



January 2023

SURVIVORS' **WATCH**

PRIORITISING WELFARE
AND CUSTODY



WOMEN AID COLLECTIVE
TamarSARC

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ABOUT WACOL

WACOL is an independent, non-political, non-governmental and non-profit organization and registered in 2000 as a company limited by guarantee, i.e. as a charitable organization (RC: 388132) with the Corporate Affairs of Commission (CAC), Nigeria. WACOL's vision is democratic society free from violence and abuse, where human rights of all, in particular women and young people, are recognized in law and practice.

Its mission is to assist in the education, social, economic and political development of women and young people through a wide range of services: training, research, advocacy, shelter, free legal and financial aid, intra-familial/community conflict resolution, and information and library services.

WACOL works throughout Nigeria and beyond. WACOL has established itself as a credible and committed organization whose work is well recognized beyond the shores of Nigeria. It has an observer status with the African Union, African Commission on Human Rights (since 2001) and it also has an NGO Special Consultative status with the United Nations (approved in 2010 by ECOSOC). WACOL is a formidable organization that can boast of institutional capacity for sustainable work in the field of advancing human rights, gender equality, democracy and good governance.

WACOL in general works in four thematic areas, which are gender/human rights, peace advocacy/conflict resolution, democracy/good governance and reproductive health rights. It has also done some work in the area of STEM and climate change.

Editor's Note

The survivors' watch is a platform created by WACOL to promote a safe space for victims and survivors of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) to share their stories without any bias, conflict, intimidation, fear or threat. The survivors' watch seeks to capture the delicate and unique stories of survivors and victims, while empowering them with the strength of anonymity to own their truth and vocalise their lived experiences.

We understand the importance of supporting survivors and victims to tell their story at their own time, giving them the opportunity to choose what aspect of their story they wish to share. The survivors watch provides the community and safe space for survivors and victims to not only express themselves but also trust that they will be respected while inspiring others to own their story and speak their truth.

This newsletter provides useful information about the issues survivors and victims of abuse experience in the society including emerging areas and trends. The survivors' watch further spotlights anti-SGBV tips and information. Discourse in the survivors' watch negates harmful bias/stereotypes, and promotes healthy practices to enable a safe environment for women and girls



Prof Joy Ngozi Ezeilo (SAN, OON)
Executive Director of WACOL

THE CRIME OF ABANDONMENT

BY IBANGAH GOODNESS ESEME ESQ.

Daily, WACOL receives at least 3 reports of abandonment and non-provision of welfare by spouses and partners. The growing cases of abandonment is sadly alarming.

Some of the reasons that have been cited for this type of abuse includes but not limited to poverty, sickness, family conflicts and culture. It is even more concerning that people fail to recognize this act as a form of abuse capable of impeding the growth and development of the victims/survivors.

Abandonment transcends any justification, its effects be it physical, emotional or behavioural can be very traumatising and difficult for the victim/survivor to live with. In fact, research has shown the linkage between abandonment and involvement in juvenile crime, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem and domestic violence. Children who have been abandoned grow up self-blaming, feeling unwanted and unloved. They end up struggling with building emotional connections/attachments with others. They become detached, unlovable and may even start depending on substances to make themselves feel better.

Whether abandonment is unintended, it is inhu-



mane and negatively influences the development of the victim/survivor, endangering the society.

It is unfair for caregivers to use abandonment or even threat of abandonment as a way of communicating, instilling discipline or obtaining compliance from their dependents. It is an abusive behavior that leaves trauma imprints on the mind and body of the victim/survivors.


The Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act 2015 provides in Section 16 that

(1) A person who abandons a spouse, children or other dependents without any means of sustenance, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to mandatory payment of monthly upkeep allowance, which shall be determined by the Court based on such a person's income and the needs of the person (s) so abandoned, in addition to an imprisonment term not exceeding 1 year or a fine not exceeding N500,000.00.


The act further makes it an offence for a person to incite, aid, abet, receive or counsel another person to commit the act of violence provided for in subsection (1). The punishment for such person is conviction to a term of imprisonment not exceeding 6 months or a fine not exceeding N200,000.00 or to both such imprisonment and fine.

Despite the innovation of this Act and its subsequent domestication by 34 of the 36 states in Nigeria, implementation remains a widespread

challenge. It is important for stakeholders to focus on research and deliberate actions that seeks to identify the root causes of this thriving abusive pattern. Awareness must be created on the impact of abandonment on victims and survivors. Importantly, accountability stake of stakeholders must be raised with regards to the implementation of the relevant provisions of the law that prohibits this crime.

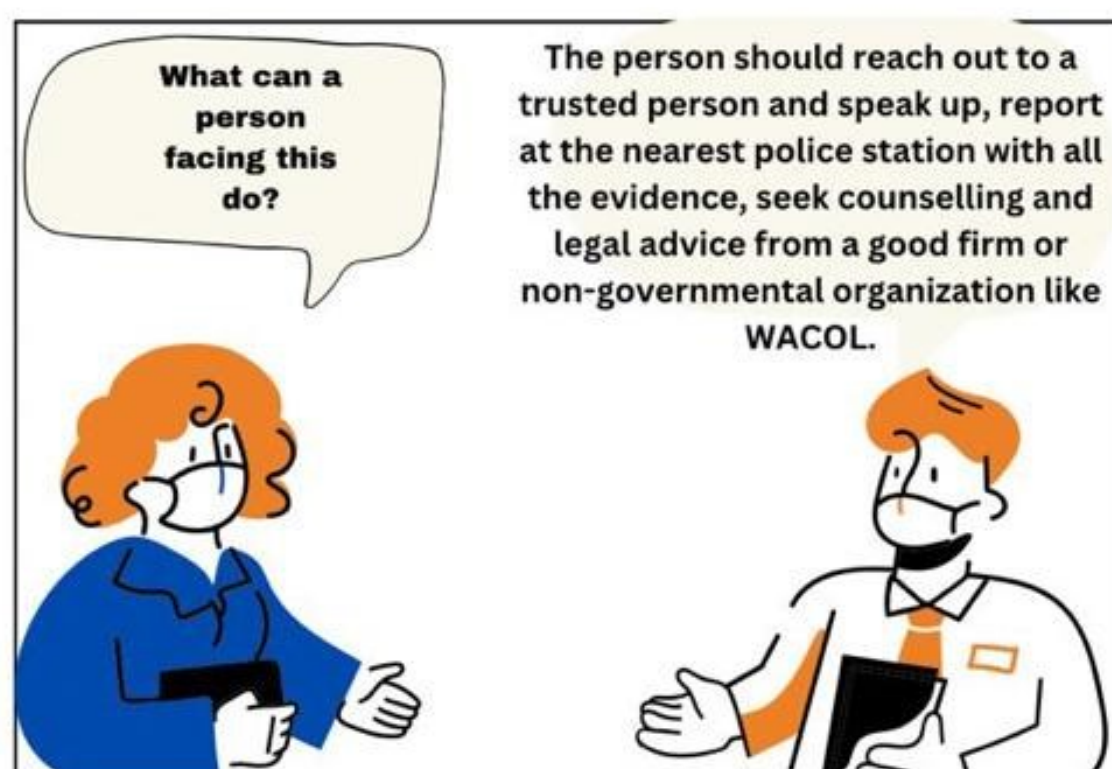
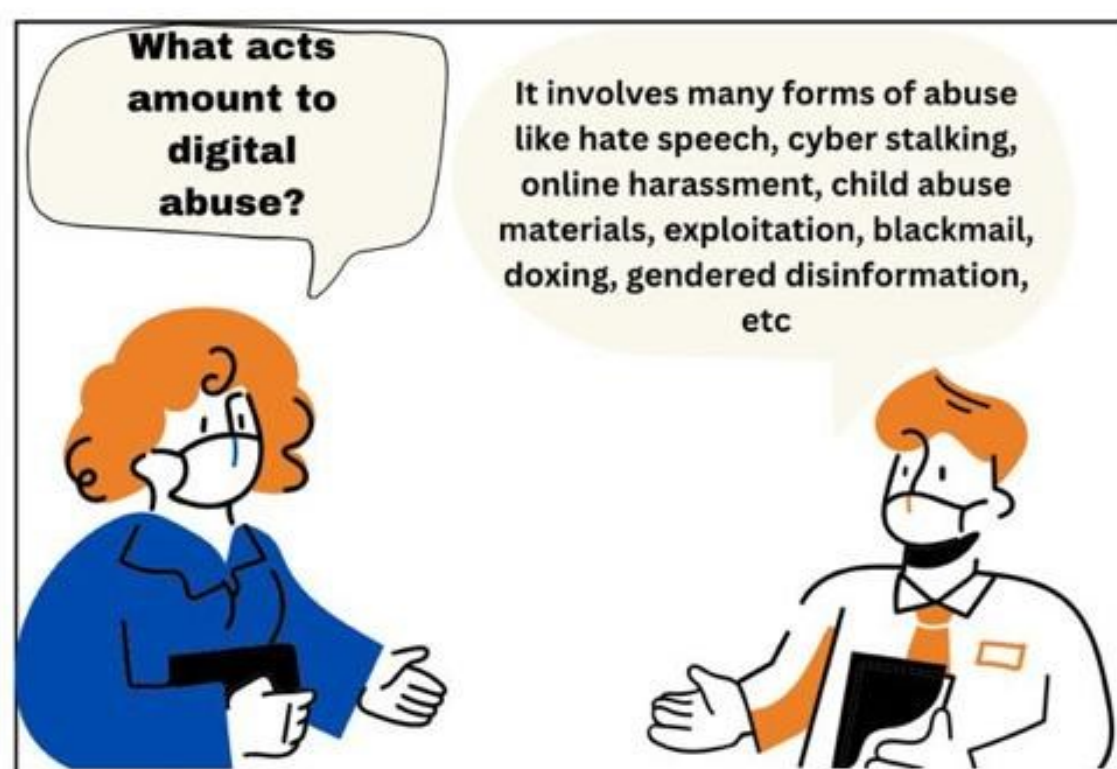
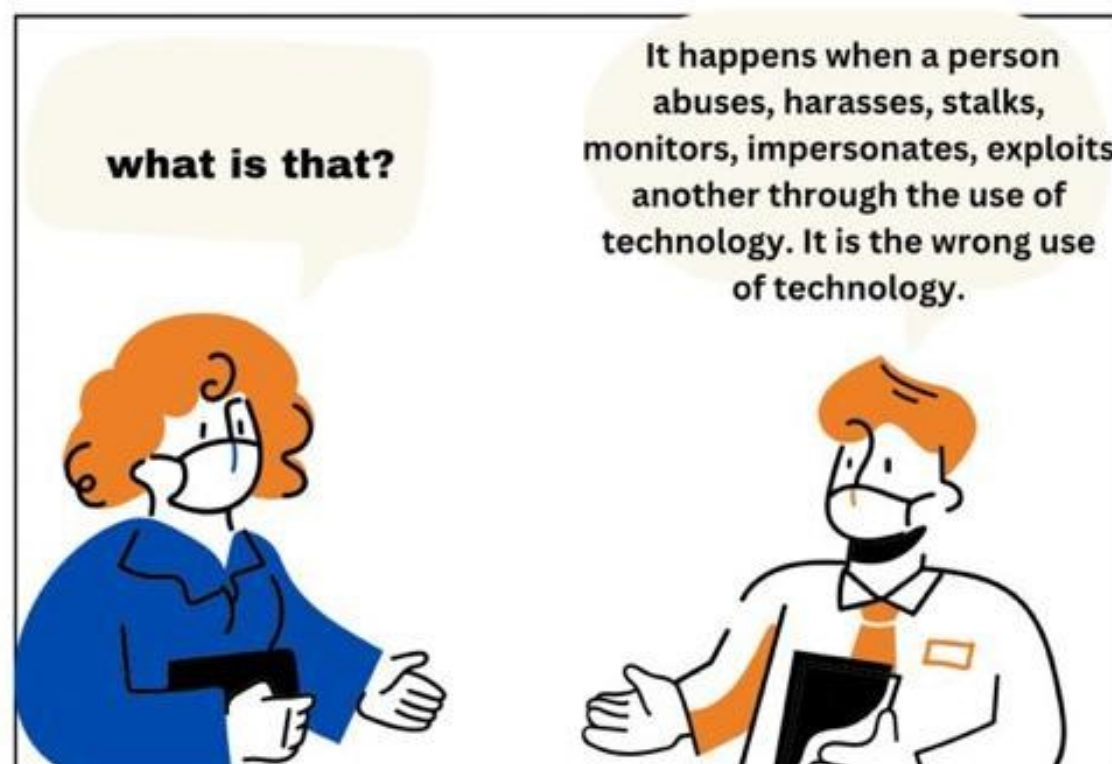


**A person who
abandons a spouse,
children or other de-
pendents without
any means of suste-
nance, commits an
offence**

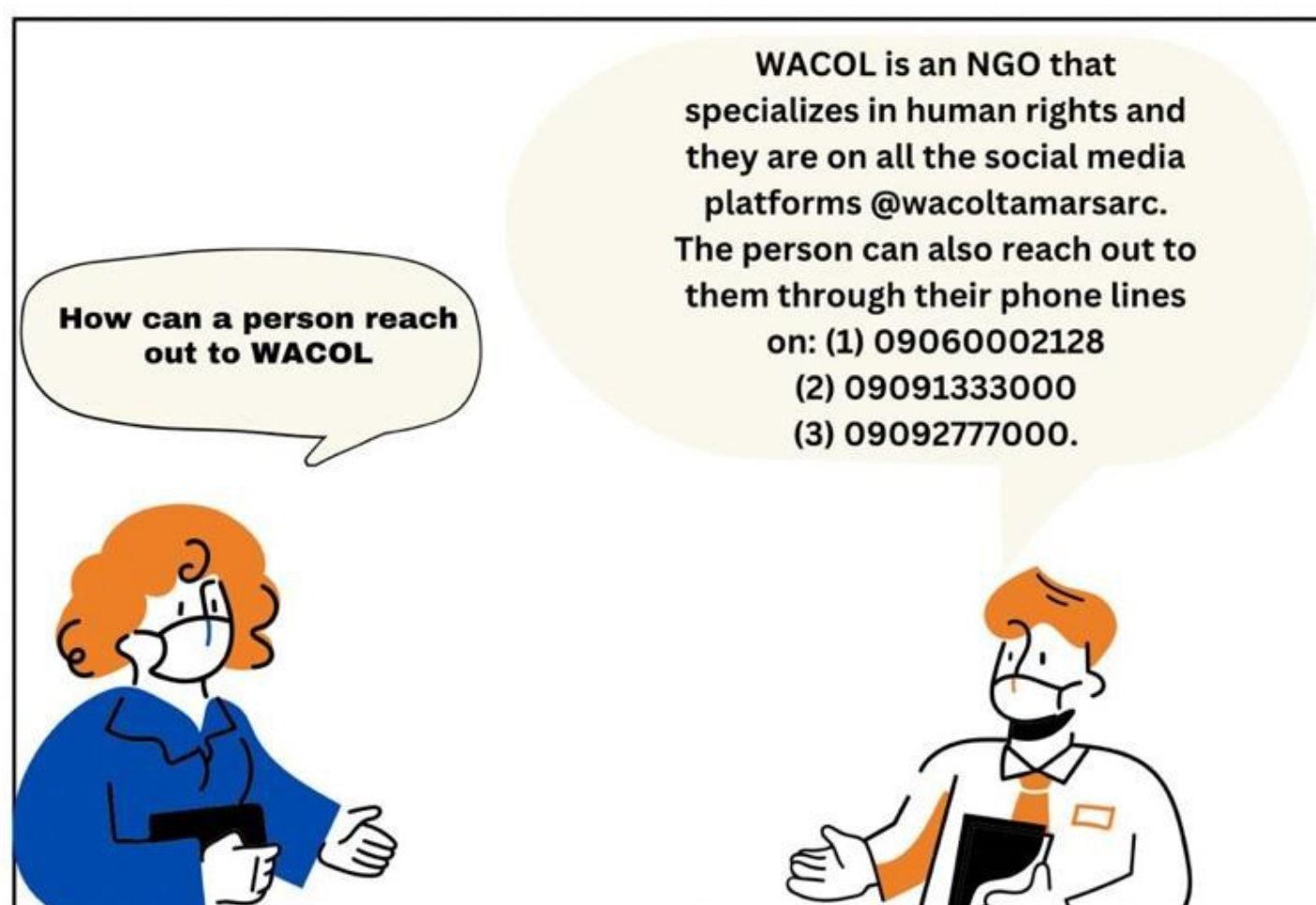




EMERGING SGBV: DIGITAL ABUSE/CYBER BULLYING



EMERGING SGBV: DIGITAL ABUSE/CYBER BULLYING



SUCCESS STORIES

*NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO PROTECT SURVIVORS

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND LACK OF WELFARE

Due to her husband's mistreatment of her and their children, Mrs. Iheukwumere came to WACOL in a fit of hysteria. She complained that she had experienced domestic abuse coupled with lack of provision of welfare by

her husband. WACOL invited husband to the office in an effort to give him a chance at fair hearing but this invitation was not honored. This compelled WACOL legal team to write to Mr Iheukwumere's office demanding for justice for her. This time around, WACOL's effort was successful as the office of Mr Iheukwumere swung into action to call him to order. He later obliged the demands of his wife through WACOL and took responsibility with a promise to never abuse her again.

Since WACOL's assistance, Mrs. Iheukwumere and her kids have received the sum of N30,000 from Mr Iheukwumere as monthly upkeep. She also benefited from WACOL counseling services. She is now focused on raising her children and also getting skill training to empower her to support herself and children to have a better life.



HARDSHIP IMPOSED BY DEAD HUSBAND'S BROTHERS

As a final resort, Mrs. Chioma, a widow, came to WACOL seeking help for her family. Her incapacities son, whose life was drastically altered by an accident, was present with her. He is unable to speak or walk. She pleaded for help from WACOL, expressing her lack of will to continue living in such pain and oppression. Her only request was to live a stress-free life in a better environment free from abuse from her late husband's brother and family.

WACOL wrote a letter and promised to take to the Igwe of Ogidi action. WACOL assisted Mrs. Chioma with State after observing the sum of 20,000



Mrs. Chioma's predicament and helplessness. In response to the intervention of the WACOL's petition, Igwe A.U. Onyido expressed his displeasure thousand Naira and continued to monitor the intervention of the Igwe to ensure that justice is done.



THE CASE OF MRS. OKOYE VERSUS MR. OKOYE



In January 2023, Mrs Charity reported to WACOL that her husband, Mr Okoye refused to provide welfare for the family and was also abusing her. She was educated by the legal team on her rights to pursue the abuse. She however, asked WACOL to only invite her husband and caution him to stop the abuse and also endeavour to provide welfare.

WACOL obliged her request and sent out an invitation letter to Mr Okoye, which he honoured and attended the join session with Mrs Charity. He was cooperative and remorseful at the session. Parties later signed a memorandum of understanding to live peacefully and perform their responsibilities. Few weeks after, Mrs. Charity reported to the WACOL that her home was at peace once more and she had moved back in with her husband. Thanks to WACOL, she no longer endures any form of abuse from her husband.

CASE BREAKDOWN

for January 2023

TYPE OF CASES



Gender Disaggregated data



Female complainants total: 65



Male complainants total: 11



Overall total: 76 cases.

Age range

18-24: 7 cases

25-34: 31 cases

35-44: 23 cases

45-59: 6 cases

60 and above: 4 cases

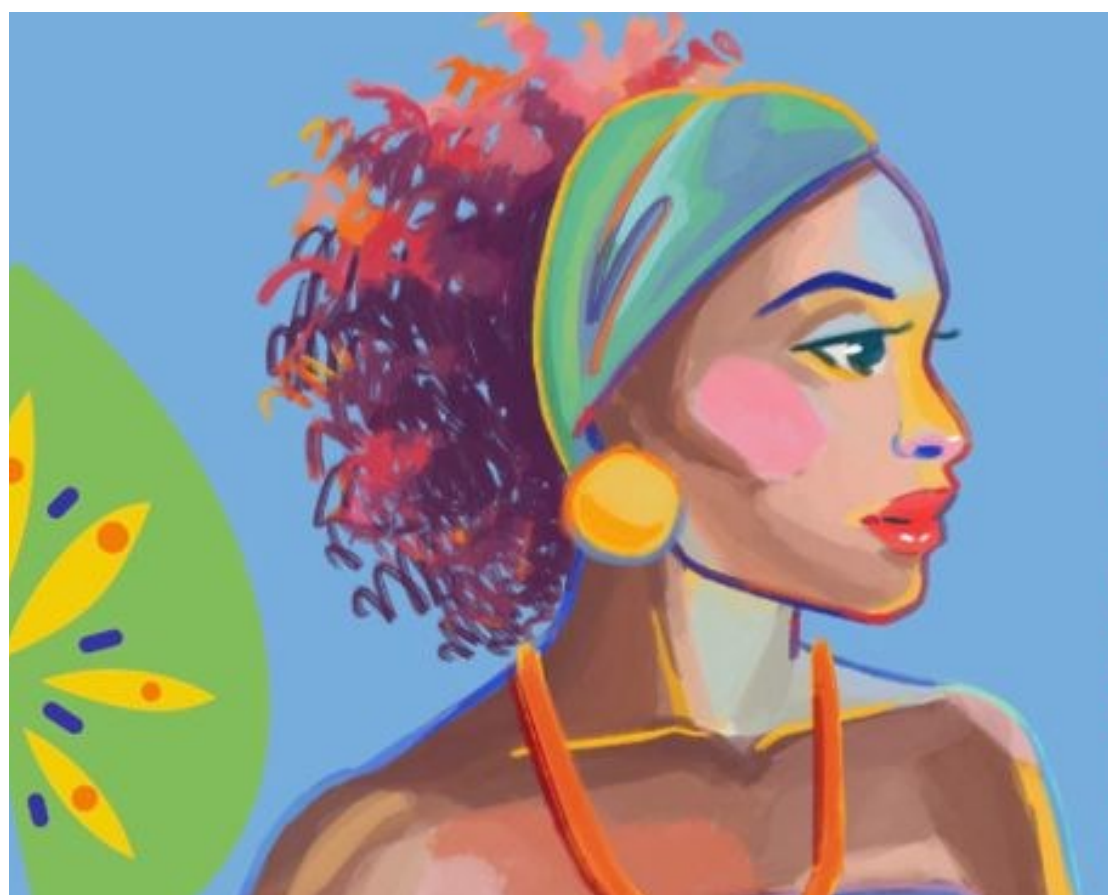
Unknown age: 5 cases

A CALL FOR INTERVENTION



TRIGGER WARNING

K (real name withheld) was born in a remote village in South East, Nigeria. She was 11 years old when she was sent to live with a woman as a “maid” due to the financial position of her parents, who struggled to take care of her 7 siblings. It didn’t take long for her “madam” and madam’s sons to begin beating and starving her on the slightest provocation.



According to K, after her first menstrua-

tion, she told her “madam”, who asked her to use tissue with the excuse that she is incapable of using a sanitary pad. K further told WACOL that she slept in the living room, takes her baths and defecates outside, amid other male staff in the house.

She was forced to stay awake till 11:00pm before retiring to bed and waking up by 4:00am to begin house chores. Her suffering became even worse when one of the sons of her madam and the driver started abusing her sexually. On a fateful day, she found the courage to report to her madam who disbelieved her and never took her complaint seriously. That was when she decided to live in silence. It didn’t help that she was not allowed to communicate with her mother when she occasionally visits except in the presence of her madam.

“ She didn’t know when she got pregnant as she didn’t have knowledge of basic reproductive education. ”

K was further abused by the other son of her madam and also the gate-man. She decided to trust the security aide attached to her “oga” to protect her from her abusers but instead, he took advantage of her and also repeatedly raped her. Every time he raped her, he forced her to swallow a contraceptive pill.

K lived in silence for more than 5 years as she was abused by these 5 men, who would rape her vaginally and orally anytime they wanted especially when she went to serve them their food on the instruction of her madam.

She didn’t know when she got pregnant as she didn’t have knowledge of basic reproductive education. It was her madam who suspected and

forced her to take a pregnancy test at home. Upon confirmation, her madam called K’s mother to take her back.

K was sent packing without any support for herself and the unborn baby. In December 2022, K was brought by her parents to WACOL/Tamar SARC for assistance. WACOL has since been providing K (who is now 6 months pregnant) with the needed medical and psycho-social assistance in a private facility. While the legal team is working endlessly to ensure that the perpetrators of this hideous act are brought to book.

K needs to get the best medical care, quality education, and skill to empower her for a sustainable livelihood post-delivery.

At the age of 16 years old, K was still in primary 5 before she had to stop school as a result of her situation. She sees Art as an expression and this was her first attempt using digital illustration.

We believe K deserves to live a better life, which is why we are calling on well-meaning individuals to join us to secure a great future for her whilst we continue to

pursue accountability and redress for the sexual, physical, and emotional abuse and exploitation she

DONATION DETAILS

Account Name: Women Aid Collective

Account Number: 2018464690

Bank: First Bank

**Description: Support for Miss K
#BreakTheSilence #EndSGBV**

CONTRIBUTORS

Prof. Joy Ngozi Ezeilo (SAN, OON) is the founding director of Women's Aid Collective (WACOL), she is the Emeritus Dean Faculty of Law, University of Nigeria and Former United Nations Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons.

Nkechi Igwe is the Head of Programme and Administration at WACOL, a gender consultant and the pioneer Centre Manager Tamar Sexual Assault Referral Centre (Tamar SARC).

Ibangah Esemé Goodness Esq. is a Communicator, Women Human Rights Defender and Digital Enthusiast. She is the program manager of WACOL GirlsWill Initiative.

Efemena Obialunamma Omekedo is a digital artist and writer passionate about creating stories that explore identities, cultures, and experiences. She is an intern at WACOL and GirlsWill.

Ugochukwu Ogoke is a graphics designer and web developer working at WACOL.

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ADVERTISEMENT & UPCOMING EVENTS

To Report any threat or human rights violation call our hot-lines: (1) +2349060002128; (2) 09091333000; (3) 09092777000.



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