

IMPACT REPORT

RULE OF LAW AND ANTI-CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA

TACKLING SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



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INTRODUCTION

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is a widespread, serious violation of human rights that has severe physical, psychological, and social impact on victims and society. According to the Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2018 (NDHS), 31 percent of girls and women aged 15-49 years have experienced physical or sexual violence at least once in their lives.

Despite the scale of the problem, the policy response is weak and capacity to support and protect victims is limited. A RoLAC assessment in 2017 found that only 14 of 36 states had adopted the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP) - an innovative piece of legislation that strengthened protection and redress for victims of SGBV. Only half of the states that had adopted the VAPP were implementing any of its critical provisions.

Gender-based violence is rooted in and reinforced by cultural norms, beliefs, and practices. Policy makers, criminal justice officials and public service providers who are influenced by these norms, often do not regard violence against women and girls with the same seriousness as other types of violence against



persons. The assessment revealed that in addition to a poor level of understanding of the nature of SGBV and its impact on victims, the behaviour of front-line officials often mirrored the cultural tendency to stigmatise the victim and minimise the weight of the perpetrators’

crime. Consequently, many SGBV survivors did not report the crimes against them. According to the 2018 NDHS survey, more than fifty percent of victims have never sought help to stop the violence.

ACTIVITIES

RoLAC worked alongside government and civil society partners to apply a multi-dimensional approach to addressing SGBV. The programme recognised the resource and capacity challenges faced by partners (government and non-state actors) and identified opportunities to leverage and maximise existing infrastructure and systems. In consultation with partners, RoLAC identified five priority intervention areas that would deliver the strongest outcomes and potentially achieve resounding impact.

Advocacy for the adoption of the VAPP Act and related gender sensitive laws, policies, and practice directives

RoLAC adopted a nationally focused advocacy strategy for the state domestication of the VAPP, which included tracking the adoption and gazetting of VAPP laws across the 36 states and regularly disseminating maps that presented the progress of the VAPP Bill in each state. RoLAC helped influence the passage of the law by engaging state ministries through the State Justice Sector Reform Teams (JSRT), promoting the law through the SARC Network, and

mobilising civil society organisations (CSOs) and the media. RoLAC supported research and advocacy by CSOs, including disability-focused organisations for the adoption of the VAPP Law, seeking state funding for its implementation. Further advocacy led to the adoption of practice directives to provide uniform guidelines for implementation of laws.

Strengthening knowledge and capacity of government agencies to respond to SGBV

RoLAC worked with government agencies and civil society partners, to identify capacity gaps that



affected their individual and collective capacity to respond to SGBV and assist survivors in accessing health, psychosocial and justice services. RoLAC delivered a series of training workshops and mentoring sessions for over 1,000 investigators, prosecutors, judges, magistrates, social protection officers, police gender desk officers, VAPP Implementation Committee members, state SGBV Response Teams, SARC personnel, civil society, and community-based organisations.

The training and mentoring focused on professional and care support, and improving knowledge and understanding about SGBV. Technical support enabled better application of guidelines to operationalise and coordinate SGBV responses, collect data and establish monitoring and evaluation processes.

Technical and funding support was provided for the establishment or enhancement of SGBV response mechanisms including Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs), state SGBV Response Teams, state VAPP Implementation Committees, national and state Sexual Offender Databases, and SGBV Courts. RoLAC support enabled collaboration between federal and state law enforcement agencies, ministries of justice and the judiciary to develop and implement rules of court/practice directives that respond to gender issues and enhance access to justice for women. It also built capacity to respond to persons with disabilities who suffered SGBV.

Grants were awarded to community based CSOs to establish additional reporting and referral channels and to strengthen the capacity of communities to recognise SGBV and coordinate with the formal justice system to respond and rescue.

Support to inter-agency and multi-sectoral coordination

RoLAC facilitated the establishment of SGBV coordination platforms including SARC Steering Committees (SSC) comprising of ministries of health, justice and women affairs, and mentored them through quarterly meetings and work planning sessions. High-Level Multi-Agency Task Teams (HiMAT) and the Service Providers Accountability Resource Committee

(SPARC) platforms were established to serve as the governance structure for sexual offender databases at both the national and state levels. These have proven effective mechanisms for coordinating data sharing and ensuring that SGBV cases are centrally captured and reported to the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP).

Sensitisation and awareness raising

RoLAC supported annual forums of key stakeholders (including the network of SARCs and network of HiMATs) to discuss implementation challenges, identify barriers and find ways to overcome them. Awareness-raising campaigns were effective in challenging the cultural and social norms that contribute to SGBV, promoting respect for the rights of all individuals, and providing information about where to seek help and support for survivors. RoLAC supported state-wide media campaigns and social media campaigns and used drama and theatre to break the culture of silence around SGBV. This has helped counter the narratives and attitudes that perpetuate victim blaming and inspired citizens to act.



IMPACT

Improved legislative and policy environment

At the start of the RoLAC Programme, only 14 states had passed the VAPP legislation. The RoLAC national focused advocacy strategy on VAPP and learning and experience sharing forums, including the SARC Network and the Network of Justice Sector Reform Teams, led to an additional 18 states signing VAPP legislation into law.

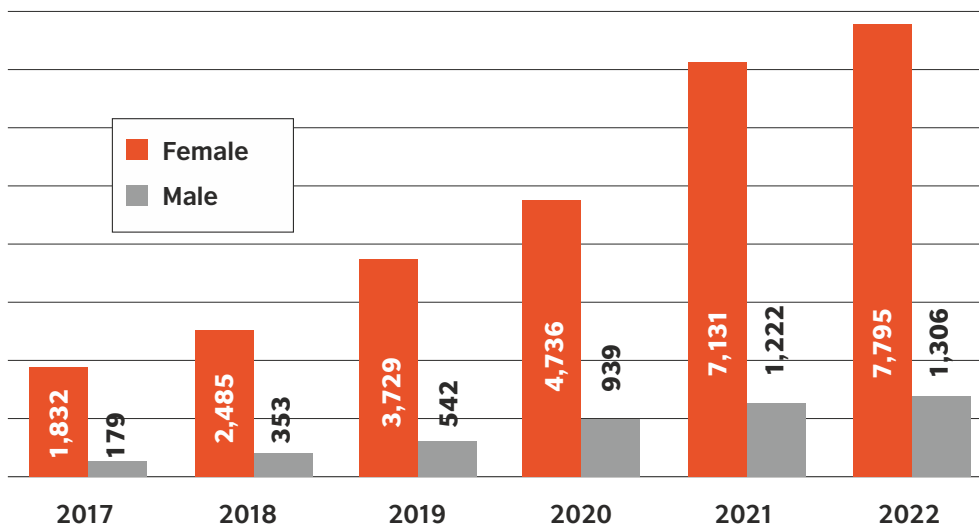
Increase in number of SGBV survivors accessing support and justice services

There were 11 Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) across 10 states in 2017. By the end of 2022, this had increased to 39 SARCs across 20 states. Between July 2017 and November 2022, SARCs have provided free emergency medical, psychosocial, and legal support to over 31,300 survivors of SGBV. Sixty-six percent of these have been girls under 18 years old. Many more survivors have been assisted by SGBV Response Teams and community-based reporting and referral channels.



Source: HerStoryOurStory

Figure 1: Clients treated by all SARCs by gender (2017-2022)



Source: RoLAC

Steady rise in SGBV prosecutions

Whilst the number of SGBV cases being prosecuted and convicted remains low compared to reported cases, data from SARCs shows a steady rise in prosecutions and convictions.

Table 1: SARC data showing prosecutions

Action	Jan-Mar 2021	Apr-Jun 2021	Jul-Sep 2021	Oct-Dec 2021	Jan-Mar 2022	Apr-Jun 2022	Jul-Sep 2022	Oct-Nov 2022	Total
Arrests	365	356	396	387	400	345	466	353	3068
Charged to Court	92	40	40	69	74	77	105	107	604
Convictions	6	1	5	0	8	8	6	2	36

Source: RoLAC

SGBV courts designated and functioning

RoLAC advocacy to address the disproportionately low number of SGBV criminal convictions resulted in the designation of 10 High Courts and one Family Magistrate Court to adjudicate SGBV cases in three states (Adamawa, Edo and Anambra) and the FCT. Adjudication guidelines for the trial of SGBV cases have been adopted and are being applied. These SGBV courts are contributing to the rise in the convictions.

Enhanced SGBV prevention measures

RoLAC partnered with NAPTIP to establish a national sexual offender register of reported, arraigned, or convicted cases of sexual violation as defined by the VAPP Act. The Register is a public safety tool for deterring repeat and would-be offenders through naming and shaming (of convicts) and enables justice service providers to report and track progress of cases across states. The partnership led to the

establishment of registers in 3 states and replication in 6 others, all linked to the national register. A total of 169 criminal convictions are currently reported on the register across 9 states and the FCT.

Table 2: Cases reported in the national sexual offender database

	Reported cases	Under investigation	Prosecution	Convicted
FCT / Reported to NAPTIP	308	151	139	16
Adamawa	29	5	22	2
Kano	53	0	3	44
Edo	287	1	225	39
Ekiti	93	93	67	26
Delta	79	0	72	7
Kwara	22	0	18	4
Akwa-Ibom	50	0	14	28
Yobe	2	2	0	0
Kaduna	3	0	0	3
Totals	926	252	488	169

Source: RoLAC



DATA/STATISTICS AT A GLANCE

- SARCs supported over **31,000 survivors of SGBV** between July 2017 and November 2022.
- The number of forensic medical reports issued by SARCs increased by **300 percent** between 2017 and 2022
- Male clients assisted by SARCs rose from **179 in 2017 to 1,306** in 2022 – a 630 percent increase
- In 2022, **10 High Courts and one Family Magistrate Court** were designated to adjudicate SGBV cases in Adamawa, Edo and Anambra and the FCT



LESSONS

RoLAC recorded greater impact where it utilised mentors or embedded technical experts within SGBV response agencies

This approach provides space for SGBV response agencies to learn, make mistakes and re-learn over time under the guidance of experts; leading to better behaviours consistently being practiced.

Lobbying and campaigning is a powerful combination that is effective for influencing decision makers.

A sustained lobbying and campaigning approach is a cost-effective advocacy tool for getting the attention of government and building the strategic partnerships that are critical for achieving the desired change.

Advocates for a more effective SGBV response are better able to present issues in a compelling way and get the attention of decision makers when they are armed with reliable data.

Credible evidence about the incidences of SGBV and the progress of cases through the justice system is essential. This type of data painted the compelling picture that led to the designation of SGBV courts in RoLAC focal states.

Utilising champions and influencers across government and civil society as well as the voice of the media can exponentially increase the amount of coverage and attention on relevant issues

Government partnership with civil society organisations or with the private sector can help address

service gaps during times when government is unable to fund the delivery of such services. In Anambra state, the government partnered with privately run shelters and homes to address the inadequacy of government shelters for survivors.



**6th Network
Conference of SARCs 2020**

“Sexual and Gender-Based Violence is a growing pandemic and the problem has always been impunity and lack of accountability. This is why this year's conference theme is Reporting, Response & Accountability”

Prof Joy Ngozi Ezeilo, OON
Chairperson of the Network of Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) in Nigeria

  @HerStoryOSNG
#HerStoryOurStoryNG 

COMMENTS FROM BENEFICIARIES

**Gbolahan Adeniran,
Criminal Justice Reform
Expert**

“

When gender-based violence cases get to court, we need prosecutors who not only understand victims and how to protect them, but also prosecutors who are able to fast-track cases because we've seen that delay compromises cases.

**Usman Abdullahi, Member
CCPC, Wukara Community,
Gwagwalada Area Council,
FCT**

“

It takes a community to protect a child. This is why representatives of the Community Child Protection Committees were selected from all ethnic groups in the community to ensure that vital information to protect children from sexual abuse reaches everyone. ”

**Father of 8-year old
survivor who received
assistance from the Salama
SARC, Kakuri, Kaduna**

“

The first day that we came to the Centre, the way they talked to us, I was much relieved. Since the first time he got the counselling, there is a good change, and he has started going back to school. If not because of the Salama Centre, I didn't think I would be able to get justice, but they are helping me, and I have some hope.

”

**Dr Fatima Waziri-Azi,
Director General, National
Agency for the Prohibition
of Trafficking in Persons**

“

The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons will continue to be proactive about providing quick responses and accessible services for victims of sexual and gender-based violence. ”



PERSONAL STORY OF CHANGE



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“

When a survivor presents himself or herself to the SARC, they come in here very, very traumatized. Our trauma counsellor talks with them until they are relaxed and until they are willing to be assessed by the medical team. Our job is to be there for them and help them stabilise. ”

Centre Manager, Sexual Assault Referral Centre

Since she turned 12, Titi had been abused by her cousin Bidemi. For 4 years, Titi let her cousin do what he wanted with her, always afraid to say no even when it hurt and always afraid to tell her mother because Bidemi had told her that “no one would understand their love and they would get in trouble”. Eventually, hitting rock bottom and seeking counselling, she started to recognise that her relationship with Bidemi had been one of grooming, mental and emotional manipulation, and rape.

Today, Titi manages one of the Sexual Assault Referral Centres established by RoLAC. Her own personal journey to heal from the sexual assault she experienced as a child, inspires her every day to support girls and women through their own process of healing from sexual violence.

Titi received training in trauma counselling from RoLAC when she was seconded to the SARC by her state Ministry of Women Affairs. This training gave her the necessary knowledge and skills she has employed in providing trauma counselling to more than 80 children since 2018. Because of her role within the SARC, Titi has also developed her stakeholder management skills and has taken on the role of Secretary to the SARC Steering Committee established by RoLAC. As Centre Manager, Titi’s day-to-day role involves engaging directly with the State Police Command, Ministry of Justice, and the Judiciary to follow up SARC cases from investigation to prosecution stage. She also works with state agencies and CSOs to ensure that survivors receive all of the support services they need. Titi has appeared in

court to provide testimony that helped secure rape convictions.

“

Sometimes when bad things happen to you, you may not know why, but you can use it for good. I couldn’t have imagined that with what happened to me, I would end up being an advocate for children to get the justice I didn’t get.

Centre Manager, Sexual Assault Referral Centre ”

The Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption (RoLAC) Programme is working to enhance good governance by strengthening the rule of law and curbing corruption. Our main objective is to back the government's justice and anti-corruption agenda by supporting the adoption and implementation of relevant legislation, policies and strategies in the sector. The six-year programme (2017–23) is funded by the European Union and implemented by the British Council.

Find out more
Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption
(RoLAC) Programme
RoLAC@ng.britishcouncil.org
www.justice-security.ng

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