



WOMEN AID COLLECTIVE
Tamar SARC



SURVIVORS' WATCH
DEROMANTICISING EMOTIONAL
AND PHYSICAL ABUSE

February 2023




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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 Statement

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 to flourish.



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

Navigating Trauma

BY EFEMENA OBIALUNAMMA OMEKEDO

Has trauma affected your life or the life of someone close to you, and you feel powerless to stop it? Does the crushing weight of this burden affect your emotional and physical wellbeing every day? Anyone can experience trauma, which can take many different forms and manifest in degrees of severity. Trauma can result from a single terrible event, such as seeing a car accident or losing a loved one, or it can develop over time after being exposed to difficulties like child abuse, sexual abuse or physical abuse. Traumas can even stem from difficult-to-explain events. These events can come from experiencing sexual harassment, being emotionally abused and so many more. Trauma can be associated as an insidiously negative experience that can result from the loss of normality centered around negativity or the feeling of that.

Wondering what trauma feels like? Or not sure if you are experiencing trauma? It is important to note that the emotions associated with trauma varies from person to person. Some persons might expe-



rience these emotions more greatly than others. Trauma can cause both physical and psychological symptoms, such as mood swings, irritability, difficulties in relationships and communication, headaches, and nausea. Traumatic stress can be activated in specific, extreme situations, and immediate symptoms like sweaty hands, a racing heart, and dizziness can take over. However how greatly or light survivors experience trauma, all emotions and experiences are valid and should be treated with regard and care.

You are not helpless if you are having trouble dealing with your personal trauma; there are things you may try that might make the process easier for you. Keep in mind that everyone's journey is unique, so you might discover that some of these coping mechanisms are more effective for you than others. There is no "proper" or "wrong" method to process trauma, and you shouldn't put any pressure on yourself to recover on someone else's schedule or in a manner that has previously been successful. Respect your special experience. You must remember that time is a lost concept when dealing

with your trauma. Hence, it is okay to go on your recovery journey slowly.

There is no "proper" or "wrong" method to process trauma, and you shouldn't put any pressure on yourself to recover on someone else's schedule

HERE ARE SOME TIPS ON HOW TO NAVIGATE TRAUMA

- You must remember to be kind to yourself
- Speak to a friend or a trusted person. If affordable, speak to a licensed therapist
- Remember that “healing” is different for everyone. For some people, healing is only the lessening of symptoms and not the erasure of the trauma. This understanding will help you to remember your own journey is uniquely yours.
- Remember to avoid re-exposure of events that trigger your traumatic experiences.
- It is okay to feel. Feeling is important!
- Sometimes, healing can be slow and you might get triggered and re-traumatized.
- It is okay to crave and want distraction. Have fun with friends, try new things, splurge on new hobbies.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE

A customer has been asking you how much you sell soap and you didn't answer her, why?

customer? I am so sad. My husband does not beat me but he abuses me and calls me all sorts of names in front of the children. Can you believe he insulted my family and called me an imbecile?

You are experiencing emotional abuse

What is that?



EMOTIONAL ABUSE

It can also be called verbal or psychological abuse and it affects the overall wellbeing.

can you please explain more?

It can take place in form of humiliation, criticism, control, shame, denial, emotional neglect and accusation. It has dire consequences because there are no physical scars to be seen.

What can I do? I need help.



EMOTIONAL ABUSE

You need to seek good legal and psychological advice so I will refer you to WACOL.

How can I reach out to WACOL?

WACOL is an NGO that specializes in human rights and they are on all the social media platforms @wacoltamarsarc. The person can also reach out to them through their phone lines on: (1)09060002128; (2) 09091333000; (3) 09092777000

This has been helpful. Thank you.



Illustrations of Abuse

SUCCESS STORIES

*NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO PROTECT SURVIVORS

SPOUSAL BATTERY RESULTING IN MISCARRIAGE

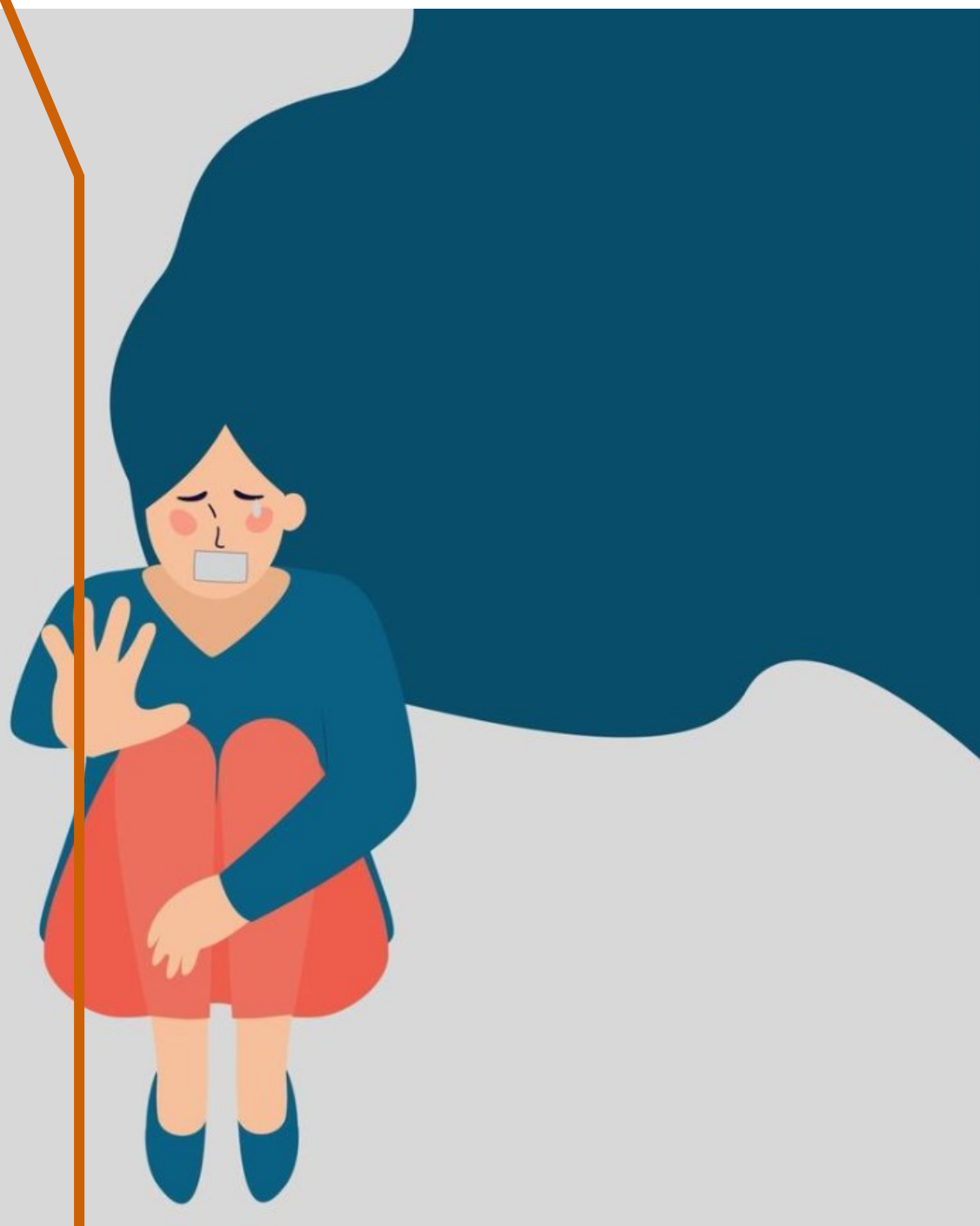
Beatrice is a middle aged, mother of six and a petty trader who lives in Enugu. She reported to WACOL that her husband physically assaulted her after they had an argument

to her bleeding and subsequently losing a 3 months pregnancy.

After two weeks of trying to manage the miscarriage at home and upon failure of her husband to take responsibility for her medical expenses she sought help from friends and was referred to WACOL.

The medical officer at WACOL Tamar SARC after examining her, asked that she is sent to a hospital for comprehensive care. At the hospital she was immediately transfused with blood. Her test results later showed that there was remnants tissue in her womb that needed to be evacuated. WACOL is currently taking care of her medical bills, WACOL legal team has also sent a

over his lack of provision for welfare. This beating led written petition to the nearest police station to investigate



RECOVERY OF CHILDREN FORCEFULLY TAKEN FROM WIDOW



Happiness is a widow and mother of 4 children. Upon the painful demise of her husband, her in-laws accused her of murdering her husband and proceeded to forcefully take away her children, sharing them among themselves as helps and leaving her in misery.

She came to WACOL for intervention, the legal team quickly sent out letters of invitation to relatives with custody of those children.

On receiving the letters, all 4 relatives in custody of the children quickly returned the children to Happiness. She is now joyfully reunited with her children and is thriving in a better space.

FREEDOM FROM EMOTIONAL ABUSE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



MaryAnn complained that she was suffering emotionally from her husband, who uses every opportunity to talk down on her and abuse her privately and publicly. She noted that this was greatly affecting her productivity and self-esteem. She also told WACOL that he denies her sex when she wants but prefers to force himself on her whenever he desires even when she pleads with him that she is sick.

On the request of MaryAnn a joint session was held between both parties. They were

heard and advised to introspect on their lives. WACOL counsellors advised them about the long-term effect of such traumatizing environment on themselves and the children.

Further expressing concern on the lingering domestic violence that needs to be stopped. They both agreed and asked for time to think about their relationship and decide on what is best for them and their children.

WACOL CLIENT SECURES WELFARE FROM HUSBAND

Ifeoma told WACOL that her husband consistently shielded away from his responsibilities as a husband and father. She wanted him to start providing welfare and also being present in the family rather than spend more time and resources outside.

At a mediation session, the husband charged that the wife was always making ridiculous demands and due to the current economy, he could not meet up. Following numerous mediation sessions

and encouragement by WACOL for parties to respect the struggles of each other, the couple signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) stipulating that the husband will provide a monthly allowance of N40,000 for the family, asides rent, school fees and hospital bills. As a show of his commitment to the agreement, he sent Ifeoma the monthly stipend for the month of February in the presence of WACOL counsellors.

YOUNG WIDOW REUNITED WITH HER DAUGHTER

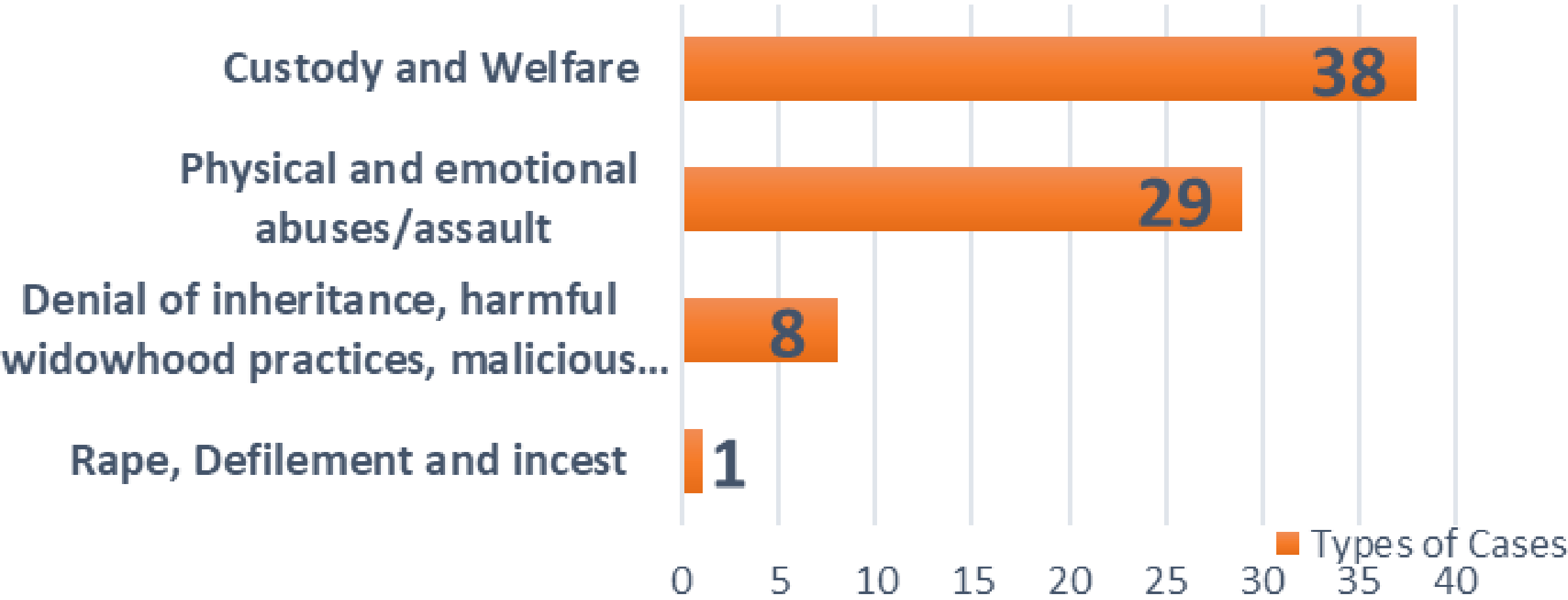


Amaka filed a complaint at WACOL that her spouse had passed away and her husband's aunt had forcefully carried her daughter away. Even after she demanded that she be given custody to her daughter. WACOL sent a letter of invitation to the aunt for a joint session. After the session, the aunt expressed her concern about Amaka having resources to take care or provide a stable environment for the girls well-being. In response Amaka provided evidence of her meaningful employment and plans to take care of her daughter. Both parties finally reached a consensus and Amaka's daughter was returned to her. She was urged to concentrate on ensuring that her daughters wellbeing remains a priority.

CASE BREAKDOWN

for February 2023

TYPES OF CASES



Gender Disaggregated data



Female complainants total: 54



Male complainants total: 5



Overall total: 59 cases.

Age range

18-24: 5 cases

25-34: 30 cases

35-44: 19 cases

45-59: 4 cases

60 and above: 0 cases

Unknown age: 1 case

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).

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

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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.



WACOL Women House (Ulo Umunwanyi)
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