



# SURVIVOR'S WATCH

**JUNE 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**

OBINNA BANKS



# THE CRIME OF ABANDONMENT: EXAMINING THE WEAPONISATION OF WELFARE SUPPORT IN NIGERIA

By **Goodness Esemé Ibangah**

According to a statement by Women's Aid Collective (WACOL), daily the legal aid unit 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 recognise this act as a form of abuse capable of impeding the growth and development of the victims/survivors.

Abandonment transcends any justification, it's effects be it physical, emotional or behavioural can be very traumatising and difficult for the victim/survivor to live with. Infact, 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 inhumane and negatively influences the development of the victim/survivor, endangering the society.

It is unfair for caregivers to weaponise welfare or even threat of abandonment as a way of communicating, instilling discipline or obtaining compliance from their dependents. It is an abusive behaviour that leaves devastating 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 dependants 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 it's subsequent domestication by 34 of the 36 states in Nigeria, implementation remains a widespread challenge.

Hence, it is important for stakeholders to invest in research and collaborative interventions that seeks to identify the root causes of this thriving abusive pattern.

Awareness must be raised on the impact of abandonment on victims and survivors. Finally, state and non- state actors must be held accountable with regards to the implementation of the relevant provisions of the VAPP law that prohibits this crime.

# SUCCESS STORIES

\*NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO PROTECT SURVIVORS

**FREEDOM FROM STARVATION, VERBAL AND SEVERE PHYSICAL ABUSE**

**M**unachi complained of being regularly battered by her husband, as a result of which she lost a twins pregnancy at two months, and was on pain relief every other day. After her report, she

community traditional ruler, at Nnachi in UDI Enugu, to compel her husband to honour our invitation, which he did.

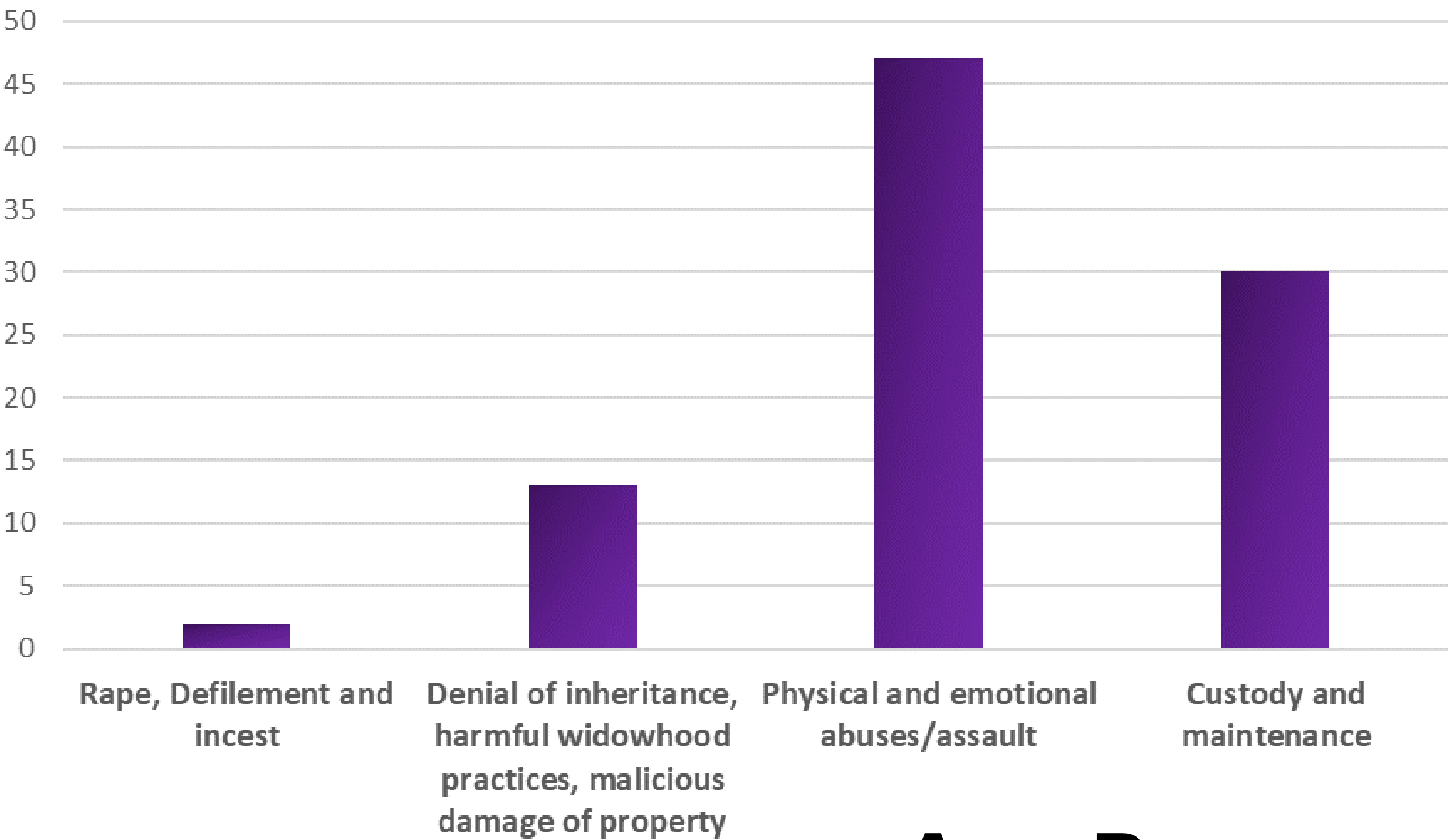
During the joint session between the parties, the victim again narrated episodes starvation, verbal abuse, and severe physical abuse in the hands the culprit. The culprit in response based his argument on victims regular outburst and physical attacks on him, grabbing his clothes, which usually provokes him to batter her. Though, the victim said it is usually when he wouldn't provide food money that she would stand in his way, blocking him from leaving the house. We mediated extensively and a truce was reached, culprit was seriously warned against repeat of spousal battery and urged to draw an undertaking to the effect, and which he did.

The culprit agreed to sign the undertaking to abate repeat spousal battery, provide food in the house and pay the children's school fees, though the victim agreed to contribute in this. Transformation is noticeable especially in the victim /survivor, who has broke the silence on domestic violence and spousal battery.

was clerked and a letter of invitation extended to the her husband who declined at first. It therefore took the intervention of the com-

# CASE BREAKDOWN

for April 2023



## Gender Disaggregated data



Female complainants total: 81



Male complainants total: 11



Overall total: 92 cases.

## Age Range

Under 18: 1

18-24: 10

25-34: 30

35-44: 39

45-59: 11

60 and above: 4

Unknown: 2





## 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 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.

**Ugochukwu Ogoke** is a graphics designer, web developer and Program associate at WACOL.

**Martha Akhere Aikhomun Esq** is a lawyer and an Associate, Chartered Mediators and Conciliators (AICMC). She's a Legal Officer (NYSC) at the Legal Unit of WACOL who is passionate about human rights.



# ADVERTISEMENT & UPCOMING EVENTS

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



**WACOL Women House (Ulo Umunwanyi)**  
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