

LESSONS LEARNED

Observatory on Violence Against Women and Girls



Learning from the NSRP Experience in Nigeria¹

Introduction and Background

The Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme was established by DFID in 2013 with the aim of strengthening peaceful resolution of conflict in eight violence affected states, building national capacity and reducing violence against women and girls. As part of the programme completion report process, and to strengthen sustainability of the achievements of the programme, partners have developed a series of “lessons learnt” documents in collaboration with local delivery organisations. This document summarises lessons identified from the establishment of an observatory on violence against women and girls, which may be useful for those considering any similar initiatives in Nigeria, or elsewhere.

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is the most pervasive human rights violation. An estimated 35 percent of women and girls globally and 45.6 percent of women and girls in Africa have experienced physical and/ or sexual violence², with little evidence available regarding the prevalence of psychological or emotional violence³. In Nigeria, surveys undertaken in 2012 and 2013 indicated that around **30% of women had experienced some form of physical, sexual or emotional domestic violence** during their lifetime⁴.

In Nigeria, as in other contexts, levels of VAWG are exacerbated by the rising incidence of violent conflict including Islamist extremism. The Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme (NSRP) works on VAWG prevention, recognising the links between it and other forms of violent conflict. The Observatory on VAWG, a platform for reporting, referrals and response is central to this focus.

This paper draws on five years of NSRP programming and three years of Observatory practice; the experiences of staff and partners⁵; the findings of two key internal reviews undertaken in 2016; and further fieldwork and research in 2017 to share lessons from the NSRP-supported observatory. The paper reflects on what works and what doesn't to inform future programming in Nigeria and beyond. The NSRP Observatory is a promising example of good practice in an area where the evidence base is still at a very early stage.

Overview of the Observatory Intervention and Actions

As part of NSRP's efforts to reduce the impact of VAWG in conflict-affected areas of Nigeria, NSRP set up three 'safe spaces' initiatives in 5 states. The Observatory is a virtual 'safe space' which consists of an online platform for reporting incidences of VAWG, coordinated by a local civil society partner in the states (referred to as the Coordinating CSO).

This is complemented by a physical safe space initiative – peace clubs. Peace club facilitators are taught life skills by community facilitators including skills for breaking the culture of silence around VAWG. Reports are made to the community facilitators. Reports are verified and reported to the Observatory. Response and referral of cases are managed by a voluntary Observatory Steering Committee (OBSTEC) comprised of local professionals

¹ This document was written by Katja Jobs. It draws heavily on the Issue 2: NSRP Learning Series, Abuja, August 2016 written by C Nagarajan and E Nwadinobi with H Ibrahim, C Dinee, S Dauda and B Amin.

² There is currently a lack of agreement on standard measures of emotional/psychological violence, making global and regional prevalence statistics difficult to calculate.

³ World Health Organisation, Department of Reproductive health and Research, London School of Tropical Hygiene and Medicine, South African Medical Research Council, Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non Partner Sexual Violence 2013

⁴ source: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/566193/CIG - Nigeria - Women.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/566193/CIG_-_Nigeria_-_Women.pdf)

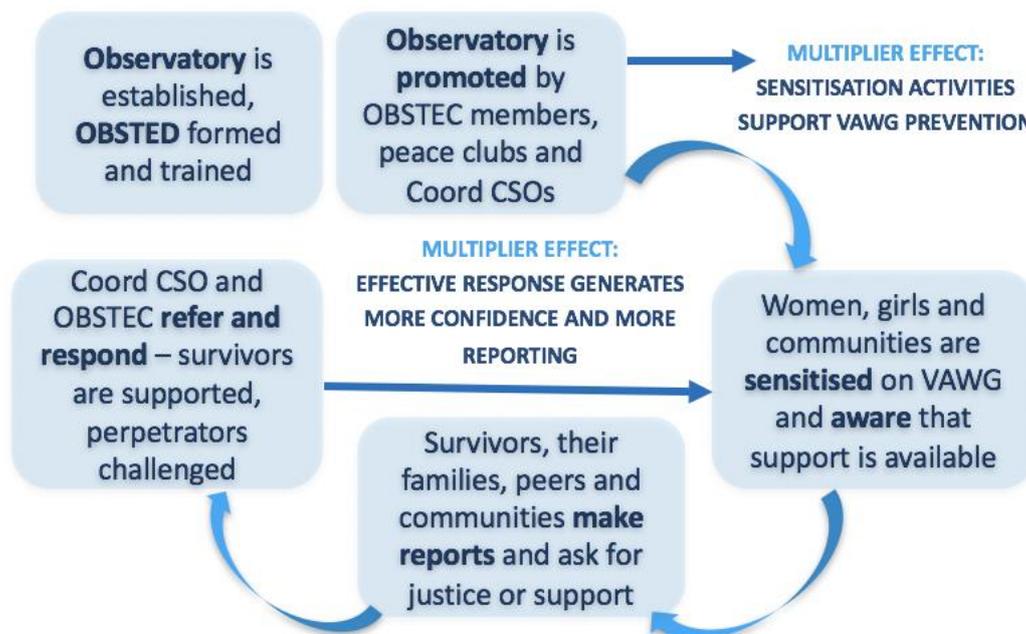
⁵ See Issue 2: NSRP Learning Series, Abuja, August 2016, C Nagarajan and E Nwadinobi with H Ibrahim, C Dinee, S Dauda and B Amin.

from security agencies, local government, religious and traditional leaders, media and relevant civil society actors, including representatives of other NSRP structures such as Women, Peace and Security Networks and Peace Clubs. The objectives of the Observatory are to:

- 1) Measure trends in violence affecting women and girls compared to overall levels of violence and fatalities in the eight states;
- 2) Break the culture of silence and increase the level of reporting on issues of violence affecting women and girls;
- 3) Increase awareness of these issues with the use of the Observatory platform; and,
- 4) Facilitate and support opportunities for prevention and response.

From the data received, monthly bulletins are created by the Platform Provider (PP), Fund for Peace (FFP), that track both specific incidents of VAWG as well as overall trends in each state monitored. These bulletins are circulated to key stakeholders who may be able to respond and prevent future occurrences. The information is also plotted onto an interactive peace building map, combining Observatory reports with other sources.

Diagram 1: Observatory Cycle of Change



The diagram above sets out the cycle and sequencing of the Observatory model based on a process of Report, Referrals and Response – the 3 R's – which mutually reinforce each other to affect change.

Observatories operate at the state level and were established in five locations to date across the north (east and west), middle belt and South South of Nigeria, including: Kano (2014); Kaduna (2014); Plateau (January 2015); and Rivers (January 2015); Borno (December 2015) states.

The model indicates that awareness-raising and sensitisation, in addition to quality referral and response, work together to generate reports and to challenge social norms on the culture of silence and impunity around VAWG. This contributes to improved policies and practice for the reduction of VAWG and increased female participation in institutions and

initiatives for peacebuilding. Overall, it contributes to managing conflict non-violently more often in NSRP target states⁶.

Summary of Progress Made and Headline Results

The Observatory has:

- Tested a promising pathway for addressing VAWG linking reporting, referral and response with advocacy, contributing to the emerging global evidence base around what works.
- Created a virtuous cycle: getting VAWG into public discourse, helping to break the culture of silence and impunity. This is in a context where it took 14 years to get the Violence Against Persons Bill into law at the federal level which was passed in 2015.
- Resulted in 1787 cases reported, over 35 monthly bulletins, 70 radio and TV programmes, tweets, social media and other campaigns as well as a combined response from civil society, government agencies, the police and security forces. NSRP has set a new bar in the states where it operates for talking about and responding to VAWG.
- From a very low base of 1 or 2 successful prosecutions of VAWG cases across the whole of Nigeria in the 10 preceding years, the Observatory has seen 47 successful prosecutions in the last 3 years since it started, setting an important precedent⁷.
- Demonstrated new ways of collaborative working between government and civil society leading to improved government performance and constructive challenge with increased citizen demand
- Driven results by providing a platform for change. It has strengthened the capability, accountability and responsiveness of government services - not only for individual survivors of violence, but resulting in concrete institutional and policy changes within health, women's affairs, police, justice, army, bureau of statistics, and civil society response organisations, traditional and religious leadership
- Influenced state peace architecture so that VAWG is properly integrated into conflict reduction and peace building efforts, contributing to early warning systems.
- Increased Government Ministries', State Governors' and State agencies' ownership of the Observatory and the VAWG agenda. Steps are being taken to institutionalise the Observatory in different ways.
- Promoted international uptake of the Observatory methodology and gender sensitive indicators influencing regional early warning systems ECOWARN and international civil society organisations' GBV manuals and guidance.

Lessons and Recommendations

The NSRP Observatory has tested and demonstrated a promising and practical pathway for addressing violence against women and girls. The following lessons have been identified in collaboration with staff and partners, and drawing on monitoring and progress reporting over the past 3 years.

The *combination* of the three Rs - Report, Referral, Response - and the *synergies* between them is key to the Observatory's success, whilst satisfying the ethical demands of awareness raising by providing a referral pathway.

⁶ For further guidance on VAWG interventions see VAWG Helpdesk (2013) DFID Guidance Note 4: Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls through Security and Justice Programming, London: VAWG Helpdesk, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/DFID1_1.pdf

⁷ Whilst these numbers are low in comparison to overall frequency and need, they represent important milestones in helping to get VAWG onto the agenda and in galvanising a response from government and other agencies – never previously seen in Nigeria.

The reporting and collection of data by the Observatory is the basis of the advocacy and sensitisation approach at the community level and with key decision makers and opinion leaders. With a trusted channel for reporting, people see that there is a safe space to discuss and report VAWG and sexual violence where reports are taken seriously. With increased awareness and a proper channel for reporting, more people speak up (as survivors, concerned observers, family, friends, neighbours, community and traditional leaders, peace club members and community facilitators)⁸. The model goes beyond data generation.

Awareness raising and sensitisation are linked to referral and response. Together, they encourage reporting and help to challenge social norms and institutional practices. Not only is linking survivors with referral and response services vital from an ethical standpoint, but support for survivors and successful prosecutions are often reported in the media, which encourages further reporting. Word spreads that bringing perpetrators to justice is possible. Quick and effective responses work to break the culture of silence and impunity and the belief that nothing ever happens.

Breaking the Culture of Silence – The 3 Rs in Action (Report, Refer, Response)

A 12-year girl was forced by her parents to marry a man much older than her and enter a polygamous marriage. She told her parents she did not want to be married and was beaten by her father for doing so. Once married, she was tied down and raped by her husband. After two weeks of enduring violence and trauma, she put rat poison in his food. Her husband and three others with whom he, unknown to her, shared his food, died. She said she did not know rat poison could kill people: she only wanted him to have a bad stomach ache which would make him divorce her.

This case was first reported in a newspaper with EVA, the coordinating CSO making a direct referral for the girl. All the members of the Kano OBSTEC became involved in her case, attending most of her court hearings. They held a series of strategic meetings to work on her release from court detention and her defence. The International Federation of Women Lawyers ran her legal defence while other members mobilised civil society, sent out press releases, sponsored media coverage and spoke out against early and forced marriage to raise public pressure and scrutiny of decision making. The OBSTEC met the Kano State Attorney General who also serves as the Commissioner for Justice. He wrote to the presiding High Court judge, asking for her immediate release and termination of her case. Six months after the case was documented, the girl was released from detention and the case against her dropped. OBSTEC members continue to follow up with her to ensure she is receiving the services she needs and being treated well by her family and community.

The OBSTEC's role in putting VAWG into public discourse is a critical first step towards shifting power relations and the social norms that maintain the culture of silence. The Observatory is working in a very difficult operating environment: there are high levels of normalisation of VAWG, whilst public discussion of this abuse is taboo and a huge amount of stigma is attached to survivors or people who dare to speak out. Survivors rather than perpetrators are often blamed. Cases go unreported or never make it to court and survivors

⁸ The data from NSRP sources such as peace clubs is tracked separately on the observatory platform as a means of documenting how the culture of silence is being overcome as part of the programme's M & E tools

are unlikely to receive sympathy or support. There is a culture of impunity for the perpetrators which is pervasive⁹.

'We have broken the culture of silence. There has been 150% improvement in reporting and speaking out on VAWG' (KII Borno, Coordinating CSO)

Without the awareness raising, sensitisation and community outreach, the culture of silence could not be broken and change would not be possible. The observatory uses a multi-pronged approach through the radio, TV, advocacy visits, community engagement and field facilitators – backed by peace clubs, community peace partnerships and dialogue committees. In each state, OBSTECs acted as champions of change, finding that this stage took up to 18 months - in line with evidence from other social norm change programmes¹⁰.

Whilst recognising the achievements made, **a more robust and systematic approach to social norm change would enhance impact.** A joint analysis by the OBSTECs of priority targets focusing on critical gatekeepers and opinion-shapers such as traditional leaders, the Hisbah (where relevant) and others, would allow for more coordinated, strategic advocacy and influence.

New Ways of Working

The Observatory's model of collaborative working and multi-stakeholder representation of the OBSTEC are critical to success. The OBSTECs bring together representatives from government departments, civil society and security forces around the same table to find collective solutions for VAWG. This is the first time this has happened under a civil society organisation acting as convener and secretariat. Prior to this, there was little joint working or trust, with a reluctance by government to share information with civil society, let alone report directly to them¹¹.

Collaborative working is bringing multiple benefits: a cross-fertilisation of expertise, combined departmental mandates, and new ideas. Team working on a common agenda helps to generate increased motivation, solidarity and mutual support across the group. It also creates a healthy momentum with increased peer influence and mutual accountability between members.

In addition, by nature of its makeup, **the OBSTEC brings more male gender champions to the VAWG agenda,** while creating a common goal that keeps women and girls at the centre, and in turn strengthens the observatories' perceived legitimacy, their outreach and impact.

Overall, a history of non-collaboration, mistrust and poor communication is being replaced by improved understanding, collaboration and joint learning between OBSTEC members, to good effect, with improved performance by ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) in terms of increased accountability and better response and support for survivors.

With accumulated experience of how change happens, OBSTECs could have benefitted from more frequent and systematic learning from each other as each observatory has

⁹ KIIs Kano, Kaduna, Rivers, Borno, Plateau, Abuja; British Council, Gender in Nigeria Report (2012: Improving the Lives of Girls and Women in Nigeria); J.I. Ikechebelu. G.O. Udigwe, C.C. Ezechukwu, A.G. Ndinechi and N.N. Joe-Ikechebelu, 'Sexual Abuse among Juvenile Female Street Hawkers in Anambra State, Nigeria,' 2008 12(2) African Journal of Reproductive Health 111-9; E. Nwadinobi, Widowhood: Facts, Feelings and The Law,' (WIDO, 2008)

¹⁰ See for example Mackie, G and LeJeune, J(2009) Social Dynamics of Abandonment of harmful Practices: A new look at the Theory. Innocenti Working Paper, Special Series on Social Norms and Harmful Practices; Paluck E and L Ball 2010 Social Norms Marketing aimed at gender based violence: A literature review and Critical assessment, International Rescue Committee;

¹¹ This in keeping with emerging evidence on best practice on VAWG interventions – personal communication, DFID VAWG Helpdesk.

different strengths and challenges. Some have been more effective at working with government and on sustainability, others at providing quality data and others at engaging communities.

A Platform for Change

The observatory provided a platform for change which helped to build a constituency of responders. In the 5 states where they are operational, the observatory has provided a common platform for joint reporting and verification of data, trends analysis and decision making around appropriate response. Although the level of engagement of ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) varied across states, the OBSTECs have slowly built a constituency of responders. In doing so, they increased awareness and reporting of VAWG by the public, as well as a commitment to act among MDAs with a mandate around this.

From a baseline of zero, over 1787 cases of VAWG have been reported to the Observatory over a 3 year period (Kaduna 232, Kano 285, Rivers 621, Plateau 482, Borno 167) and over 839 cases have been responded to and/ or resolved. 421 cases are ongoing or are under investigation. There have been 47 successful prosecutions in court for VAWG which is unprecedented in Nigeria. Whilst this is a low base compared to the scale of the problem and need, it represents a fundamental shift in behaviours and expectations by the public and responders.

The OBSTEC provided the catalyst - the demand – for government departments to respond to their mandate and meet their obligations. With the observatory and the OBSTEC behind them, OBSTEC members have greater legitimacy and credibility to call for action within their own organisations and others', using information to drive forward change. Whilst not pretending that this is a panacea, it makes it more difficult for requests to be ignored and side-lined. As such it is helping to shift the incentives for institutional change within the mandate of the individual constituencies.

The OBSTEC has credibility and legitimacy to drive change

For example, in Plateau at the height of the conflict between pastoralists and agriculturalists there were reports of high levels of sexual exploitation of young girls and women when the security forces were in town. When a local NGO raised the issue, security forces senior command and powerful individuals in government were dismissive and excused the behaviour as "boys will be boys". However, when the case was raised by the OBSTEC backed by evidence and data, this provided an institutional platform to challenge security forces' behaviour. This was no longer 'just' a group of concerned NGO women, but a legitimate, credible, multi stakeholder grouping including the police, MoJ, HRC, MoH, Federation of Muslim Women (FOMWAN), Federation of Female lawyers (FIDA) with a more powerful collective voice which couldn't be ignored. This provided a degree of safety from intimidation for the civil society activists and was one of the first times that the security forces were held to account for their behaviour – a major step forward. (Focus Group Discussion with Plateau State OBSTEC and Coordinating CSO CWEENS)

Improved Government Capability, Accountability and Responsiveness

MDAs improved their capability to respond to women spurred on by the Observatory experience. In several states, the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (MWASD) have reformed the way they report and document VAWG cases to a systematic, structured, system based on a set template. Previously VAWG cases were part of the

Ministry's routine case load and reporting system and were easily lost in the piles of files and paperwork. Now they have a data base which is quick to navigate, allows for easy follow up and provides an institutional memory for continuity with staff changes¹².

'The OBSTEC has served as a propeller for the MWASD. It has made their work simpler and more effective and they have benefitted from the civil society partnership. Working with NGOs has increased information sharing and trust' (KII Plateau, NSRP office)

Increased visibility of VAWG and the accompanying prioritisation within the public service has been an important driver of change. VAWG and sexual violence have been given higher priority in several government Ministries and agencies, and are receiving greater attention (police, MoJ, MWASD, MoH) directly because of the work of the observatory¹³. There is increased knowledge of federal and state legal frameworks on women's rights and VAWG as well as service provider obligations. It also includes increased understanding of the practicalities of where people can get help, what to do in a GBV case, the procedures to follow for reporting, how to preserve and record the evidence and where to go to access free medical support at public hospitals¹⁴.

This is cascading to local government level. The local level social welfare departments have also become more proactive in reporting GBV as they have seen an increase in cases. This is resulting in improved collaboration within and between government departments at different levels – improving horizontal and vertical accountability¹⁵.

Collective action around case work leads to improved accountability making it more difficult for the police or the justice system to dismiss sexual violence cases on false grounds or to pervert the course of justice due to corruption and bribes. Institutionalising checks and balances by government departments and civil society working together, has increased transparency, responsiveness and mutual accountability.

Key informants gave examples of how collective action is improving outcomes. By working together, the Ministry of Justice, the Human Rights Commission, Federation of Female Lawyers, FIDA, the police and the MWASD, have supported survivors to ensure cases get to court and have a proper hearing. They facilitate the process and ensure follow up, provide pro bono support and legal advice to survivors and ensure they are present at the court to watch proceedings. This is resulting in increased prosecution and justice seen to be done¹⁶.

Similar interventions in the future should build in systematic investment in strengthening capacity and service provision alongside work to change social norms, raise awareness and monitor trends – and adequately resource this work for a more comprehensive response. Despite the achievements mentioned, services that survivors need often do not exist, are unaffordable, inaccessible and/ or of low quality. Psychosocial support in particular is almost absent and there are only 3 safe houses in the whole of Nigeria. In Kaduna for example, MWASD does not have a single psychologist on staff and in Borno, the State Neuro-Psychiatry Centre no longer exists as all staff had fled due to the insurgency. Response agencies, including hospitals, the police and justice systems suffer from systemic lack of capacity. Although OBSTEC members and coordinating CSOs have been proactive and taken steps to build the capacity of some agencies, resources and skills to do

¹² KIIs with Kaduna, Kano, Plateau and Rivers state

¹³ KIIs Rivers, Plateau, Kano, Kaduna

¹⁴ KIIs Kaduna, Plateau, Abuja, Kano,

¹⁵ KIIs Kaduna, Plateau, Rivers

¹⁶ OBSTEC chairs in Kaduna, Plateau, Rivers

so are limited. There is a risk of raised expectations and potential backlash as people speak out and cannot be adequately supported¹⁷.

There has been an increase in prosecution of rape cases which is starting to act as a deterrent and is breaking the culture of impunity. This is a major step forward and should not be underestimated in a country where it has taken 14 years to get the *Violence against Persons Act* passed at the federal level and is still in the process of getting this law domesticated at state level. Prior to the work of the Observatory/OBSTEC, there was almost no investigation of VAWG and rape cases and there had been very few prosecutions of rape cases. Cases were thrown out or never reached court. Local police would not take action for a host of reasons including lack of evidence, interest and knowledge of how to handle these cases, corruption and demands for bribes which survivors could not afford, but also discrimination and social norms that blame the survivor rather than the perpetrator, resulting in settlements outside of court. Because of the work of the Observatory and OBSTEC many cases are now being investigated properly. More perpetrators are being arrested and brought to justice and there has been a total of 47 successful prosecutions.

A key lesson is that not all survivors want to take the legal route to justice. OBSTEC members should be trained from the beginning to recognise that survivors will need a range of services including, but not limited to arrest and prosecution. Survivors may not want to report to the police and seek redress in the courts, given the stigma, the attitudes and practices of some security and legal personnel and the fact that many perpetrators are known to the survivors. In many cases, OBSTEC members had a presumption that the legal route was required, especially in cases of rape, to the level of forcing affected women and girls down this path. It is important that OBSTEC members offer a range of referral and response services.

The NSRP Observatory demonstrates how change happens in Nigeria with lessons for other FCAS. Incentivised by the observatory and galvanised around a common agenda (in this case VAWG), senior leadership have found room to manoeuvre to instigate change, despite the constrained environment and capacity weaknesses. There is evidence of institutional change and improved responsiveness within the police, the Ministries of Justice and Health and within the MWASD. In each case, government *responsiveness* and ownership of the VAWG agenda were important ingredients to drive change. By focusing on specific practical entry points for response, modelling good behaviour and setting standards, they were able to make a difference by changing systems and practices within their organisation. Rather than tackling reform in a comprehensive all-singing, all-dancing way, they worked from inside out. Leaders focused on what was manageable, practical and expedient. They used their organisations' mandates to drive change –showing how change can happen in FCAS contexts.

Improved Police Responsiveness in Plateau

The Commissioner of Police of the Plateau Area Command issued a directive to all 17 local government areas that rape cases reported at LGA level be referred to the state level Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to ensure proper investigation as a criminal case. A special VAWG desk, with 3 dedicated officers has been established at this level. DPOs and DCOs in all 17 LGAs were trained by the OBSTEC on how to handle rape cases. This has improved the way rape cases are being tackled. 'Now the police are responding better and survivors are not being victimised twice'.

¹⁷ this was raised as a key challenge in all states

Similarly, the State Attorney General gave a directive for the OBSTEC to report cases of VAWG to the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP) at the Ministry of Justice. If cases were being blocked at the lower courts the complainant could ask to transfer the case to the Ministry of Justice to appeal on his or her behalf. This has resulted in four successful prosecutions with over 20 still in the court – a major achievement when previously VAWG cases of this kind would not see the light of day.

Improved Police Responsiveness in Kano

The observatory and the OBSTEC has provided the police with a mechanism for amalgamating information and data at the state level. Previously there was a disconnect between the 34 LGAs and HQ. VAWG and rape cases stayed at the local level. The central command had no coherent picture.

The Commissioner of Police has now established a desk office headed by a senior female officer who attends the OBSTEC. Divisions have been directed to refer any sexual cases to the centre for proper investigation. Cases are now dealt with at the high court rather than in local magistrate courts, providing greater accountability and professionalism. This has led to increased prosecutions.

Strengthening Child Protection in Kano

In 2016 the Kano State Governor, influenced by the data of the observatory which demonstrated a rise in child related sexual violence, kidnapping and abuse, appointed a Child Protection Adviser and created a child protection committee based on the cross-departmental model of the OBSTEC. The committee focuses on awareness raising with the community and parents on risks and prevention, particularly in the light of concerns over radicalisation. The committee purposely was not set up as a response agency, rather, a representative sits on the OBSTEC for reporting, referral and response, ensuring there is complementarity between the two committees.

Improved Health Service Response

In Plateau state the Jos Public Hospital didn't treat rape cases as an emergency as they weren't seen as a life or death situation or a priority for triage. But as a member of the OBSTEC the hospital has changed its policy and practice. Rape cases are now seen as a priority. Survivors are treated within a few hours and free of charge.

In Kaduna

A Sexual Assault Response Centre (SARC) was established in Kakuri at the end of 2016 in the general public hospital. The SARC was established by the Kaduna state government with support from DFID -Justice for All (J4A) programme ¹⁸. This brings together staff from the MWASD, the MoH, and the MoJ. They have been seconded to the centre from their home departments, for a joint and coordinated response. The centre offers a range of services from immediate medical care, HIV testing, emergency after rape PEP drug, counselling, legal advice and support for proper documentation of the evidence for investigation. NSRP and the OBSTEC, found this useful for referral of cases and is evidence of good working relationship with a sister DFID programme.

¹⁸ Key informants and CCSO Kaduna

The Observatory is having an impact on the peace architecture, demonstrating how VAWG and gender issues can be integrated across a conflict reduction programme. This is apparent in Plateau state where the government through its Peace Building Agency has adopted and reinvigorated the State Conflict Management Alliance (SCMA), originally convened by NSRP, in addition to the other community level structures¹⁹. Representatives from the OBSTEC are part of the SCMA reporting on VAWG and representatives from the community level initiatives (peace clubs, community peace partnerships and dialogue committees) are represented on and feed into the OBSTEC so that VAWG issues are mapped and discussed at all levels.

The diagram below illustrates how VAWG and the Observatory feeds into and influences the state architecture:

Diagram 2: Peace Architecture Plateau State: Linkages with the Observatory on VAWG



This integration is helping to provide early warning of potential violent conflict and is bringing greater attention to VAWG and gender issues across the state. For example, when a young Fulani man, who was part of a notorious violent gang, raped a young woman from a different ethnic group, existing ethno religious tensions in the area meant there was a real risk of escalation to a full blown ethno religious conflict with loss of life. The case was made more complicated because the girl's father was a police officer. He was reluctant to report the rape to the local police for fear of retaliation by the gang members which would only make matters worse. The case came to the attention of the OBSTEC. Because of the sensitive nature of the case, the OBSTEC escalated it to the next level up - the State Conflict Management Alliance. As a result, police and military from outside the local area were able to intervene together and the case was settled outside the court. Justice was seen to be done and the situation was de-escalated.

¹⁹ Peace clubs, observatory, dialogue committee, community peace partnerships

Government Ownership and Sustainability of the Observatory

Alongside the quality of the coordinating CSO, peer networking between OBSTEC members and reliance on the voluntary commitment of individuals seem to be important success factors. Observatories are dynamic and multi-layered platforms. Activity is happening daily by multiple people and agencies, mostly outside of formal OBSTEC meetings and on a voluntary, relationship-led basis. All OBSTECs are using informal channels such as WhatsApp groups to communicate on cases and follow-up. OBSTEC members described frequently using their personal funds to travel (sometimes far out of town) to meet with survivors, take them to hospitals, courtrooms and police stations, and negotiate with families or community leaders.

The personal commitment, motivation and passion of the OBSTEC members and the coordinating CSO have been a main driving force for progress to date. The engagement of government and security agencies in particular is often dependent on individuals rather than their institutional mandate. Nevertheless, as the examples above show, these individuals have managed to create space for change within their organisations.

In the Nigerian context, the voluntary nature of the OBSTEC and the commitment of individuals is one of its strengths. In fact, all key informants, referred to this as one of the key aspects that will ensure sustainability of the OBSTEC after the programme funding stops.

Questions remain regarding the long-term sustainability of a model which relies on the commitment of a group of individual “champions” within their agencies. Until Observatory responsibilities are integrated into job descriptions and budgets of MWASD, the police and other OBSTEC agencies, there is a risk that support will peak and trough depending on the individual in post at the time. Several OBSTECs described member agencies who had been very disengaged and this changed when a new individual came on board in their place, or vice versa.

Measures to ensure institutionalisation and sustainability are important for scale up and increasing impact . Planning for this needs to be properly integrated into programme design. This was not given enough attention during the lifetime of the programme. For future programming, a roadmap for sustainability that includes a process of absorption of OBSTEC structures into a relevant MDA should be developed early on and implemented as part of a responsible exit strategy. The opportune time is after the launch of the Observatory at a time where some traction has developed.

Government and state ownership of the VAWG agenda and the observatory are critical to longer term sustainability. Examples above, show how government and other agencies have taken action and set up complementary response mechanisms and institutions that have life beyond this current programme. Below are some examples of initiatives being explored to sustain the Observatory and the OBSTEC at state level. In each case, the key will be to ensure government ownership whilst avoiding co-option which might lead to a loss of dynamism, independence, and collaboration with civil society.

In Kaduna, Kano and Plateau the relationship with the MWASD has been strengthened. The MWASD has shown a willingness to take on the secretariat role and to provide a space for convening the OBSTEC meetings. In Kaduna, the convening CSO already has a desk space in the Ministry and a ministry desk officer has been assigned to support. In Plateau, the former Chair of the OBSTEC and the Permanent Secretary of the MWASD, through the

State Action Plan, put in a budget line to support the work of the Observatory and the OBSTEC. The convening CSO is currently in discussion with the MWASD on taking over the running costs of the Plateau safe house. With regard to the data collection and analysis, several states are in discussion with the Bureau of Statistics (BoS) who are themselves a member of the OBSTEC. The BoS has agreed to regularly publish data on VAWG as part of its reporting.

In Rivers, the office of the Governor's wife and the Deputy Governor have been actively involved in the Observatory work. Both are long time gender activists. Joint discussion with the MWASD is resulting in a multi-pronged proposal for sustainability. The Governor's wife has committed to integrating a physical safe space - a Women's Development Centre – as a one-stop-shop for advocacy and support on VAWG. The MWASD is working to domesticate the VAPP Bill and support the State Action Plan on VAWG. The Commissioner is seeking to put in a budget as part of the SAP to support the Observatory.

In Borno, where the Observatory is the youngest and where the conflict is particularly intense, the question of sustainability is more challenging. However, with an increase in reporting and an excellent relationship with the police there is potential for continuity.

International Uptake of the Observatory Initiative

The Observatory role in linking local level recording and mapping of VAWG issues with broader programme conflict mapping is important, but more could be done. It is currently not resourced to tap into larger potential sources of data on VAWG with other local institutions such as the Hisbah and hospitals, or more broadly with UN and other regional early warning systems. The Observatory platform's relatively small reporting of cases compared to the levels of VAWG, constrains its value and opens it up to criticism of not being relevant or able to impact at scale. In responding to this challenge, as part of its exit strategy, Fund for Peace, the organisation that runs the observatory and provides the analysis, is currently exploring embedding this work within ECOWARN, ECOWAS' early warning system. This comes on the back of training FFP provided, to help ECOWAS make its 66 early warning indicators gender sensitive – which drew directly on the experience of the Observatory in Nigeria.

The NSRP Observatory data on VAWG is useful to partners both inside and outside of Nigeria. In the Niger Delta, VAWG data is currently being used by the Partners for Peace (P4P) and International Peace and Development Unit (IPDU) of the Partnerships in the Niger Delta (PIND) Foundation. It is also used as a resource for triangulation and cross-validation with other data sources, such as the Nigeria Watch data set from the University of Ibadan, to measure trends in VAWG against overall trends in violence and insecurity in Nigeria.

USAID, and the US Institute of Peace (USIP) use the Observatory platform and web map for tracking VAWG. NSRP supported the development of indicators and analytical functionalities for the web map in response to partner demands. In particular, during the Nigerian general and local elections, USIP asked NSRP partner Fund for Peace (FFP), to prepare a presentation looking at the trends in VAWG as compared to the overall trends in election-related violence occurring in the eight NSRP target states.

Programme outreach activities can generate international interest in replicating NSRP's approach. The concept of breaking the culture of silence on VAWG by marrying ground-level information with cutting edge technology, is being picked up elsewhere. In Kenya, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Nairobi and the Open Society Foundation - East Africa, have expressed interest in a similar initiative with a focus on

gender-based violence in national elections. In Uganda, the Observatory platform was demonstrated to partners in a restorative justice consortium. Most recently, River state presented its experience of the Observatory at the Global Medical Women's Association Conference in Vienna. The MWA has asked to include the Observatory as a tool and a case study in its manual on how to address VAWG.

The Nigeria Observatory is adding to the international evidence base on VAWG. With many of the characteristics of successful VAWG interventions, the observatory offers a promising example on which to build.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Investing in high quality M&E from the start of the programme is essential. One of the main challenges for the programme were the inadequacies of the M&E system which was unable to capture much of the activity taking place. The M&E system must be able to measure change that is often slow and uneven, and capture both intended and unintended results. It needs to go beyond the anecdotal and systematically capture the stories of change within a coherent narrative of progress.

Conclusions

The Observatory has tested and demonstrated a promising and practical pathway to address VAWG. The combination of the three R's Report, Referral and Response with advocacy, has been key to its success whilst satisfying the ethical demands of awareness raising and providing a referral pathway.

The Observatory has demonstrated that its practical approach leads to more than a set of individual cases, however important for the individuals. This process brings about new ways of collaborative working and institutional change for VAWG prevention and reduction.

And beyond that, it has shown potential to influence the state, national and international peace architecture and conflict early warning systems to be more gender sensitive, and to stimulate new approaches to VAWG elsewhere.

For more information and support on the Observatory please see:

How To Note 2017 on Setting up the Observatory written by K Jobes and E Nwadinobi
Issue 2: NSRP Learning Series, Abuja, August 2016 written by C Nagaranjan and E
Nwadinobi with H Ibrahim, C Dinee, S Dauda and B Amin.

E Grant (2016) Review of Output 3, Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Programme NSRP
S Stevens (2016) Final Report NSRP Review of Observatories

<http://www.nsrp-nigeria.org/>

<http://library.fundforpeace.org/vawg-2015-q1>

http://www.academia.edu/30232050/Observatory_on_Violence_Against_Women_and_Girls_Learning_from_the_NSRP_Experience

VAWG Helpdesk (2013) DFID Guidance Note 4: Addressing Violence Against Women and
Girls through Security and Justice Programming, London: VAWG Helpdesk
http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/DFID1_1.pdf

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