. Through their teachings and guidance, they can advocate for inclusivity, respect, and protection for all individuals, regardless of their abilities. Religious leaders can also offer support and resources to survivors, including counselling and safe spaces, and work collaboratively with other organizations to develop comprehensive strategies for preventing and addressing GBV against people with disabilities. By promoting justice and equality, religious institutions can contribute to creating safer and more inclusive environments for everyone.
- Religious Institutions and leaders need to ensure that guidelines and structures put in place in their institutions respect and rights of survivors. The rights of individuals who have experienced different types of trauma, abuse, or violence, including GBV should be safeguarded and respected. These rights play a vital role in facilitating the recovery, healing, and reconstruction of survivors' lives. Religious leaders and institutions have a responsibility to ensure that survivors receive the necessary support from legal, social services, and community networks, enabling them to effectively exercise their rights and regain a sense of empowerment and autonomy in their lives

2.1.1 The Role of Religious Media Outlets

Religious media outlets can play a crucial role in mitigating GBV by leveraging their influence and reach to promote awareness, education, and prevention. Many religious institutions own influential media channels that can be used to advance gender equality and GBV prevention through targeted programs, advocacy campaigns and messaging. Here are some strategic recommendations for the role of religious media outlets in mitigating GBV:

- **Collaborative Approach**

Collaboration between religious media outlets is crucial to enhancing awareness and promoting GBV campaigns within religious institutions. By leveraging their platforms and influence, these outlets can unite to raise awareness, educate and empower individuals, challenge cultural norms, and advocate for change. Through joint media campaigns, educational resources, thought-provoking content, and survivor support, religious-owned media outlets can play a transformative role in creating a safer future, free from GBV.

- **Engage religious leaders**

Religious media outlets can play a vital role by providing platforms for religious leaders to speak out against GBV, promote healthy relationships, and advocate for gender equality within their communities. They can use their media outlets to stand as champions against GBV.

- **Advocacy and awareness campaigns**

Religious media outlets can use their platforms to launch advocacy and awareness campaigns particularly during critical international days like the 16 Days of Activism Against GBV. These campaigns can include educational content, survivor stories, information about available support services and create awareness of laws put in place to address GBV such as the VAPP Act. By raising awareness, religious media outlets can contribute to changing societal attitudes and behaviours towards GBV.

- **Addressing GBV within religious institutions**

Religious media outlets can highlight the importance of addressing GBV within religious institutions by holding a zero-tolerance stance against GBV. They can advocate for policies and mechanisms that prevent GBV, provide support for survivors, and hold perpetrators accountable to ensure they do not move on to unsuspecting religious institutions.

Section 3: Implementation Strategies

Strategy 1: Promote social change through advocacy and creating awareness of GBV.

- This strategy involves creating awareness and engaging advocates from religious communities as peer educators to effectively communicate and ensure acceptance of the policy. These religious leaders will raise awareness and promote the policy's values at the grassroots level. Religious leaders should utilise their platforms to preach messages that discourages GBV within their communities.
 - Creating an inclusive society that respects diverse religious perspectives: Inclusive societies are communities where individuals of all religious backgrounds are accepted, respected, and have equal opportunities, regardless of their beliefs. Religious leaders can organise inter-faith and intra-faith events to design strategies to incorporate teachings that discourage GBV into their sermons. This strategy encourages religious leaders to create platforms for dialogue and discussions within religious communities to promote an inclusive society where diverse religious perspectives are respected, and the values of human dignity are embraced and adhered to within a religious context. This approach acknowledges that religious institutions play a significant role in shaping societal norms and attitudes. This approach acknowledges that religious institutions play a significant role in shaping societal norms and attitudes, ultimately contributing to a more harmonious and cohesive community.
 - To achieve this, the framework promotes dialogue and understanding among different religious institutions and leaders. It encourages interfaith and intrafaith discussions and collaborations that address GBV and promote gender equality. By creating spaces for respectful and open dialogue, the framework seeks to build consensus and understanding around the importance of addressing GBV within religious contexts. This approach respects the diversity of religious beliefs and practices while also ensuring that the policy's values of respect, equality, and non-violence are embedded in religious teachings and practices.
-

Strategy 2: Religious Text Analysis and Interpretation

- Religious institutions should establish specialized committees at regional and national levels to critically analyse and interpret religious texts and identify aspects that may contribute to GBV. Develop guidelines for religious leaders to navigate these texts in a manner that promotes gender equality, respect, and non-discrimination, thereby challenging existing interpretations that perpetuate violence.
-

Strategy 3: Establish GBV Desks and implementation Committees

- To guarantee the comprehensive implementation of the framework, national and state intra-religious implementation committees comprising representatives from diverse religious organizations (such as the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and its related structures, as well as the Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI) and its related structures) will be established and supported to ensure adherence by religious institutions. This will also involve establishing a network of similar committees within all religious institutions.
- Religious institutions should establish GBV desks with helplines to monitor, report, and refer GBV incidents within their establishments. This framework strategy encompasses the appointment

and training of GBV desk officers, who will be equipped with the necessary training and skills to raise awareness about GBV, report cases of GBV, provide referral services for survivors, offer support to survivors, and implement preventive measures within the religious environment.

- The implementation committees will monitor the activities of the GBV desks within religious organizations to ensure compliance with state and national laws on GBV. The implementation committee will play a crucial role in ensuring accountability and addressing any issues hindering policy implementation.

Strategy 4: Advancing GBV Data Collaboration in Religious Organizations.

- Religious leaders will play a major role in gathering GBV data within their respective institutions. This includes providing the same data to feed into the National GBV Dashboard. The facility will methodically instruct and monitor the ways in which religious establishments add information to national databases. The National GBV dashboard serves as a central hub for reporting cases of GBV. Hence, training and equipping religious leaders on reporting cases of GBV to the National Dashboard will foster collaboration among religious institutions and establish a single mechanism for gathering information on GBV cases. This will guarantee complete and accurate data for interventions and policymaking based on evidence. Thereby, encouraging the sharing of knowledge and skills as well across different religious groups and individuals trying to prevent GBV eventually enables data sharing between religious institutions to detect trends, gaps, and areas that require more attention.

Strategy 5: Develop GBV curriculum for religious institutions

- Religious leaders and institutions should partner with religious and other educational institutions to raise awareness about GBV and promote teachings on gender-sensitive topics to address GBV within educational settings. Collaborating with schools, religious institutions can integrate lessons on respect, consent, and gender equality into their curricula.
- Developing training programs for teachers equips them with the skills and knowledge needed to identify and respond to GBV incidences, as well as to report and refer cases appropriately. Additionally, working with CSOs and NGOs, and government bodies, religious leaders can help address GBV issues and promote a safer environment for pupils especially girls.
- Furthermore, strengthening the guidance and counselling units within religious educational institutions allows for better identification, reporting, and response to GBV cases in schools and campuses. This holistic approach ensures that educational environments become safe and supportive spaces that foster respect and equality for all students.

Strategy 6: The Use of social media

- Leveraging social media for addressing GBV is potent due to its expansive reach and facilitation of discussions. Strategies include awareness campaigns utilizing hashtags, sharing educational resources on GBV forms and prevention, providing accessible information about support services, fostering online survivor communities, advocating

for policy changes, collaborating with stakeholders, sharing personal stories, encouraging dialogue, offering training sessions, and using analytics for monitoring and evaluation.

Strategy 7: Establishing GBV Technical/Implementation Working Committees

Religious institutions should establish GBV technical working committees across all levels of the institutions to coordinate efforts, share information, and ensure the effective implementation of policies. These committees would bring together relevant stakeholders, experts, and representatives from various sectors to provide comprehensive guidance, support, and expertise. In addition, a dedicated committee should be responsible for policy implementation and expand its role to collaborate with security agencies for effective monitoring and evaluation of GBV initiatives. This coordinated approach ensures a unified and efficient response to GBV challenges within religious communities.

These committees can serve as a platform for collaboration and the exchange of best practices, enabling religious institutions to work together towards the common goal of addressing GBV. By involving stakeholders from different sectors, such as government agencies, civil society organizations, and academia. A comprehensive approach can be developed that takes into account diverse perspectives and experiences. This inclusive approach will help ensure that policies and interventions are evidence-based, culturally sensitive, and responsive to the needs of survivors.

Section 4: Framework: Risks and Mitigation Strategies

In addressing GBV, religious institutions must consider the potential risks associated with their efforts and develop strategies to mitigate them. A comprehensive framework for risks and mitigating strategies enables these institutions to anticipate challenges and implement effective measures to manage them. This includes assessing potential backlash or resistance from community members, navigating sensitive cultural and religious contexts, and addressing any gap in training or awareness among leaders and staff. By proactively identifying these risks and developing targeted mitigation strategies, religious institutions can enhance the effectiveness of their initiatives, safeguard the well-being of their communities, and promote long-term, sustainable change in the fight against GBV.

Therefore, in addressing GBV, religious institutions must carefully navigate several risks while also developing strategies to mitigate them effectively:

- I. Ensuring the adoption and implementation of the ERF by religious institutions and leaders in Nigeria presents a risk due to the various denominations, sects, and lack of an adequate central body. This challenge can be overcome through strong programmatic actions. This involves targeted advocacy visits to the various religious coordinating bodies and institutions, organizing programs, workshops, and seminars to educate and raise awareness among religious leaders about the ERF and their role in implementing it. Fostering dialogue, collaboration, and ongoing consultation with religious institutions and leaders is also crucial to ensuring their ownership and commitment to the ERF. By actively engaging these key institutions, the successful adoption and utilization of the ERF can be achieved in Nigeria.
- II. In addressing HTPs, religious leaders or institutions will face resistance from community members who hold traditional views strongly, more specifically traditional birth attendants to mitigate this challenge, religious institutions and leaders can implement strategies such as engaging in open dialogue with the community members, which fosters understanding and builds trust. Providing education and awareness programs helps dispel myths and misconceptions surrounding GBV and promotes more informed perspective. Additionally, involving traditional and community leaders in the conversation ensures that respected figures within the community support the efforts against GBV, which can aid in shifting attitudes and gaining broader acceptance. Taking these approaches, religious institutions can navigate resistance and promote positive change and acceptance in their communities.
- III. Initiatives against GBV may come into conflict with deeply rooted cultural and religious beliefs. Religious institutions need to strike a balance between respecting these beliefs and advocating for change. This can be achieved by engaging in respectful, informed discussions with their congregations or followers, providing culturally sensitive educational materials, and incorporating diverse perspectives. Religious institutions and leaders need to carefully address the intersection of GBV with cultural and religious values, religious institutions can promote change while respecting traditional belief, ultimately fostering greater acceptance and progress in the fight against GBV.
- IV. The lack of comprehensive and accurate data on GBV cases in Nigeria, as well as the absence of collaboration and knowledge exchange among religious institutions and stakeholders working towards combating GBV, pose a serious risk in implementing this framework. The establishment of an online GBV data source and a unified data collection system managed by religious institutions, creating a centralized platform for sharing information, best practices, research findings, and resources related to GBV as stated above, will address the need for reliable data and facilitate collaboration, learning, and resource sharing to enhance efforts in combating GBV in Nigeria.

Annex I: List of stakeholders engaged

We hereby do warmly acknowledge the valuable contributions and support of the following Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organizations, and Faith-Based Organizations at state, regional and national levels in the development, compilation, review and validation of the policy framework among others:

FAITH-BASED GROUPS

1. Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)
2. Women Wing of The Christian Association of Nigeria (WOWICAN)
3. Justice Development Peace Commission (JDPC)
4. Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN)
5. Nasrul – Lahi-L- Faith Society (NASFAT)
6. MICA/Da’awah Institute (DIN)
7. International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT)
8. Association of Islamic Law Teachers
9. Muslim Students’ Society of Nigeria (MSSN)
10. Muslim Sister Organization of Nigeria
11. Muslim Sister Association of Nigeria
12. Development Initiative of West Africa (DIWA)
13. Lux Terra Foundation.
14. Christian Women for Excellence and Empowerment in Nigerian Society (CWEENS)
5. Community and Youth Development Initiative (CYDI)
6. Concern Women International Development Initiative
7. Do Foundation
8. Essential Health Network for Rural Dwellers
9. Every Girl Initiative (EGI)
10. Family Empowerment and Youth
11. Reorientation Initiative (FRYREP)
12. FCT Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Response Team
13. Gender-Based Violence Task Force, Ebonyi State
14. Glitter of Hope
15. Glorious Teens Ministry
16. Inspire Development Initiative (IDI)
17. Kachem Young Initiative
18. Nana Girls and Women Empowerment Initiative
19. Nana Khadija Centre
20. Nigerian Association of Women Journalists
21. Parent-Child Intervention
22. Save the Child
23. Sexual Assault Referral Centre Kaduna State (SARC)
24. Smile Women and Children Foundation
25. Society for the Improvement of Rural People (SIRP)
26. Stand To End Rape (STER)
27. Voluntary Aid Initiative
28. West African Network for Peace Building
29. Women & Community Livelihood Foundation
30. Women Initiative for Value Empowerment and Sustainability (WIVES)
31. Women Information Network
32. Women’s Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA)
33. Working for Family Stability Initiative
34. Young and Useful Generation (YUGI)
35. Zaki’s Gem Support Foundation

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

1. Ministry of Women and Social Development Affairs
2. National Orientation Agency
3. National Human Rights Commission
4. National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons
5. State Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Committees
6. National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP)

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

1. AKS Gender-Based Violence Committee
2. Association Against Child and Sexual Gender-Based Violence (AACSGBV)
3. Caring Hearts Initiative
4. Civil Resource Development and Documentation Centre (CIRDDOC)

Gender-based violence (GBV) in Nigeria is a deeply rooted and pervasive issue, often fueled by patriarchal norms and unequal power dynamics. GBV has severe physical and psychological consequences, impacting not only survivors but also communities and society as a whole. The Ethical and Religious Policy Framework aims to create an all-encompassing ethical and religious policy framework, empowering religious leaders and institutions to take responsibility for addressing GBV.

The policy framework assists religious leaders and institutions in holding themselves accountable regarding issues of GBV within their domain. It emphasizes accountability by promoting education, partnering with state agencies for reporting, aiding legal processes, and offering support. This framework integrates moral teachings and religious principles to prevent, address, and alleviate GBV, while actively pursuing gender equality. It focuses on empowering survivors and holding perpetrators accountable.

This document was produced by The Kukah Centre, a Nigeria-based non-profit, non-governmental and public policy organisation that offers alternative approaches to the challenges of leadership and the impact of conflict on national development. Interfaith dialogue is at the core of the Centre's work and involves actively promoting conversations among Nigeria's faith communities, as well as between leaders in faith and public policy. The Kukah Centre's core programme areas include: Interfaith Dialogue, Peace and Conflict Resolution, Leadership Training and Development, Good governance, Public Policy Research, Memory and Knowledge Preservation.

This report is supported in part by



HEAD OFFICE:

Flat C1, American Specialist Hospital Complex, (opposite Rockview Royale Hotel), 1, Luanda Crescent, Wuse 2, Abuja - Nigeria.

REGIONAL OFFICE:

#10 North Road, Abakpa, Kaduna - Nigeria.

+234 (0) 903 114 9816

+234 (0) 916 984 1498

thekukahcentre@thekukahcentre.org

www.thekukahcentre.org