



SURVIVOR'S WATCH

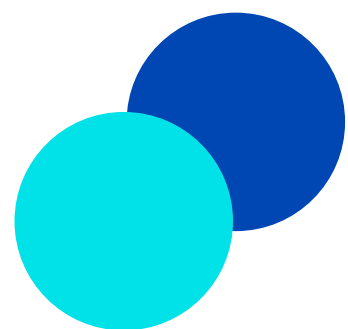
APRIL 2024



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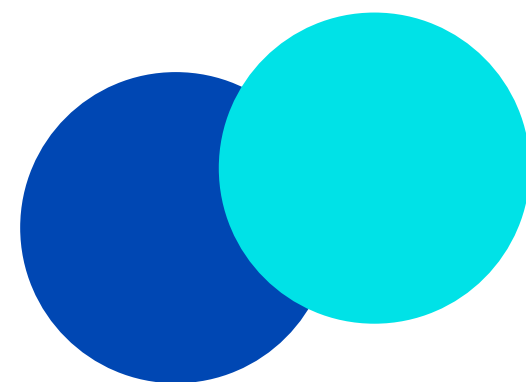
About WACOL

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

EMOTIONAL ABUSE IN MARRIAGES: A SILENT EPIDEMIC IN NIGERIA.

By Ebube Onah

Marriages are meant to be a sanctuary of love, trust, and mutual respect. However, beneath the facade of many Nigerian marriages lies a hidden but pervasive issue: emotional abuse. Defined as the systematic use of behaviors to control, intimidate, and degrade a partner's emotional well-being, emotional abuse often goes unnoticed and unaddressed in Nigerian society.

Emotional abuse takes various forms, all of which are detrimental to the victim's mental health and overall well-being. It can manifest through constant criticism, belittling remarks, manipulation, isolation from friends and family, and the use of guilt or shame to control behaviors. Unlike physical abuse, emotional abuse leaves no visible scars, making it easier to deny or overlook.

In Nigeria, where traditional gender roles are deeply entrenched, emotional abuse can be exacerbated. Women, especially, are often expected to endure mistreatment in silence, under the guise of upholding family unity or respecting



their husbands. This cultural tolerance of emotional abuse perpetuates a cycle of suffering and silence, where victims feel trapped and unable to seek help.

The consequences of emotional abuse are profound and long-lasting. Victims may suffer from anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and a distorted sense of reality. Over time, they may withdraw from social interactions, lose their sense of identity, and become emotionally dependent on their abusers. In extreme cases, emotional abuse can escalate to physical violence, further endangering the victim's safety.

One of the primary challenges in addressing emotional abuse in Nigerian marriages is the lack of awareness and education. Many victims and even bystanders may not recognize emotional abuse as a serious issue requiring intervention. Moreover, cultural norms that prioritize family reputation over individual well-being often discourage victims from speaking out or seeking help.

While Nigeria has laws against domestic violence, including emotional abuse, enforcement and awareness remain inadequate. Social support systems, such as shelters and counseling services, are also limited, leaving victims with few resources to escape abusive situations or heal from their trauma.

Addressing emotional abuse in Nigerian marriages requires a multifaceted approach. It begins with raising awareness about the signs and impact of emotional abuse through education campaigns and community outreach. Empowering victims to speak out and seek support is crucial, as is holding perpetrators accountable through legal channels and providing comprehensive social services.

Emotional abuse in marriages is a critical issue that demands urgent attention in Nigeria. By challenging cultural norms, increasing awareness, and strengthening support systems, we can create a society where marriages are built on love, respect, and mutual dignity. Only then can we break the cycle of emotional abuse and ensure that every individual, regardless of gender, can live free from fear and emotional harm in their marital relationships.

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Did You know?

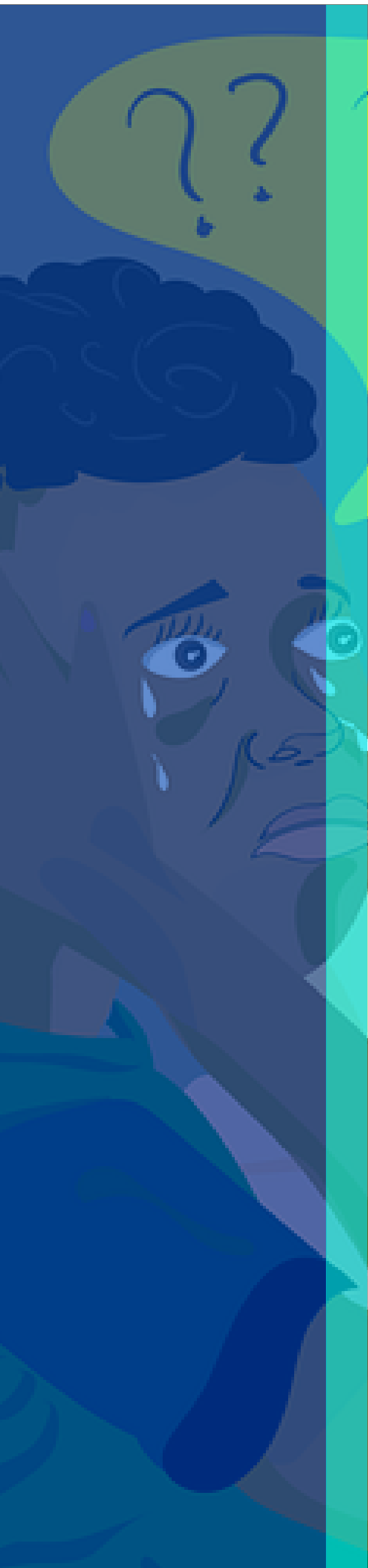
A woman is entitled to inheritance from her deceased parents.

In UKEJE V. UKEJE (2014) LPELR- 22724 (SC), the Supreme Court has confirmed the rights of Nigerian women to I heritage from their deceased parents, reinforcing constitutional provisions.

SUCCESS STORIES

*Names have been changed to protect survivors

Intervention on Case of Domestic Violence



It was a day like any other for the complainant, a young woman living in a small village outside Enugu. Little did she know, her life was about to take a tragic turn.

The complaint's relative, who is a prison warder with a history of violence, suddenly lashed out at her in a fit of rage. With a powerful slap, he struck the side of her head, causing immediate and severe damage to her hearing. The victim (complainant) was left reeling, her world suddenly muted, unable to hear the sounds that had once filled her life.

Terrified and in agonizing pain, The complainant sought help from Women Aid Collective (WACOL). The team at WACOL jumped into action, tracking down the complainant's violent relative and convincing him to take her to Parkline Hospital in Enugu for urgent treatment.

At the hospital, the doctors confirmed the severity of the complainant's injuries. Her eardrum had been ruptured and the delicate bones in her inner ear were severely damaged. Without imme-

diately and specialized care, the complainant risked permanent hearing loss.

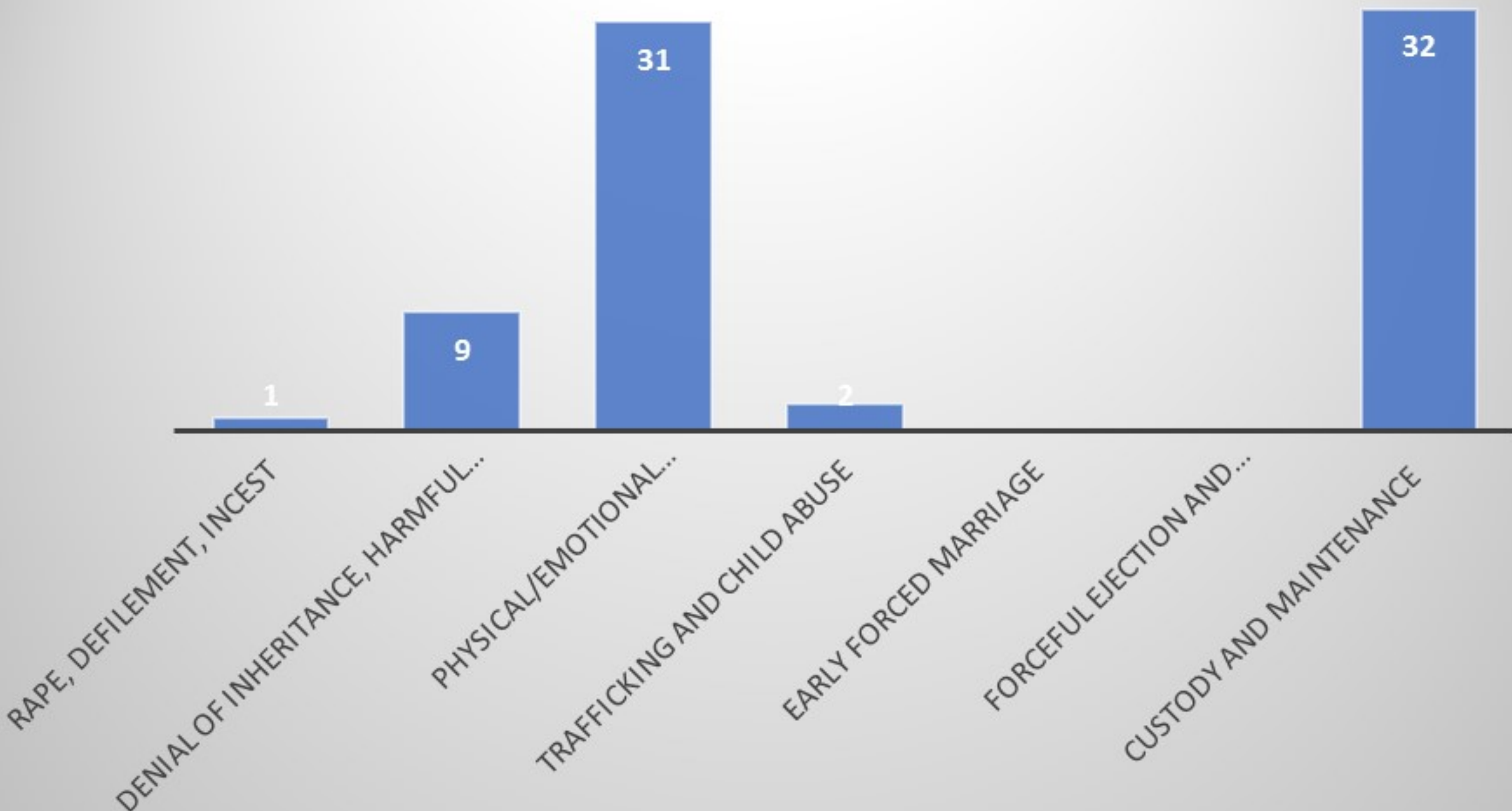
Thanks to the quick intervention of WACOL and the skilled medical team at Parkline, Amara began a long and arduous journey of recovery. Week after week under WACOL's supervision, she underwent complex procedures and intensive therapy, fighting to regain even the slightest shreds of her hearing.

The road was not an easy one. The complainant faced moments of despair, unsure if she would ever hear the voices of her loved ones again. But with the support of WACOL and her perseverance, she persevered.

And then, one day, a miracle happened. After months of treatment, the complainant began to hear the world around her once more. Her hearing was not fully restored, but she could make out the voices of her family, the songs of the birds, and the gentle rustling of the wind.

CASE BREAKDOWN

for April 2024



Gender Disaggregated data



Female complainants total: 75



Male complainants total: 5



Overall total: 70 cases.

Age Range

Under 18: 4

18-24: 6

25-34: 25

35-44: 27

45-59: 9

60 and above: 4

Unknown: 0

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).

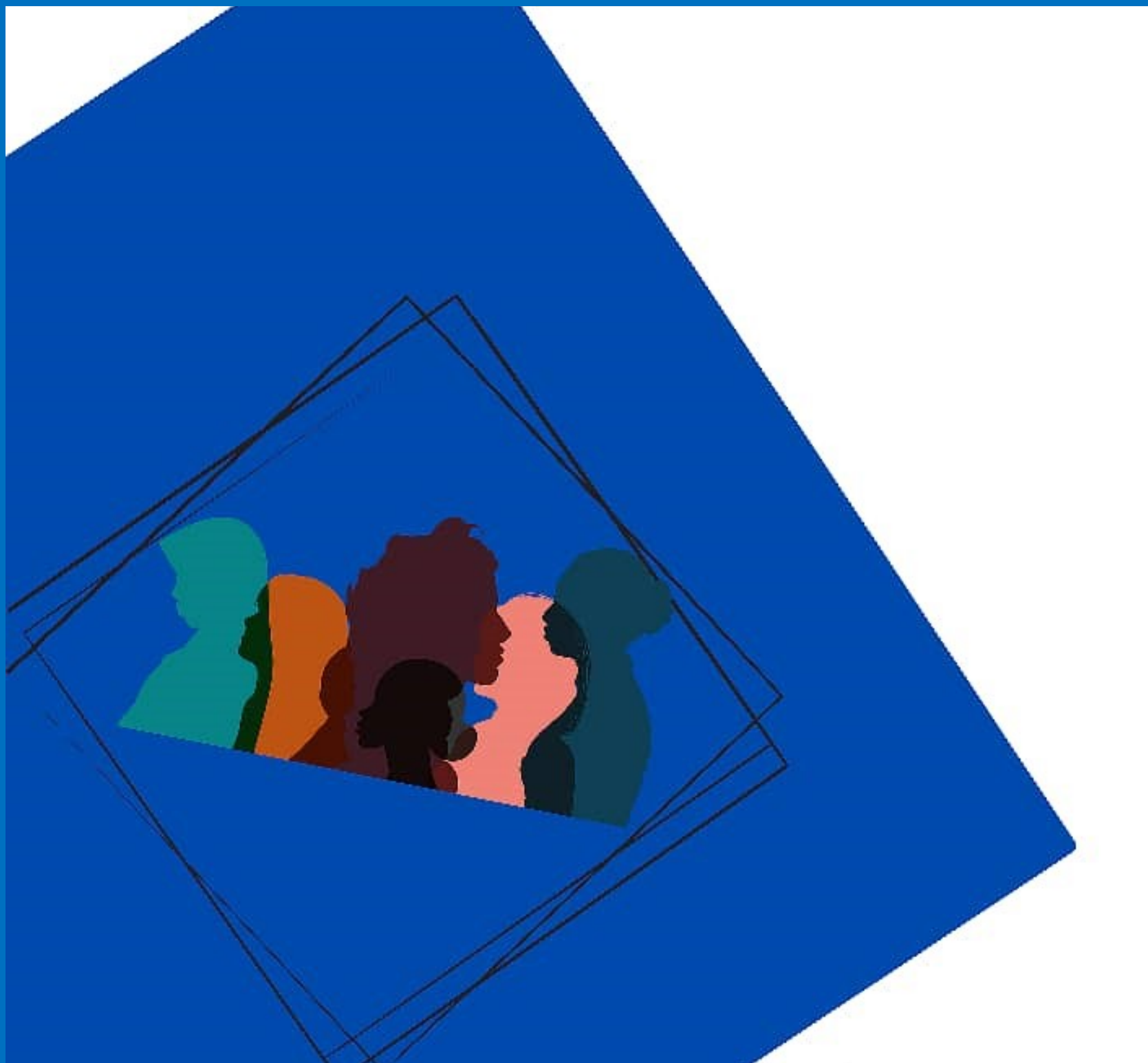
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ADVERTISEMENT & UPCOMING EVENTS

To Report any threat or human rights violation call our hotlines:
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