



SURVIVOR'S WATCH

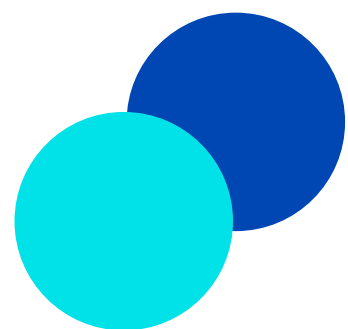
MAY 2024



TABLE OF CONTENT



3	About WACOL
4	Editors Statement
5	Physical Abuse in Nigeria: A Deep-Seated Crisis
7	Success Stories
8	Law facts
9	Case Breakdown
10	Contributors
11	Advertisement and Upcoming Events



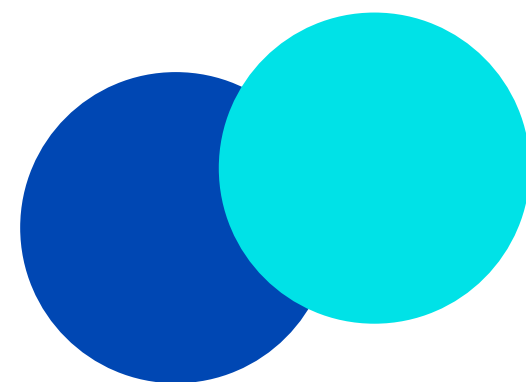
About WACOL

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

Physical Abuse in Nigeria: A Deep-Seated Crisis

By Onah Ebube

Physical abuse remains a pervasive issue in Nigeria, affecting individuals across different demographics and socio-economic strata. Despite legislative frameworks aimed at curbing this menace, the country grapples with entrenched cultural practices, insufficient enforcement, and societal stigmas that perpetuate the cycle of abuse.

Physical abuse in Nigeria is deeply rooted in historical and cultural norms. Traditional patriarchal structures often place men in dominant roles, with women and children being more susceptible to abuse. The cultural acceptance of corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure further exacerbates the problem. While modernization and urbanization have brought changes, many communities still uphold these practices, making it challenging to eradicate physical abuse.

Nigeria has several laws aimed at protecting individuals from physical abuse. The **Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP) of 2015** is one such legislation, providing comprehensive measures to prevent and punish all forms of violence against persons. However, the implementation of these laws is often hampered by systemic issues such as corruption, lack of awareness, and inadequate resources for enforcement.

One of the most high-profile cases of physical abuse in recent Nigerian history is that of Maryam Sanda. In 2017, Sanda was accused of stabbing her husband, Bilyaminu Bello, to death. The



incident, which took place in Abuja, sparked national outrage and brought attention to the issue of domestic violence. Sanda was subsequently sentenced to death in January 2020, marking a significant moment in the fight against domestic violence in Nigeria. This case highlights the extreme consequences of unchecked abuse and the need for stronger preventive measures.

Children employed as domestic workers often face severe physical abuse. In 2020, a shocking case came to light in Lagos where an 11-year-old girl, employed as a domestic help, was found with severe burns and injuries inflicted by her employers. Such cases are not isolated incidents but part of a broader pattern of exploitation and abuse of vulnerable children.

The lack of regulatory oversight and societal indifference further compounds the problem, leaving many such cases unreported and unresolved.

Women Aid Collective (WACOL) also records numerous cases of physical abuse each month. Recently, a young girl in a village near Enugu had her life changed when a violent relative struck her, causing severe hearing damage. Terrified, she sought help from WACOL, who quickly intervened and got her to Parkline Hospital for urgent care. The doctors confirmed extensive damage to her eardrum and inner ear, risking permanent hearing loss. With WACOL's support, she underwent complex procedures and therapy, gradually regaining some of her hearing.

Addressing physical abuse in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach. Strengthening the enforcement of existing laws and ensuring accountability for perpetrators is crucial. Public awareness campaigns can help shift cultural norms that condone or overlook abuse. Providing support services for survivors, including safe shelters, counseling, and legal aid, is essential in helping them rebuild their lives.

Moreover, community involvement plays a vital role in preventing abuse. Empowering local communities to recognize and act against physical abuse can create a grassroots movement that fosters a culture of respect and non-violence. Educational programs targeting young people can also instill values of gender equality and non-violent conflict resolution, laying the foundation for a future free from abuse.

Physical abuse remains a significant challenge in Nigeria, rooted in cultural practices and exacerbated by systemic issues. Case studies such as those of Maryam Sanda, and child domestic workers illustrate the severe consequences of this abuse and the urgent need for comprehensive solutions. While legislative frameworks and the efforts of NGOs provide a foundation, a concerted effort involving government, communities, and individuals is necessary to eradicate physical abuse and build a safer, more just society.

“

The Violence

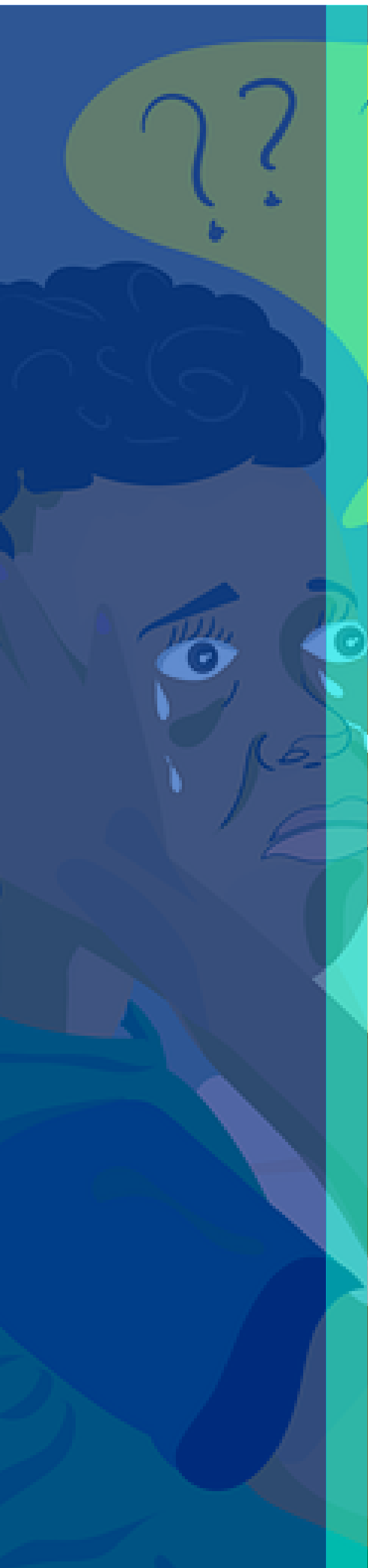
Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP) of 2015 is one such legislation, providing comprehensive measures to prevent and punish all forms of violence against persons.

”

SUCCESS STORIES

*Names have been changed to protect survivors

Resolving family conflict



It was a bleak and desperate day for the young mother. She had traveled from Lagos to Enugu, excited to visit her husband's home for the first time. But what should have been a joyful reunion quickly turned into a nightmare.

The family had checked into a hotel, the mother eagerly anticipating quality time with her husband and their two young children - a 4-month-old baby and a 1.5-year-old toddler. Little did she know, her husband had sinister plans.

Under the pretense of going to buy biscuits for the kids, the accused snatched the children and fled, leaving the distraught wife alone in the hotel room. Panic and terror gripped the young mother - she was in an unfamiliar city, with no idea where her be-

loved children had been taken.

Feeling helpless and afraid, the woman reached out to WACOL, an organization dedicated to protecting the rights of women and children. With their intervention, a glimmer of hope emerged. WACOL's tireless efforts traced the location of the husband (accused) and fished him out from his hiding, through a peaceful mediation between them WACOL was able finally reunite him (the husband) the mother with her children.

This story is a tragic reminder of the challenges faced by vulnerable individuals, particularly women and children, who are subjected to such unimaginable cruelty. But it also serves as a glimmer of hope, a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the vital role that organizations like WACOL play in providing support and restoring justice.

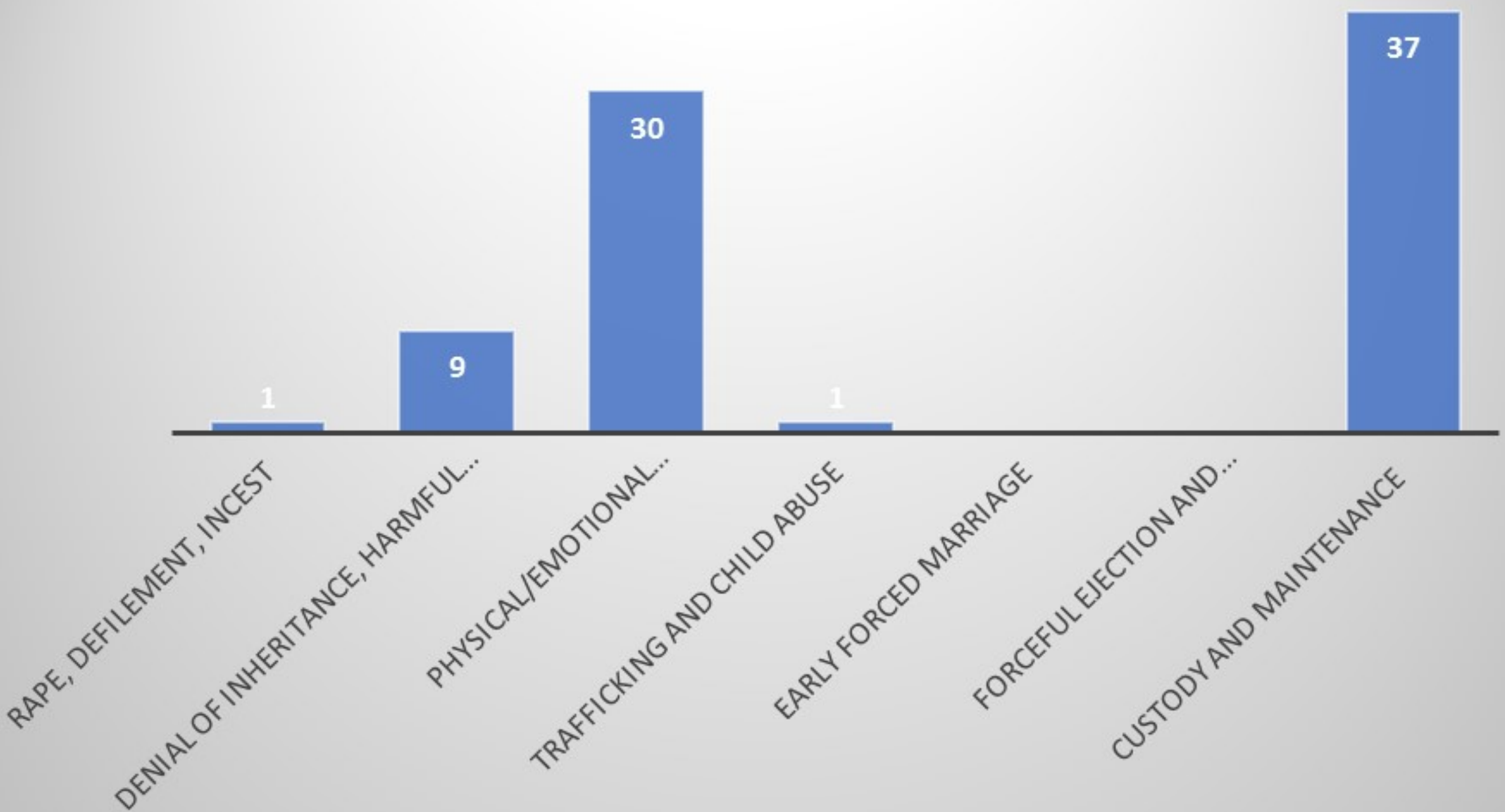
Did You know?

In Nigeria, the grounds on which a marriage can be declared void are specified under the Matrimonial Causes Act. A marriage is considered void if:

- 1. Either party was already married to someone else at the time of the marriage.**
- 2. The parties are within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity or affinity, meaning they are too closely related by blood or marriage.**
- 3. Either party is under the age of 18 years and did not have the necessary consents.**
- 4. The marriage was not properly solemnized according to the law, meaning it did not follow the required legal procedures.**
- 5. Either party was of unsound mind, suffering from a mental disorder, or unable to give valid consent due to any mental condition.**
- 6. The marriage was procured by fraud, duress, or mistake.**

CASE BREAKDOWN

for May 2024



Gender Disaggregated data



Female complainants total: 78



Male complainants total: 9



Overall total: 69 cases.

Age Range

Under 18: 2

18-24: 3

25-34: 26

35-44: 31

45-59: 10

60 and above: 3

Unknown: 3

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).

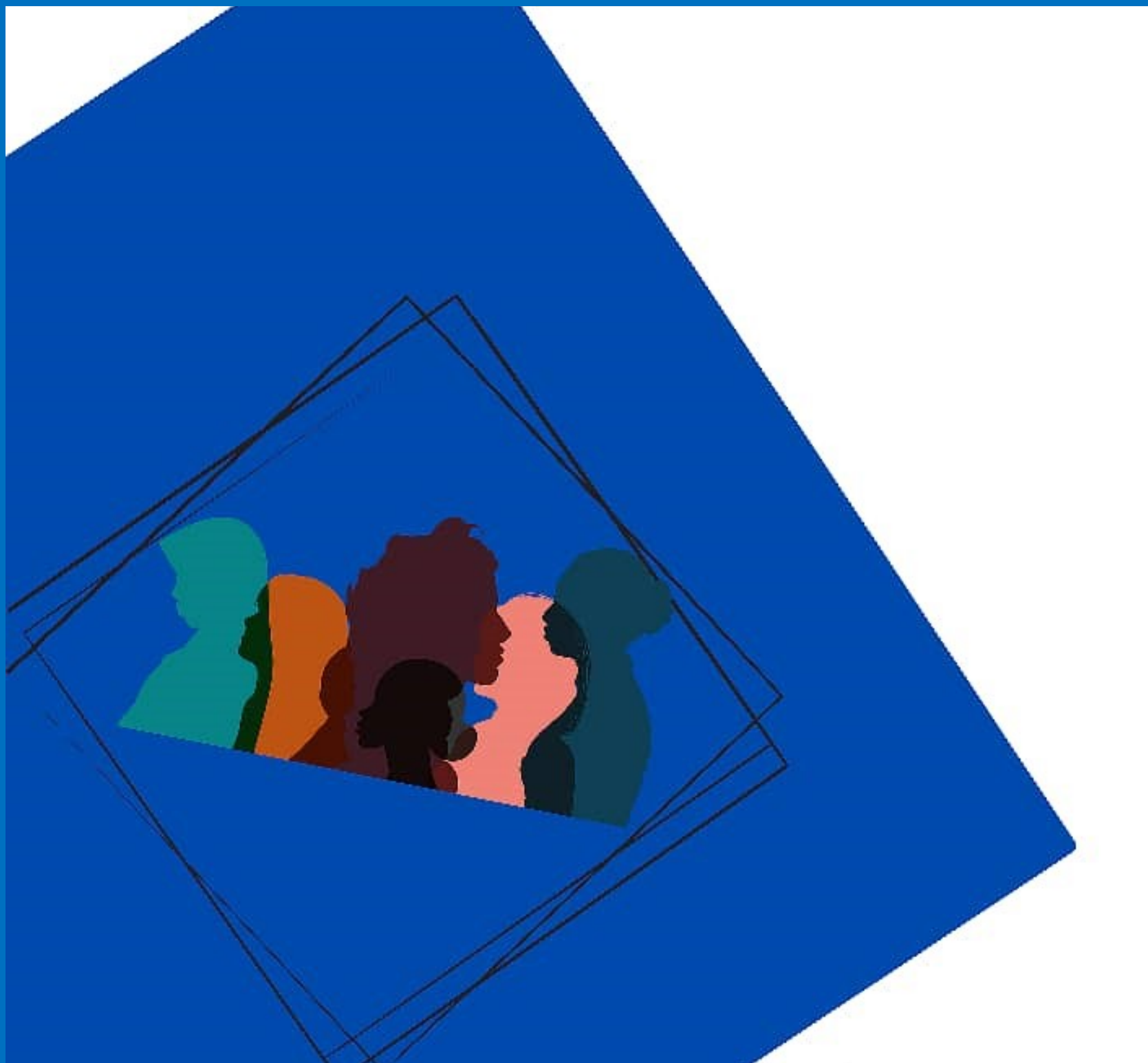
Ibangah Esemé Goodness Esq. is a Communicator, Women Human Rights Defender and Digital Enthusiast. She is the program manager of WACOL GirlsWill Initiative.

Ugochukwu Ogoke is a graphics designer, web developer, Philosopher and Human Rights Advocate. He is a digital communications officer at WACOL.

Onah Ebube is a Law student and SDG Advocate for gender and quality education. She is also a skilled graphics designer and volunteer at WACOL.

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)
No 9 Dr. Mathias Ilo Avenue, New Haven Extension.



0703 577 9083; 08095757590



wacol@wacolnigeria.org; wacolnig@yahoo.com;
wacolnig@gmail.com



WACOLTamarSARC
www.wacolnigeria.org



WACOL Tamar Sarc
Women Aid Collective-WACOL