



Musawah Global Life Stories Project

NIGERIA COUNTRY REPORT

Documenting Women's Life Stories
Relating to *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah*



2014

This report, which was submitted to the Musawah Secretariat by the country team, has been lightly edited by the Secretariat for format and style.

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Introduction

The *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah* Project

Musawah is carrying out a knowledge and movement building initiative that seeks to engage with the concepts of *qiwamah* and *wilayah* (men's guardianship role over women). A part of which is the Global Life Stories Project, which consists of participatory research in which we document the life stories of a number of women in 11 countries, focusing on how *qiwamah* and *wilayah* are experienced, understood, and contested in the lived realities of these selected individuals. Musawah Nigeria has undertaken the *qiwamah-wilayah* project with the concept of child marriage as focal point.

Child marriage in northern Nigeria

Child marriage is the marriage of a child, defined to be below age 18 to an adult, according to the United Nations. Child marriage "is one of the most persistent forms of sanctioned sexual abuse of girls and young women" (Center for Reproductive Rights (<https://www.reproductiverights.org/>), 2000; cited by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) (<http://www.ippf.org/>), 2007). In 2004, it was estimated that more than 100 million girls in the developing world would be married before their 18th birthday within the next decade (Bruce and Clark, 2004; cited by the IPPF, 2007).

In Nigeria, "more than 25% of girls in union live with men 15 or more years their senior" (UNICEF <https://www.unicef.org/>, 2005). A child marriage study carried out by UNICEF revealed the percentages of women aged 20-24, were married before age 18. The study found out that 42% of women in Africa were in this group. The percentages for northern Nigeria are perplexing: 73% of women aged 20-24 were married by age 18, and 45% by age 15 (UNICEF 2005; retrieved by IPPF, 2006).

Child marriage severely impedes girls' growth in areas such as social, health, physical, and economic. A married girl often experiences a loss of freedom as her movement is restricted unless with permission from her husband or his family. She is also denied access to education, health care, and economic opportunities. Child marriage can lead to many health risks such as VVF, reproductive tract infections, STDs including HIV/AIDs, maternal mortality and morbidity.

Patriarchy is prevalent in the whole of Nigeria thereby resulting in the low status of women. *Qiwamah* and *wilayah* from a patriarchal context are very much embedded in the lives of Muslim men and women in the Northern part of Nigeria, and also other parts of the country even though the use of the term *qiwamah* and *wilayah* may not be used.

The belief that a man is the absolute head of household is deeply entrenched in the society. Men have full control over women's lives - what they do and how they do it- and it is believed that it is so because supposedly religious texts, such as the Qur'an say so.

The age gap between spouses, in many cases, further heightens the power imbalance between husbands and wives and discourages open communication. Due to the low status of women and girls, their decision- making powers, and control over resources is also low or in some instances non-existent. These beliefs translate in the suffering of Muslim women and girls, especially with regards to lack of access to education, healthcare information, and services and other socio-economic benefits.

The global women's position on the development of the girl child as articulated in the Platform for Action is to the effect that "for the girl child to develop her full potential, she needs to be nurtured in an enabling environment where her spiritual, intellectual and material needs for survival, protection and development are met, and her equal rights safeguarded". It will be difficult for a girl child to

develop her full potential if she is rushed into marriage and therefore, adulthood and parenthood.

The Core and Nucleus group of Musawah Nigeria, together with its members namely: Center for Women Adolescent Empowerment (CWAE) Yola (<https://www.facebook.com/CWAE.Yola/>), Isa Wali Empowerment Initiative (IWEI) (<http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/members/isa-wali-empowerment-initiative-iwei/>), BAOBAB (<http://www.learningpartnership.org/baobab>), and WRAPA (<https://www.macfound.org/grantees/885/>) are fully committed to working together to ensure that women and girls are able to improve their lives by realizing their full potentials.

Goal

Improving the lives of women and girls through reduction of child marriages, resulting in equality and justice in the family.

Project objectives

The objectives of the project are:

- To create awareness and increase knowledge amongst men, women and girls: especially parents and girls, on patriarchal interpretations of *qiwamah* and *wilayah* and the actual lived realities as experienced by women and girls
- To increase awareness on negative consequences of girl child marriage, to both the girls, and their parents.

The *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah* Project Team

Description of composition

We decided to carry out the research in 2 different geo-political zones of Nigeria; Nigeria is very diverse in culture and practice, to see the commonalities or diversity. Unfortunately, we are not able to include the four other zones. As is the instance of the south-west, which has a large population of Muslims, but our advocates there are not strong; in the south-south and south-east, however, the regions are majority non-Muslim, but we also lack strong advocates there. Our two zones are the two northern states, Kano State in the north-west with majority Muslim population of over 80%, and Zainabwa State in the north-east with about 60% Muslim.

Getting set

Two NGOs will physically participate, while we will use a lot of literature, and draw from the knowledge of two NGOs. All four organisations are advocates of Musawah Nigeria.

About Isa Wali Empowerment Initiative

Isa Wali Empowerment Initiative (IWEI), a non-governmental and non-profit organization, was registered on November 24th, 2009 under the Companies and Allied Matters Act 1990, with registration number RC 856560.

Isa Wali was a known advocate for women's rights, as well as a vocal critic of injustices that prevailed in the 1950's and 60's arising from the disparities between the more affluent, and the underprivileged in Kano and the North, generally. He wrote several articles confronting the conservative class in Kano from an intellectual viewpoint, being versed in classical Arabic and a scholar of Islam, in his own right. It was, therefore, befitting that an organization aimed at empowering women in northern Nigeria, would be named after such a visionary.

IWEI aims to transform the lives of the most vulnerable groups (women, youth and children) through economic and socio-empowerment programs and access to information and qualitative health care. The Initiative envisions peaceful, healthy, empowered communities with social justice for women, youth and children to fully develop their potential. IWEI's mission IWEI seeks to transform the society by enabling women, youth and children escape the cycle of poverty and ignorance mostly fostered by harmful traditional practices, by attaining a state of wellbeing and having a voice through innovative, qualitative and sustainable empowerment programmes

About The Centre for Women and Adolescent Empowerment (CWAE)

The Centre was set up in Yola Town, June 1996 as a non-governmental organisation (NGO), to promote women's human rights and gender equality, giving value to women's contribution in the socio-economic and political development of their country; Nigeria; amongst other goals. Its focus is to create attitudinal change through activities especially with women and adolescents, always from a lived realities' perspective. In all of its 17 years, it has been responsive to people's daily lives and experiences, always trying to support them to find solutions from within, using information and respected community members (women and men) to resolve issues.

The Centre has a policy of deliberately making sure women and young people are always part of its activities. And in every programme it undertakes, gender and assertiveness training is a major component, and above all it requires all participants in its activities to accept this as a principle for engaging with the Centre.

Roles of the partner organizations

Those that will carry out the interviews of the resource persons

North-East – Yola – Zainabwa State - Center for Women Adolescent Empowerment (CWAE) Yola

North-West – Kano State – Isa Wali Empowerment Initiative (IWEI) Kano

The core members of the *qiwamah* and *wilayah* team:

- Asma’u Joda, Musawah Nigeria – co-founder and director, founded for equality in the Muslim family.
- Amina Hanga, Musawah Nigeria – member and IWEI – executive secretary
- Tauhida Ibrahim, Musawah Nigeria – member
- Mariam Marwa-Abdu, Musawah Nigeria – member

The core members were supported by other key individuals:

- Safinatu Dauda Mani, journalist and interviewer
- Habsatu Dahiru – journalist and interviewer
- Amina S. Koki – Law Student, Bayero University Kano. researcher and interviewer
- Fatima A. Ibrahim
- Aliyu Alhassan – Law Student, Bayero University Kano <http://www.buk.edu.ng/>
- Zubainatu Yahaya,
- RuqayyaTijjani Ibrahim
- Danjuma – illustrator

The two organisations are actively involved in grassroots work and because they are part of Musawah, understand the context we are talking about. They have also all worked in areas where child marriage is still a big issue especially in the rural areas. The Centre has been on ground for a long time and child marriage has always been a focus in their work. While IWEI, is a much younger organization and has not done research on child marriage, but it is in a rural community where child marriage is the stark lived reality of the women there. IWEI has been working in this community for the past 3 years and are making real impact. It is also an organization that is making real change as per the lived realities of the women and men in the communities.

The Process

The process of documentation of the life stories took 12 months of part-time work by the research team members covering three stages: (1) preparation; (2) interviews; and (3) analysis and storytelling.

Stage One – Preparation

Setting up the team

The team was set up when our two members returned from the Bali workshop. Initially the plan was to have the research conducted in three different geo-political zones. A meeting was held with the team leaders from the three different zones, over tea, local snacks and several documents, discussing what best way to approach the project.

All the team leaders work in their own capacity as women rights' defenders, and uphold the same beliefs in striving for equality in the Muslim family. The common thread discovered was that child marriage was a major problem in all the zones; and also a major setback to women's rights in the long run. Of course, other issues as polygamy, domestic violence, child labour and divorce, to name a few, all came up. The rationale of sticking with child marriage is that this is where all the other issues follow naturally. It was then decided that these three zones would be ideal: one being a majority Muslim state, the second being a moderate Muslim state, and the last being a minority Muslim state that was also, at that time, experiencing civil unrest.

After this meeting, each team was asked to get in touch with advocates in their own localities, engage with people that would assist in the entire process.

Developing the instruments

In another subsequent meeting, a set of instruments supporting the interview process was drafted. These were questions to guide the focus group discussions as well as questions that the interviewer was meant to ask the resource person.

Making a work plan

On working on the evolving work plan, we discovered that the Plateau State team would be unable to contribute to the project, at this juncture. So we had to sit down, over snacks and drinks, at an advocate's office, and re-design the work plan. Instead of having two stories from three zones, we restructured to have two stories from the two zones. Already knowing that the USD 3000 would not be sufficient for the project, we decided to source for additional funds in order to facilitate a better-quality document in the long run.

Stage Two – Interviews

Selecting the resource persons

As each team was given the loose criteria of age being the guiding factor in selecting the resource persons, it was at the discretion of the team leaders and interviewers, who exactly fit the bill. The age selection was that for each zone, we required a story, each from a young girl who had been, or still is a child bride; a middle-aged woman; and a more mature woman, all with the common denominator of having been child brides. Each team bore in mind that the 'rule' was not set in stone.

Focus group discussions with married women and young girls

Focus group discussions were held in Ajingi, Kano. The age groups were diverse, from young girls under

15, to a more mature group of ages 16 and above. It was a lively session and the responses to the questions, summaries of which can be found in Appendix 2, were very interesting.

Collection of life stories

Before collection began, each interviewer had the instruments developed for the process. They were made to understand that the questions were not rigid, and that they should also allow the resource person to feel free and be open. After the initial interviews, some time was allowed to pass before the resource persons were to meet with the interviewer. At this point, the interviewer was to allow the resource person to reflect on the story as it was told. More of the life stories followed, as more detail was added to what had been documented previously.

At another meeting, the interviewer was required to let the resource persons read (or have read to them) their stories. Upon reflection, a common thread was found in the resource persons; they did not want their experiences to be suffered by other women.

Review of progress

After having collected the stories, the team met again in Abuja at a generous advocate's house, for two days. The stories were read by the team and the interviewers filled in the gaps in the stories. When they were unable to do so, they were asked to revert to the resource persons for more clarification.

Making notes

After this session, the stories were compiled and additional clarification was made by the resource persons. The stories were shared with the team members via email, and an illustrator was engaged to create pictorials of the stories. The first illustrator could not depict the stories as they were meant to, so we had to search for someone else. The second person was brought on board, and he could cleverly depict the stories in a few sketches.

Stage Three – Analysis and Storytelling

Understanding the life stories

In order to better understand the life stories, a table was modeled after the Indonesian one, putting in information relevant to the focus of our research. Each interviewer also made some reflective notes based on her interviews, and further interactions with the resource person. At this point, four of the resource persons had continuous interaction with the resource persons; two were active volunteers at the two NGOs involved. It was also decided by the team that the stories should be told in the first-person narrative.

Analysis of stories with team and others

This was the more technical aspect of the project. At first, members of the team had randomly filled in the table. With assistance from Mulki, we were able to get the hang of the process and continue.

Retreat with members and resource persons

A two-day retreat was held with eight people comprising the team members, resource persons, and others from CWAE and IWEI. This was held in a hotel in Kaduna, Kaduna State. It gave the resource persons an opportunity to be heard by a larger audience, though all the stories have been anonymised. The team was able to work towards compiling the stories into one comprehensive report, as well as working on the legal mapping document as well.

Producing and sharing women's life stories

Following the pilot report, the team worked towards compiling the report. The team is hoping to secure additional funding to conduct a similar project in another part of the country. These stories will be translated into Hausa, and Fulfulde and disseminated in further advocacy. The pictorials will also be used as tools of advocacy. Filmmakers have been met with, in the hopes that a documentary will come from the report.

Country Background

Nigeria is made up of 36 states, and a Federal Capital Territory (FCT), grouped into six geopolitical zones: North Central, North East, North West, South East, South South, and South West. Various separate cultural, ethnic, and linguistic groups, such as the Oyo, Benin, Nupe, Jukun, Kanem-Bornu, and Hausa-Fulani empires exist in the country. These peoples lived in kingdoms and emirates with traditional, but sophisticated systems of government. There were also other relatively small but strong—and indeed resistant—ethnic groups (e.g., Igbo, Ibibio, and Tiv).

Housing Census puts Nigeria's population at 140,431,790, with a national growth rate estimated at 3.2 percent per annum. However, world fact book recorded 174,507,539 in 2013 (July 2013 est.). The 2006 census, indicates that Kano state has a population of 9,383,682, while Adamawa state has a population of 3,737,223.

According to NDHS (2008), about 50 percent of the population is female, and 50 percent is male. The sex ratio (the number of men per 100 women) is 99. The ratio in rural areas is lower than that of urban areas (97 compared with 101).

Nigeria has more than 250 ethnic groups, with varying languages and customs, creating a country of rich ethnic diversity. The largest ethnic groups are the [Hausa](#), [Yoruba](#), [Igbo](#) and [Fulani](#), accounting for more than 70% of the population, while the [Edo](#), [Ijaw](#), [Kanuri](#), [Ibibio](#), Ebira, [Nupe](#), [Gwari](#), [Itsekiri](#), [Jukun](#), [Urhobo](#), [Igalala](#), [Idoma](#) and [Tiv](#) comprise between 25 and 30 per cent; other minorities make up the remaining 5 per cent ("Nigeria" in *Geographica: The complete Atlas of the world*, Random House, 2002, [ISBN 0375720375](#)). According to PEW 2012 research, Christians comprises 50 per cent, Muslims 40 per cent, while other religions comprise about 10 per cent of the Nigerian population (The PEW research center's religion and public life project Global Religious landscape report (2012)).

The life expectancy of women is 55.77 years, and men is 49.35 years.

Reduction in infant mortality, (2003-2008): Infant mortality has dropped from 100/1000 live births as recently as 2003 to 75/1,000 live births in 2008 (Meeting the targets: promoting legislative intervention for the attainments of the MDGs in Nigeria, A publication civil society legislative advocacy centre (CISLAS), ABUJA page no 149)

The maternal mortality ratio, is 545 per 100,000 live births (NDHS, 2008). However, there exists wide variation across the geo-political zones. The North East zone has the highest MMR 1549/100,000. There are also rural – urban variations

In Nigeria, 55% of the population aged 15 years and older can read and write according to the findings of the NDHS. More men (67%) than women (44%) are literate, but the literacy rate is higher in urban (71%) than in rural areas (47%).

The net attendance rate for enrolment into secondary schools for boys is 29 per cent and girls is 22 per cent. Only 4 per cent of women in the North complete secondary school (Gender in Nigeria Report 2012).

The percentage of employment rate of women compared to that of men according to NDHS (2008) report, was about 71.1 per cent women of age 15-49, and 98.6 per cent men of age 15-59.

A breakdown of the labour market by gender shows that female employment was notable among self-employed traders, where they constituted almost 57 per cent of employment in this subsector. Their

contributions in other areas, are very minimal and far below those of their male counterparts. For example, they made up 39 per cent of total workers in the public sector, notably in the wages and salaries' area, and 28.3 per cent of the private sector workers. Their shares of employment were respectively 29.4 per cent, and 34.4 per cent for others unspecified self-employed and self-employed farmers (National Manpower Board (1998), *Study of the Nigerian Labour Market: Selected Metropolitan Areas*, Manpower Study No.33).

Civil law entitles women to have access to land, and a few states have enshrined equal inheritance rights into law, but certain customary laws stipulate that only men have the right to own land (Section 43 of the Constitution of Nigeria in CEDAW, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/> (2003)). Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: Nigeria, Combined Fourth and Fifth Periodic Reports of States Parties, CEDAW/C/NGA/3-4, CEDAW, New York, NY, pp. 49, 55.). For women without the means to purchase land on their own, in practice, their ability to obtain land flows solely through marriage or family (Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition (2008), *The Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition Shadow Report*, Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition, pp. 7, 51-52, 61-63; CEDAW (2003), pp. 52-53, 55; WAC (2008), p. 62-63.). In daily life in Nigeria, men generally make decisions regarding property. According to the 2008 DHS, nearly 62 % of women reported that men make most or all of the decisions about major household purchases; 83.5 % of men reported control over these decisions (National Population Commission [Nigeria] (NPC) (<http://www.population.gov.ng/>) and ICF Macro (2009), *Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2008* (https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/ng_publications/Nigeria_DHS_2008_Final_Report.pdf), NPS and ICF Macro: Abuja, Nigeria., Tables 15.4.1 and 15.4.2).

Women make up only 24% of land owners and for distributed land, they make up only 26% of owners. Under civil and Islamic law, married women have the right to have access to property, other than land. However, JICA reports that livestock, expensive cows, or draught animals are more likely to belong to males rather than females (JICA (2011) *Country Gender Profile Nigeria Final Report* (http://www.jica.go.jp/english/operations/thematic_issues/gender/background/pdf/e10nig.pdf, accessed 19 March 2012). In daily life in Nigeria, men generally make decisions regarding property. According to the 2008 DHS, nearly 62 % of women reported that men make most, or all of the decisions about major household purchases; 83.5 % of men reported control over these decisions (National Population Commission [Nigeria] (NPC) and ICF Macro (2009), *Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2008*, NPS and ICF Macro: Abuja, Nigeria., Tables 15.4.1 and 15.4.2.)

In Today's Nigerian government, there are about 13 women in Executive Cabinet, representing about 32 per cent of the 42 member-Cabinet. Many of them are leading sensitive institutions (Uchechuwku O, *Empowering the Nigerian Woman*, High point of The Jonathan Presidency, 2012, the tide).

NDHS survey 2008, indicates that men marry considerably at later age than women. About one in four women age 25-49 (24 percent) were married by age 15, compared with less than 1 percent of men. Only 13 percent of men age 25-49 had married by age 20, compared with 60 percent of women. By age 25, only 39 percent of men were married.

Sixteen percent of married men age 15-49 reported having two or more wives. Older men, those in rural areas, those in the northern zones, those with lower levels of education, and those in the lowest two wealth quintiles, are more likely to have two or more wives than other men.

The trend by age group indicates an increase in domestic violence from the 15-19 age group through the 25-29 age group, and a decrease thereafter. Thirty per cent of women age 25-29 have experienced physical violence at some time since age 15 by their husbands.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): Data on FGM show that the South East and South West of Nigeria are the epicentre, 50.4% and 60.7%, as against 3% in the North West, and 2.8% in the North East (Gender in Nigeria Report 2012 British Council)

The 2008 NDHS report indicates that the experience of sexual violence ranges from 6 percent among women age 30-49, to 9 percent among women age 20-24. Women who are employed but not paid in cash, are the most likely to have experienced sexual violence (11 percent), while unemployed women are least likely (6 percent).

About five percent of women who have ever been pregnant reported that they experienced violence while pregnant. Women who are divorced, separated, or widowed are more likely than other women to have experienced violence during pregnancy (12 percent). Five percent of currently married women have experienced violence during pregnancy. The proportion of never-married women who had a pregnancy, and who reported that they ever experienced violence while pregnant was negligible.

Life Stories

LET OUR VOICES BE HEARD, OUR WAY

These are the stories of the women who shared their pains and struggles with us, so that we can strive to ensure equality and justice in the Muslim family.

Life story #1: Salamatu – The Reluctant Child Bride

Name: - Salamatu
Age at first marriage - 14 years
No of Children - none
Present marital status - single
Age at time of interview - Sixteen Years (16)

Salamatu is a 16-year old girl who comes from a busy market town. She had run away to the city to escape an unhappy marriage. The distance from her village to the city is about a 45-minute drive by car. Even though it was a big risk, as she had never been there before, she took it. This new-found courage was out of utter desperation as she had no support from her father, nor stepmother.

For young girls coming from rural areas, marriage is considered the ultimate goal for a woman, and education is not considered important. Salamatu has shown a keen interest in learning and is currently enrolled in school. She shows no desire to return back to her village life and that could be borne out of the fact that she knows she would be married off again.

Wudil is an old commercial district that is famous for its fish, grains, and cattle market. It is a junction town with a large mobile population made up predominantly of Muslims, with Christian communities. It has a very active female sex worker population as a result of the market. Commercial drivers who spend the night in Wudil enjoy their free time, while their vehicles are being offloaded or loaded up, with their kept companions, or engage the services of sex workers, readily available who range in age from 18–24 years.)

My name is Salamatu and I come from an extended family of fifteen children and two stepmothers. My mother was the first wife and had seven children. She was divorced when I was six years old. The second wife has six children, and the youngest has two children. We all live in Wudil Local Government Area of Kano.

Our parents divorced when I was about 6 years old, we were left in the care of my stepmother who was very harsh with us. She made us do all the house chores starting from cooking, washing of plates and pots, washing her children's clothes and her own, fetching firewood and water every day. We were always the first to rise and last to go to bed.

My siblings (7 from the same mother) and I, were not allowed to attend formal school or Qur'anic school, while my stepmother's own children went to Qur'anic school. She made my sisters and I hawk food for her, while my brothers would be sent to the farm to work, but her kids stayed home and did nothing. We told our father about what was going on, but he would not listen to us.

When I turned thirteen, a man called Danlami (who was over 40 years of age with a reputation for having been divorced six times, and also widely known as a wife beater) came and asked me to marry him. When I refused, he went to my step mother and gave her some money, which she accepted. I

would refuse to see him whenever he came, but he would go straight to my step mother and give her the gifts I had turned down.

In a hausa-fulani setting, it is the norm that fathers rarely interact with their children, especially the female ones. Salamatu's father did not ask her as he felt the one closer to her was her step mother. He believed the step mother as he assumed she would know of the girl's interests.

When he sent his people to my father with his marriage proposal, my father said he would have to ask me first before giving them an answer. As soon as they left he called my step mother and told her. Eagerly and immediately, she told him that Danlami had been visiting me and I was interested in him. Without asking me, he sent to them that I had accepted. I tried in vain to get my father to listen to me that it was not true, but my pleas fell on deaf ears.

When Salamatu was narrating her story, she looked so frightened and she kept on looking behind her as if she is scared someone was listening. I had to keep on calming her down so that she could continue her story.

Upon learning of the impending marriage, I ran to my maternal aunt's house in the next village but my father found out where I was and brought me back. My aunt tried to talk him out of the marriage but he would not listen. The marriage took place immediately after I was taken back.

Few days after the marriage, my husband gave me a severe beating because I refused to have sexual relation with him. It continued that way for almost 6 months, until one day he was able to get his way with me sexually; Danlami beat and raped me. I was bruised all over, from my entire body to my private parts. The day after this beating, I ran to my mother's place; she had resettled in another town where she was now married. I stayed there for about two weeks before news reached my father where I was. He came to get me from my mother's house with my step mother in tow. She came and rained abuses on my mother, accusing her of being responsible for my staying away from my husband's house, just the way she refused to stay in my father's house. These accusations hurt my mother deeply, so much so that she told them to take me, and warned me never to return to her house.

After we got back to Wudil, my father gave me a beating and told me never to come back to his house or he would kill me; I was to return to my husband's house and expected to be a good wife. I was forced to go back to Danjuma's house and the beating continued for a year. Sometimes he would come back late at night, drunk and smelling of alcohol. On those nights, his sexual desire would increase and the beatings would increase; I would get simultaneously raped and beaten.

At a point, I realized that this was not the life I wanted for myself. I started making plans to run away from this abusive marriage but did not know where to go. Then one day, I remembered there was a woman called Uwani who used to come to our village to visit her father. Our fathers' houses are close to each other, and whenever she was around I ran errands for her. I once heard her describing her house in Kano to her brother and I never forgot the name of the town.

All the time I was with my abusive husband, I tried to save money so that I could one day run away from him. I bided my time and waited for the day I would have enough. After about a year, I was able to save enough money from the money he gave me for food, and what I made from selling kuli-kuli (groundnut biscuits, a byproduct after pressing out the oil). One morning, after my husband had gone to the mosque, I ran away to Kano city. I got there by asking for directions until I got to Uwani's house. Uwani was very surprised to see me, but she welcomed me with open arms. I lied to her; I told her that my father had sent me to come and work to raise money for my marriage, which is a common thing among our people. She did not hesitate or suspect, and almost immediately, I was taken to one woman's house that was in need of a nanny.

I was so happy to have been able to escape from such an unhappy and abusive marriage, and thought that the future looked bright. The woman I was taken to work for her as a nanny is a very nice woman who lives with her husband and three children. Hajia and her children were good to me. Whenever the children came back from school, I always asked them to teach me what they learnt. When Hajia saw my interest in education, she asked me if I wanted to go to school and I answered, "it has always been my dream" and told her how I always wanted to go for a very long time.

Hajia made preparations for me to start school and I was so thrilled and excited. Alas, my happiness was cut short when, one day, out of the blue, my mother came.

[Salamatu started crying with so much pain, a minor who is seeking happiness. I never saw so much pain in the eyes of someone so young. It took two days before she was able to continue her story.](#)

On my mother's arrival, everyone was warned not to tell me about it in case I decided to run away again. In the morning, Hajia's aid we should all get ready so that we could go and visit Uwani. On getting there, I was shocked to see my mother and I realized that the truth was out. My mother started crying when she saw me and narrated how they got to know where I was- through Uwani's brother. He came to visit his sister (after my arrival on her doorstep) and Uwani told him to tell my father that I had arrived safely and I am in good hands. But her brother explained to her how my mother had been looking for me, my father had washed his hands off me, and my husband was demanding for what he had spent on me before and during my stay with him.

Upon hearing the news, Uwani told her brother to go and tell my mother my whereabouts and bring her to Kano. My mother told them everything that had happened and how her second husband divorced her because she had to go out every day, moving from one village to another, and to our entire relative's house looking for me. He gave her an ultimatum, told her to choose between her marriage and her daughter and she chose me. My mother spent her money on Mallams praying for my safe return. My father did not help with anything or support her in looking for me. She said even my husband did not do anything to help in finding me, he went to my father and demanded that they pay him everything he had spent when marrying me, and that he did not want me anymore. On hearing the news, I was filled with joy that at last I was free of the abusive marriage which lasted for almost two years.

When my mother said she was going to take me back to my father's house, that was when I started crying and begging her not to take me back. Uwani and Hajia intervened in the matter and said that my mother should leave me with them, but she should inform my father that I had been found. They also advised her that she tell him where I was and with whom. They believed that he would allow me to stay since Uwani's father and mine are old friends, just like brothers. My mother left without me. She said she did not have the money to give my husband so that he would release my belongings, but Uwani assured her that I would raise the money from my earnings as a nanny.

Reflections

Salamatu was enrolled into both *Islamiyya* and formal school and for a couple of months she was doing well, then she met a girl called Zainab who lived in the area. Zainab turned out to be a bad influence on her. Salamatu dropped out of school and was seen around the neighbourhood with Zainab in the company of boys. It was finally brought to our attention, my husband was upset and said it was best she was returned back to her parents. We did not realize she had overheard the conversation, she packed her bags and ran away. I was beside myself with worry. She eventually contacted Zainab a few days later, to say she was well and staying with a relation in another part of town. The news got back

to her mother who came and traced Salamatu to the relation's house. Salamatu's mother said she was going to take her back to the village, as they wanted to finalise the issue of her divorce. They wanted the husband to give Salamatu the divorce in writing. Salamatu wept bitterly, but promised she would return to me in time for Ramadan. I have not heard from Salamatu since and her phone is permanently switched off.

Analysis of Salamatu's story

Polygamy and growing up

Salamatu has faced a lot of difficulties during her childhood. This can be attributed to her parents' divorce, and polygamous family background. Left in the care of their stepmother, Salamatu and her siblings were subjected to maltreatment; they do all house chores ranging from cleaning, cooking, fetching water, washing the household clothes, and working in the farm all year round. They were not opportune to attend either secular or Qur'anic school. The Compulsory, Free and Universal Basic Education Act (2004), states that every child has a right to free education up to junior secondary level and it is the duty of the parent to ensure the education of the child. Their father was not supportive of them, and did not listen to their complaints at all.

At the age of fourteen, she had a lot of suitors but her stepmother accepted the proposal of a very old man who is older than Salamatu's father, against her wishes. She tried to make her father understand that she does not like the man but as always, he kept deaf ears. *Shari'ah* urges guardians to seek the consent of a virgin girl before marrying them off, and gives the widow a right to choose the husband herself. Consent of parties is an essential element for a valid marriage under Nigerian law, Marriage Act.

Salamatu ran to her maternal aunt to avoid the marriage. Unfortunately, her father found out her whereabouts and brought her back to the house. Her marriage to the man was conducted immediately.

Provision and obedience in marriage

Danlami became abusive because she refused to satisfy his sexual urge until he finally got his way with her. Salamatu ran to her mother's house (who got married to another man in a neighboring village). Islam command not to harm anyone nor allowed oneself or be harmed by other. *Shari'ah* prohibits infliction of harm on one's partner. Salamatu was severely thrashed by her father, and also threatened to kill her were she to try and run again. Her mother cried for the insults that were rained on her.

Domestic violence

She was taken back to the abusive and drunk husband's house. She endured the beating, continuous rape and insults for two years out of obedience to him and her father. Nigerian law under penal and criminal code S. (55) and (295) respectively permits correction of wife by way of slight beating as long as it does not inflict grievous hurt to her. For the grievous hurt it amount to assault punishable by law. But both laws do not recognize marital rape.

Though maintenance was not an issue, insecurity and fear made her determined to save money from the household money and run away from his house. To avoid further confrontations with her family, she took the risk of going to the city (for the first time ever), to a woman she barely knew from her village.

Trajectory of self

Salamatu is a girl that has suffered so much at a very young age. Lack of support, security and lots of

abuses and maltreatment made her develop a mind of her own, and decided to run from her family, husband and the whole village. This has hazards as it is sometimes the reasons why some women end up as 'sex workers' as they have nowhere to go and have no economic skills/education to be able to support themselves.

In the city, Salamatu accepted to work as a house help to an unknown woman and also changed her identity. Lack of self-esteem, integrity and education made Salamatu drop out of school and befriend a sex worker. Though nothing has shown that she is one herself, her friend is well known as one. Not long ago, contact has been lost with Salamatu as her mother has taken her back to the village to settle the problems between her family and her husband. Danlami is demanding for the complete money he spent on her marriage.

Circle of influence

- **Mother:** Did not have much influence in her life as she was divorced from her father when she was six years.
- **Stepmother:** Had a negative influence in her life, as she sent her out to hawk, prevented her from receiving an education, forced her into an early marriage and tried to keep her in it
- **Father:** Had a negative influence in her life as he did not interfere in her step mother's role. He forced her into the marriage and threatened her with death if she did not stay in it.
- **Husband:** Had a negative influence in her life. She suffered DV at his hands, all through the marriage.
- **Uwan:** Came into her life and her influence has been positive as she got her a job as a nanny. She also intervened when the mother wanted to take her back to her father's house
- **Fatima (Interviewer):** Her influence has been positive as she also intervened in preventing her mother from taking her back to her father. She has also put her in school (secular and *Islamiyya*). However, in the end her mother took her away.

Life Story #2: Hauwa Balarabe – Searching for Love

Name: - Hauwa Balarabe
Age at time of interview: - 50 years old
Age of first Marriage: - 14 Years
Marital Status: - Married
Children: - None

In Muslim communities of Northern Nigeria, marriage between a Muslim woman and a Christian man is forbidden.

My father used to work for my maternal grandfather and converted to Islam in order to marry my mother. I was about 4 years old when my parents broke up. It was not until after I had grown up that I was told the reason; my father had reverted to Christianity, and my mother refused to stay in the marriage. After the separation, my father disappeared and my mother was forced to wait for him; for over 3 years; because he had not given her a divorce. My mother got married after a long wait. There is a confused custom, where a woman whose husband disappears has to wait for a certain period to give him a chance to return, called *gaiba*, in this case it was for 3 years. This woman's case is pathetic as the reason for the termination of the marriage was not abandonment, but that he reverted to Christianity, and so she had to wait only for 4 months and 10 days to find out if she was pregnant and if not she was free at the end of that period. I was very young so the only effect on me was the separation from my parents.

I was given to *myyapendo* (mother's elder sister), who had lost her only daughter, to raise as her own. I grew up in my aunt's house with her granddaughter Lauratu, who was 2 years older than I. We were both enrolled into primary school, but our education was not stable as my aunt's husband was a railway worker and moved around a lot. I was scared of my aunt as she always treated me badly. I was made to do all the house chores. I was often made to hawk food items, which interrupted my schooling and was sometimes, even told to earn enough to purchase *kayanSallah* (Eid clothes) and cosmetics for myself before I was 14yrs old. "*Ban taba sanin sa sabon takalmi ba, sai dai abani kwance.*" (I never knew what it was to wear new shoes as I was always given cast offs).

When Lauratu got married, I took it for granted that I would continue school. One day I got ready for school, picked up my bag and slate to go, my aunt stopped me to tell me that the only reason she put me in school, was to avoid being harassed and accused of discriminating between her granddaughter and I. That was the end of my schooling.

"I was married off at the age of 14 to a soldier chosen by my aunt and against my will. At the time, I already had a suitor that I would have preferred to marry, but she rejected him because he was wealthy and if I married him I would become well off." Asked how much *sadaaq* she received, she said "I don't know, as I was never told, nor was I given".

Initially my marriage was good, but gradually my husband became abusive. He would beat me with his uniform belt and give all sorts of excuses for the beating. He would get upset and beat me for wanting to discuss personal issues with him, or if I refused to have sex with him. I became very scared of him, so much so I couldn't eat properly. Whenever we were not on good terms, he would fling my plates and dishes after eating. The day I will never forget, was when I served him half cooked food, he was so angry that he flogged me with the buckle of his belt, hook stuck in my head, and I had to go to the hospital to get it removed, and still have the scar on my head. This was the final straw that ended the marriage. "I don't know how it happened, I just heard my aunt giving orders for my things to be packed out of the house." The marriage lasted 2 years without a child.

(When she was recounting this episode to me, she was still bitter despite the fact that this had happened over 30 years earlier).

I went back to live with my aunt and the ill treatment got even worse without Lauratu, my aunt felt she didn't have to restrain herself. I received many marriage proposals but turned them down as I was scared it would be a repeat of my first marriage. When finally I made a decision to marry a person of my choice, my aunt kicked me out of her house. With no house, no money and nowhere to turn to, life became hell and unbearable. All the members of my family refused to support me as they did not want any trouble with my aunt, so I was on my own. I left Kaduna and went to Kano to seek a life; I had heard work was available in Kano before making a decision to go there and seek for work. I roamed from one place to another and eventually found a food seller to work for, she was a good woman and treated me well, as if I was her own daughter; so, I started thinking of going back to school but she did not encourage me. A neighbor persuaded me to go with her to Lagos, where I could go back to school. When we got to Lagos, I discovered she was a commercial sex worker and that was how I became one. *I was 17 years and had nobody to guide me and it looked all glamorous and fun.*

I worked as a commercial sex worker for 8 years in Lagos; I stayed with some of the sex workers in a single room where we paid the head of the room from what we made each day. I had no challenges at all because at that time things were safer and I didn't have a care because I was young and naive. I had lots of friends around me, which made life so nice, and I felt that I was happy. I earned enough to take care of myself. I bought my own clothes, ate well and paid my medical bills; I was living well without a thought for a rainy day, so I was not saving at all. I met a man, Bilyaminu who wanted to marry me, but his father refused to allow the marriage, as he knew my profession.

My friends were going to Saudi Arabia to look for work, in a place where nobody knew my past. On getting there I got a job as a house-help for a Saudi family, it was a terrible experience because I had gotten used to a free lifestyle, where I was in charge of my life and not beholden to anybody, so I kept moving from one family to another looking for a place I could work, and still be in charge of my own life. Old habits die hard and with the influence of my friends. I realized I could continue with my old job (commercial sex), as I was determined to save enough money to return home and buy a house for myself. Commercial sex work in Saudi is a thriving business, as it had been back home. I had no challenges, I was never apprehended, I didn't get pregnant so that wasn't a route I could have been discovered. I was also sending money to my aunt as her husband had died while I was away.

I met a man twenty-five years older than I. And a beautiful relationship blossomed.

My 2nd marriage was to an elderly Saudi Arabian man; Abdallah; this marriage was conducted in secret. He explained to me that, if his wife found out, she could take him to court. He would be imprisoned while I would be deported back to Nigeria. I agreed to these terms because I was desperate to leave my old life behind, and for once have someone to take proper care of me. I got all this and more from Abdallah as he took care of all my needs, but he never spent the night in my house; so that his wife would not find out about me.

The marriage lasted for 18 years, and I got pregnant once but had a miscarriage when it was 4 months. As Abdallah was now aging and getting frail and had diabetes, he decided to terminate our marriage. He had become old, sick and almost impotent and decided I was too young for him, and needed a virile man to take care of me. In spite of my pleas that I was content to stay married to him under those conditions, he would not hear of it and gave me a divorce. I suspect the real reason he divorced me was because he didn't want me to make any claims after his death, which would mean his family would know about me.

“After my marriage with Abdallah ended, I got a job to take care of an elderly Saudi woman. He continued to pay my house rent and upkeep. I bought a house in Kano with my Saudi savings and continued to look after my aunt until she died. I found friends that initiated me into trading in wrappers. I stayed in Saudi for 4 years, then one day I went shopping and bumped into Bilyaminu who had come to Saudi Arabia for *Hajj*”; (Bilyaminu was the man that had wanted to marry her, but the marriage had been opposed by his father and her aunty before she left for Saudi Arabia). “He said he had been looking for me all these years and begged me to return to Nigeria and marry him”. I agreed and returned to Nigeria and stayed in Kano until Bilyaminu turned up for the wedding.

When I arrived in Nigeria with wedding plans in my head, Bilyaminu did not come until I engaged the services of a *mallam*; a person that you pay to pray for you when you are in need of urgent solutions to problems. I paid him to pray for Bilyaminu to come and marry me. He finally came after 4 months, but instead of making the wedding plans he told me that his relatives said even if he married me, I would leave him and go back to Saudi. I was so angry and made him know how angry I was. He then came back and said his relatives insisted that if he has to marry me then we should go for HIV test, which I agreed to.

He finally agreed to the marriage but then on the wedding day he informed my *wali*, my maternal uncle that he had no money to pay the *sadaaq*. It was agreed for him to pay the minimum *sadaaq* which was N6, 200 (the equivalent to US\$23 at that time). The *Imam* that was to contract the marriage told him he could pay the *sadaaq* after the marriage. And that was how we got married, with him not paying upfront.

After the wedding, we stayed in my house for a month all expenses on me, he contributed only N200 (US\$1.50) once. My source of income was my rent from the house I owned, it was paid annually and I used it to buy things I would need for myself in my new life. I had thought that when I moved to live with him in Lagos, he would take care of me. He then went back to Lagos, leaving me in Kano, with the promise to come for me within the month. I waited for over 2 months before he returned, and so I rented out my house and left with him for Lagos.

Living in Lagos was not as I expected, he had rented a very tiny room for me and said he would spend a day in my house, and 2 days with his other wife who knew about me. I rejected his suggestion, and so he agreed to spend 2 days in each house. For food, he would buy rotten ingredients, which made me weep while preparing the meals. He refused to buy me even pure water to drink, and insisted I should drink directly from the tap, despite the fact that Lagos tap water is said to be not potable.

“Pure Water” is a type of treated water sold in cellophane bags, commonly consumed by Nigerians.

Whenever he came to stay in my house, he behaved as if he was in a prison; he would not even eat freely if I was in the room. When I asked him for money, he wanted to know what I needed money for. I felt this to be an insult; it was demeaning that at my age I was being asked to explain what I needed money for. I even suggested to him that I would sell my clothes to start a business, even if to sell pure water but he refused to allow me.

Life was so hard for me living with this man, who treated me like he didn’t enjoy my company. I eventually got fed up and decided to leave, after all he still had not paid the *sadaaq*. I went back to Kano and stayed with friends. He came once to see me and didn’t bring me anything. Rather he told me to use the money for my house rent for transport fare and go back to Lagos.

Reflections

Hauwa Balarabe kept lamenting how unfair husbands can be whenever she recounts what Bilyaminu did to her, while she was in his house. She feels that he married her thinking she had money, but says she still loves him. She believes if she goes back to Saudi to work and earn some money, life would be better with him.

Hauwa Balarabe's perspective on gender relations is she thinks men are meant to be the superior in all aspects of life. She expected her different marriages to be perfect with her being the obedient wife, which never happened. She felt that her lack of education resulted in her not knowing her rights in the society and during her failed marriage, which has contributed to the hardship she went through all her life.

Hauwa Balarabe is very bitter about her childhood experience; she blames her parents for giving her out to her aunt. Her first marriage was a bad experience, which would bring a sad look into her eyes when she talked about it. Whenever she spoke about the second marriage, it always brought a smile to her face. Her third and last marriage was a bad experience and yet she still wants to go back to him only if he will give her the *sadaaq*.

Hauwa Balarabe's life when she was a sex worker, she thought was full of fun, because all she did was sleep in the afternoons, get dressed and go out in the evenings to work with her friends who were also in the same profession. There was no one in her life to tell her what was right or wrong.

Her biggest regrets in her life were not furthering her education, and the end of her marriage with Abdallah. She felt if she had gone to school she would not have married so early and have had so many problems, and would certainly not have become a commercial sex worker. She felt at 54 years, it was too late to start a new life. Hauwa Balarabe is now back in Saudi Arabia.

Analysis of Hauwa Balarabe's story

Childhood and culture of giving children away

A most unfortunate cultural practice that occurs in Nigeria across the divide is giving out of children to relatives, usually to serve the recipient relatives that are either childless, or their children have all left home. This has no religious claim to it, but what is heart rending is that in all the stories told here all have gone through this path, with several negative consequences. These children are severely neglected, abused etc. and their parents, never seem to be able to stop this from happening.

In the case of Hauwa Balarabe, we see a most miserable trajectory. She is given to her maternal aunty who had one child in her life; whose daughter was also given to her and whom Hauwa Balarabe met when she was sent to her. Hauwa Balarabe was enrolled in primary school to accompany Lauratu, but Hauwa Balarabe though younger, had to do all the household chores and do *tallah* (hawk) to supplement her aunt's income. Towards the period of *Eid*, she had to do even more work, in order to make enough to buy what she needed for the festivities.

Hauwa Balarabe's schooling stopped as soon as Lauratu was married off, when her aunty cruelly told her to remove her school uniform when she got ready to go to school. She informed her at that young age that she registered her only because she didn't want people to harass her.

We feel that Hauwa Balarabe's parents neglected her and if in the right country, should have been prosecuted for child neglect. They never once checked on her and didn't care how she fared. They never came up in the story again. Under the concepts of *qiwamah* and *wilayah*, parents have a duty

and responsibility to provide all the spiritual and material needs of their children at least till they get married. Hauwa Balarabe never got this.

Child labour and child abuse (domestic violence)

Hauwa Balarabe's aunty abused her from the day she landed in her house. Islam values children and there are several places in the literature of Islam that says this. The labour laws of Nigeria and internationally, of which Nigeria is a signatory; forbids child labour and abuse of children. Hauwa Balarabe was made to do all the household chores practically as a baby and go out to hawk to earn a living for her aunty. In spite of that, Hauwa Balarabe was never compensated even with gifts during the *Eid* festivals. Hauwa Balarabe had to work extra hard to be able to get enough for her aunty and left over to buy her "*Sallah* clothes and cosmetics". Hauwa Balarabe never got new clothes or shoes and as she said "ban tabasaninsabontakalmiba, saiabanikwance." Hauwa Balarabe always got the cast offs.

Deprived of education

Hauwa Balarabe craved education. She had started and enjoyed going to school, but her aunty removed her and made sure she didn't have a substantive education. Later on in life, when Hauwa Balarabe found work with a nice food seller, she made another attempt to return to school, but the woman discouraged her.

In northern Muslim communities in Nigeria, education of especially the girl child is not really valued. Education as a whole in Nigeria has suffered gross neglect. Even though education in public schools is compulsory up to junior secondary school in Nigeria, government has allowed the quality to deteriorate badly and there is no implementation of ensuring parents send their children to school. Islam also makes education a cornerstone. The Prophet of Islam, is said to have received his first commandment as "READ"... and we are told that one is supposed to search knowledge up to the wall of the world, i.e. China.

Hauwa Balarabe really wanted to have an education, and from her very enterprising nature, she probably would have done very well, seeing how she was able to accumulate wealth, travel, etc., without education.

Child marriage, wife battery and sadaqa

As mentioned above, Hauwa Balarabe had a most wicked aunty that made sure she would not find happiness. At the age of 14, she was married off to a soldier, a man she did not choose or accept. At the age of 14 it is quite normal in her locality to get married so she already had a suitor, someone doing well but her aunty, to spite her, gave her to a lowly soldier. Soldiers have the reputation of being hard and abusive and very soon this became evident in Hauwa's life, it got to a point where everything she did offended him. So, whether it was the food or her request to discuss issues, it almost always ended up with him beating her. He would also fling her dishes and plates and break them up. The final straw was when he beat her with his army belt and the buckle lodged in her scalp. After going to the hospital to remove the buckle, her aunt finally took her away. Hauwa was neither told how much *sadaqa* she got, nor was she given anything in that direction.

Hauwa Balarabe made the best out of her situation

After Hauwa's first marriage ended, she returned to stay with her aunty, who became worse in her treatment and verbal abuse. Hauwa's abusive marriage made her very wary of marrying again. Though many suitors came, she rejected most of them, when she was ready to settle down with one of them her aunt sent her away. So Hauwa left home and went to Kano to seek a future. She found a food-seller that she worked for, and for the first time in life she was treated as a daughter. She ate well and slept well but when she requested to go to school, she wasn't encouraged. A friend enticed her to go to Lagos to seek work.

Hauwa Balarabe went with her neighbor to Lagos, and when they got there she realized her friend was a Commercial Sex Worker (CSW). Hauwa found life with the CSWs an easy life, full of fun and earned enough to make her most comfortable in her life thus far. She was young, naïve and had no positive role model in her life and saw no issues either with health, security, etc. She was able to feed well, dress well and look after any medical needs. She was also able to send money home to her aunty. She found a suitor Bilyaminu who proposed to marry her, but because of her “profession”, which she had been practicing for 8 years, his father refused to allow him. And her aunty, when he went to ask for her hand in marriage rejected it on the basis that his father had refused.

In disappointment, Hauwa Balarabe took the opportunity to go to Saudi Arabia to seek work. In Saudi, she was restless going from one household to another, till she got lured back into her “profession”. She found it was possible to do commercial sex work and survive on it. She made enough money to support her aunty now a widow. Then she found a man and got married.

Second marriage

Hauwa Balarabe got married to her second husband, Abdallah, who was 25 years older than herself. The marriage was good except that Abdallah could not marry her publicly. As he explained to her, she would be deported and he imprisoned for life if his wife ever found out. Abdallah provided her a house and looked after all her material needs for 18 years. But as he started to get old and frail, he terminated the marriage. But he continued to provide accommodation and sustenance.

Hauwa’s biggest regret was the end of her marriage to Abdallah and she never got back that love, peace and general feeling of being worth it.

Third marriage

Apart from the abuse when the going got bad with her husband, Bilyaminu was probably her worst marriage. After her marriage with Abdallah had ended, Hauwa Balarabe found work looking after an old Saudi woman. She also traded. When she went shopping one day during the *Hajj* period, she bumped into Bilyaminu, who persuaded her to return to Nigeria and marry him. Hauwa returned home and waited for Bilyaminu...it took him 4 months to come and with all sorts of hurdles and challenges e.g. that his relatives wanted her to do an HIV test, which she did etc. Eventually when the time of the wedding came, he wanted to cancel as he claimed he didn’t have the money for *sadaaq*. He was allowed to marry her on credit; which he never paid.

It took him long and she used up her funds before he finally took her to Lagos and put her up in a tiny one room apartment, and gave rotten ingredients for her to cook food, and other such misbehaviour that humiliated her. Unhappy with her situation, Hauwa left him and is now back in Saudi, with the ambition to make money and if he paid her, her *sadaaq* she would go back to him.

Hauwa Balarabe’s trajectory

Hauwa is a person with a very good heart. In spite of all her aunt’s negative and disempowering behaviour and effect in her life, Hauwa looked after her till the end. Even though her life if looked at through “moral” lenses will be one of the worst, she does not come out that way. She comes out as a very strong and positive woman that used her situation for the best. She could never be put down and she learnt to fend for herself as soon as she could walk.

Influences in Hauwa Balarabe’s life

Negative

- **Father:** His influence in her life was negative as he disappeared and abandoned his family. This created hardship and resulted in Hauwa being brought up by her maternal aunt.
- **Mother:** Her mother was indifferent and almost absent from Hauwa's life
- **Maternal aunty:** Was a wicked woman who was never nice or pleasant to her. She made her do all house hold chores, and used her for child labour. She stopped her from going to school, once her daughter left home. She prevented her from marrying her choice and instead married her off to a soldier who turned out to be an abusive husband. Her aunt would take the money she sent her, though she knew Hauwa was selling her body to get the money
- **First husband:** He became abusive, raped her, battered her and even hit her with an army belt which got lodged in her skull, she had to be taken to the hospital for it to be removed. This ended the marriage.
- **Mai abinci (food seller):** was both negative and positive in her life. She was a good influence and made her feel like a daughter. The negative aspect was she was not interested in education, and therefore did not support her in her desire to return to school.
- **Neighbor:** Lured her to go into commercial sex work. Gave her first chance at friendship. She found she could stand on her own feet and got some sort of independence
- **Friends/Commercial sex workers:** They became her first family and gave her support
- She found economic empowerment. On the other hand, they didn't give her a good moral orientation.
- **Family:** Were very unsupportive and did not want to be saddled with being responsible, so they took refuge in *fear* of aunty so not to give her any support
- **Second husband-Abdallah:** Because of the laws of his country, he kept their marriage a secret and when he became aged and frail, he ended the marriage, which was devastating for her.
- Abdallah gave her love and luxury, he made her feel like a good person and gave her 18 years of good life, and even when he divorced her he continued to provide accommodation and upkeep.
- **Third husband/ Bilyaminu:** Bilyaminu exploited her from the beginning. He was a weak person and claimed his father stopped their marriage in the beginning, and then when he lured her back from Saudi, thinking she had the funds to make his life comfortable, he claimed his relatives insisted 1) she would abandon him and return to Saudi and then 2) they insisted on HIV test 3) in Lagos he wanted to treat her unfairly and spend less time with her 4) he provided her very poor accommodation and didn't give her good food etc.

Life story #3: Rashida – At times When I Remember I Cry, I Laugh

Name: - Rashida
Age at Marriage: - 16
Present Age: - 35
Marital Status: - Married
Children: - 6

When we were going to hold the interview, Rashida said she would rather her real name was not used. The interview was held in my house even though I had given her the option of conducting it in a restaurant, thinking she might like that. She said she would prefer my house where no one would see her. The interview was held in a mix of English and Hausa language.

Rashida recounts: “My parents were abroad for a few years when I was about 3 years old; during that period, my younger brother and I were sent to live with our grandparents. Even though they treated us very well, I always experienced great feelings of joy and peace when my parents were around and I went home to be with them. Despite my desire to live at home with my parents, I did not have a close relationship with my mother. She was always sending me away to stay with my grandparents. I could not, and still do not understand why my mother used to shun me, what did I do to her? (said sadly with an unhappy expression on her face).”

It is a common custom among Hausa and Fulani tribes to not express love to one's children especially first borns. Rashida was the eldest child of her parents.

When I was about 4 or 5 years old, there was a *Mallam* (Islamic teacher) much older than my mother who held sway over her. She believed everything he told her as the Gospel truth because he was much older than her, and learned. I attended his *Islamiyya* school. He used to rub himself over me and whenever I would not cooperate, he would give me a beating at school. He would then explain the bruises on my body to my mother by saying I was very disruptive in his class. Whenever I would try to explain what happened, my mother would neither listen, nor believe me. To this day, it has affected my relationship with my mother, as I still do not trust her. Rashida naturally felt betrayed by her mother and, since the relationship was a strained one to begin with, this incidence further alienated Rashida from her.

I got married when I was 16 years old after I had completed secondary school. My father was not in favor of the marriage, as he could see I was interested in furthering my education, while my mother wanted me to marry. This could be in part because from the time I was 14 years, I started getting marriage proposals. My marriage was initially not supposed to be conducted at that time, but my peers in my father's family were to be married that week. When my husband found out he immediately sent his folks to ask for my hand in marriage for fear of losing me to another man since my husband was one of my suitors. He had been courting me by sending gifts, his proposal was accepted and within two days preparations were made in order for my marriage to take place at the same time with my peers. There was a lot of friction during this period between my parents, but in the end my mother won the battle and I got married.....It was not until two days after my wedding, I found out that my parents had divorced during the ceremony. My mother to this day has blamed me for the breakup. Rashida's mother was nine (9) when she got married, and this could have been a reason why she did not see anything wrong in her daughter getting married at an early age. Rashida also said that her parents never got on well, and their marriage had been turbulent but yet she continues to blame herself for their break up.

After our wedding ceremony, we moved into my husband's family home which was a compound with houses. Life was tough as his family was very unfriendly and did their best to make things difficult for me. I think it is because they felt I had married him for his money. Her husband's father had died and there was quite a large inheritance to be shared among the family, as he had been a successful business man. They lived under his elder brother's control as the family inheritance had not been shared and being the elder brother, he was in charge of the family affairs.

The water pipe line was diverted to his elder brother's house, effectively cutting off our water supply. My house maids used to get beaten, frustrated and harassed by family members living in the other houses in the compound till they left. Whenever my friends came to visit, they were not welcomed until they too, stopped coming. To make things worse, my husband Safiyanu, changed immediately after we got married; he kept late nights and was very quarrelsome. He was dictatorial and did not tolerate arguments, nor discussions of marital issues with me.

She has had five (5) children for him, and she said for each delivery, the only thing he would provide was the ram for the *suna* (naming ceremony). She would sustain herself and children with the food stuffs (*gara*) provided by her family, and money given as gifts. He would also eat the food but once the food and money had run out he would not contribute anything, and that was when they would start to have conflicts as she now had to ask him for food. She said sometimes the children would go to sleep on hungry stomachs as he had not brought home any food.

During my second pregnancy, I was very ill with typhoid and malaria and couldn't eat for days but all my husband cared about were his sexual desires. An old woman living with us tried to feed me, but I was too weak to even move. One day my mother came to visit and saw the condition I was in. I was taken to hospital where the pregnancy had to be terminated to save my life.

Their sexual relationship was poor, her husband was rough with her and would force entry which was painful. She said sometimes she would wake up in the middle of sleep to find him on top of her. She said she had never been aroused sexually, even he would sometimes put on blue movies for her to watch. She said her childhood experience had affected her to the extent that she just could not enjoy sex. Her husband's treatment of her only worsened matters. She said "*saikacewatakaruwa* (as if I was a prostitute), he would just use me and walk away"

She said after she had delivered her second child, she had to have stitches, and one of the stitches came undone but the doctor ignored it saying as it was small, and it would heal but it never did. Instead, it worsened due to the rough sexual handling by her husband. After her fifth child, she went to see the doctor and when he examined her, he was so shocked that he exclaimed "*mijinki wane irinmutum ne, jahili ne? mijinkibayamiki ta dadi*" (literally what sort of man is he, is he stark ignorant? he is very rough with you sexually).

Her movements were restricted and she once went for six (6months) without visiting her parents. He would shout at me if I asked his permission to go home to visit, and because I did not like being shouted at as it ended in tears, I would not ask. I hardly went out and the times I did, he would take me and return later to pick me up.

I tried to continue with my education as prior to our marriage, Safiyanu had agreed that I would go back to school. When I asked him, he refused even when I tried to show him that I would also be able to contribute to the family income. On one occasion, he told me that if he allowed me to go back to school, I would run off with someone else. Having heard that he was a womanizer, I told him that if I were to run into him with another woman, I would turn a blind eye and pretend I did not know him. (She had been told that he was chasing girls in the higher institutions)

I could not understand this as my brother-in-law allowed his wife to continue her schooling/studies. And this is coming from someone from an educated family. Though, in his case, my husband did not finish his studies, he dropped out of secondary school. On reflection, maybe his lack of education (secondary school level), could have been the reason why he did not allow me to school.

My children's education has been erratic, thereby depriving them of a good education. There was a time they went for 2 years without going to school. On one occasion, she had to sell some of her clothes to buy school uniforms for the children.

He would not let her go out to earn a living, even though she asked him on numerous occasions. She said if she could earn a living she could also contribute to the family income. She said there was a day he did not return home till 12midnight, there was no food in the house and the children were hungry. When he came in empty handed, she said she got up and went to her room to get her veil. She then left the house and started walking. Her intention was to go to her brother's house and get food, she did not have any money for a taxi. As she was walking, she recognised a man passing by who used to live in their compound. She said she called out to him and asked him for some money to pay for a taxi. He gave her the money and stopped a taxi, she said if not for him, she would have had a long walk to her brother. She said on that particular incidence that was how she got food for her children. By the time I had returned home, Safiyanu had covered his tracks by calling my mother and other relatives to tell them that I had left the house and he did not know my whereabouts. If not for my brother he would have caused a scene.

Rashida said she could not confide in her mother as her mother always took Safiyanu's side. She said Safiyanu was always running to her mother to report her. On these occasions, he would buy foodstuff and talk to her in a nice manner, knowing that her mother would come to their house. When her mother would visit, she would say to Rashida – "Kina so kigama da duniyalafiyakuwa?" (do you want to leave this world in a good way?) She had tried on numerous occasions to tell him that it was better for them to try to resolve their problems without involving others, but he would not listen.

She still tried to resolve issues by talking to him, instead he told her that people were influencing her. She once retaliated by telling him she had never seen a more ignorant (*jahili*) person than him. She asked him where in the *hadith* or Qur'an was it where it is stated that a husband should maltreat his wife. She said on this particular incident her blood pressure was so high that the doctor told her, she had narrowly missed having a stroke.

Sometime last year, she decided she had had enough and could not take it anymore. She said she had been married for 16 years, and had reached the point where she hated the sight of him and had even told him so. She left the house and moved into her father's house, where she stayed for seven months before being persuaded to go back by her mother for her children's sake. During the time, she was living in her father's house, we continued to meet regularly. One day she told me that she had decided to return to school and had already enrolled. I was really happy for her and encouraged her to do so. The reasons for her moving back was she did not have somewhere to live, and also for the sake of her children. She said her father's house was small and she had had to stay in his wife's room. She could not go and stay with her mother as they did not get on and her mother would just continue to put pressure on her to return to her husband. She felt really handicapped by her lack of education and inability to get a job, thereby preventing her from being able to rent her own place. She said her husband has always used her unsupportive mother against her.

She returned back to her husband's home due to pressure from her family. She told her family that it was only because they had pressured her into returning that she had done so. She also told Safiyanu, that she had no feelings for him any longer and did not want to have anything further to do with him,

he should leave her alone. She said despite their problems, he still continued to approach her for sex but this time she would refuse him. She said "How can you think about sex when you are hungry and unhappy? *Is marriage all about sex?*"

She said she hates the sight of him that sometimes her feelings are so intense, she has sometimes thought of dousing their home with petrol and setting it ablaze. The turning point came when she found out he had never supported her in her search for work. He would go behind her back and tell those she had approached not to employ her. She said someone offered her a job which she accepted, at the time they also asked her if she had asked her husband's permission and she said she had. She said her husband found out and he called the man and abused him, and also accused the man of adultery with Rashida. She said this caused her to no longer trust him

For many years we did not have a television, when my last child saw a television in someone's house, he screamed out of fear. He could not understand how there were people in the television. **"At times when I remember, I cry, I laugh."** [When recounting this episode, she would at times laugh when she remembered something funny about it.]

Feeling tired and frustrated, I finally took the matter to court. My husband tried to persuade me to drop the case and I resisted. He even tried to turn my children against me saying that I was being swayed by money from other people. I did not even tell my family that I had gone to court to seek a divorce as I knew they would try to stop me. After failed attempts to talk me out of it, my husband refused to divorce me and I was advised by the judge to give him back his *sadaaq* for my freedom (i.e. *khul'*).

She said her family was putting pressure on her not to go through with the divorce, and had even promised to pay her children's school fees, but she was determined to go ahead with it as he had pushed her to the limits. She had reached the point that even if it meant hardship for a while, she was willing to endure than stay with him. She also said that she had been complaining to her family and nobody had done anything to support her, until now when they realized she was determined not to return to her matrimonial home.

Rashida said she regretted having children for him. She said he did not show any love, nor care for his children. The children were also copying their father's behaviour in his treatment of her. e.g. he would fling things at her instead of handing it over to her. Her children also started to do the same thing to her, and she had to tell them off. She also said her elder son was terrified of his father.

I pray when all this is over, my children will be looked after and be given a good education. I warn my kids not to be like their father. I tell them to be good, honest, responsible and trustworthy. If time were to be rewound, I would change all the decisions I had made so far. My advice to a person with similar case is to leave the man without hesitation. My advice to men is they should treat their wives with love and compassion and understanding.

Reflections

I first met Rashida about a year ago. She is an attractive, soft spoken 35-year-old woman. On that first day, she spent an hour telling me about her marital situation. She appeared to be really stressed and she said she did not sleep well at nights. She was suffering from high blood pressure and had started getting nose bleeds as a result. She was lacking in confidence in herself, and found it difficult to talk to people in a group. She was always putting herself down and saying she did not have the brains to do certain tasks. Over the course of time we, have met many times, with encouragement, she enrolled into higher education even though her husband did not approve. She does not have the support of her family and she believes it is because of her children

At the last meeting we had, she broke down and cried. She looked very unhappy and said she felt very frustrated, as she was having problems with her step mother who did not want her in the house (at that point she had moved out of her husband's house into her father's). She wanted to know why everyone was insisting she go back to her husband when they all knew how she felt about him and the poor relationship they had. She said they kept telling her to go back for the sake of her children.

She said how could she go back to her husband when she did not want to have anything to do (sexual relations) with him. If she did, God would be angry with her as a wife. Her role is to cook and sexually satisfy her husband. She believes it to be true, as that is what religious scholars say. She also believes the *hadith* that says there are more women in hell. The husband is always on top.

Due to financial constraints, she had stopped attending classes as she did not have money to pay the fees. I tried to make her bring back her goals into focus as a way of distracting her from her worries, as she looked really stressed out when she came in. By the time she was ready to leave a few hours later, she was looking relaxed and cheerful. She admitted that when she came, she felt she was on the verge of a break down. We looked at setting small goals as a first step which included drawing a simple chart of steps to take to get to where she wanted to go. The first step was to return to school. In terms of her marriage, she is adamant she is not going to return to her husband's house.

I feel really sorry, sad and frustrated for her because what she is going through is also the plight of many women who are in the same situation as her. If she had completed her education, she could have looked for a job, but she is having to start again. She appears to be more confident in herself and she confirmed it herself.

Analysis of Rashida's story

Child marriage

Rashida was actually married as a child at the age of 16, despite the fact that she and her father wanted her to go to school, but her mother was scared of her becoming loose so she insisted on marrying her off because she had good looks and many suitors, including rich men. Her mother was able to win the battle and Rashida was married to her husband who was one of her suitors

Child abuse

As a child, Rashida suffered lack of affection from her mother. She was left to the care of grandparents when she was about 3 years of age. Due to cultural barrier, Rashida's mum always drove her away to her grandparents whenever she sought the mother's attention. Even when Rashida was molested sexually by her Islamic school teacher, an elderly man. He would cane her till she had bruises on her body because she would not allow him to rub his body against hers. His excuse to her mother for the caning was that she was disruptive and difficult in class. Her mother would believe him and not her. His influence on her mother was because he was learned and much older.

Domestic violence

Rashida has gone through a lot, emotionally and physically. Her husband was not gentle with her sexually, he was always very demanding and was selfish not to consider her to the extent that she had a problem with her birth stitches. Rashida thinks her Islamic teacher's molestation affected her sexually, and her husband's attitude only made matters worse. He would not give them food, they would have to survive on "*gara*" traditional gift of food items brought for her by her parents each time she gave birth. She has had five children for him and he is not interested in their schooling to the extent that paying their school fees is a tug of war. Sometimes the children have had to stay away from school, as he had not paid their school fees. Though he had agreed that she could continue her education when she got married but he reneged on his promise. He did not trust her and feels she would leave

him for someone else if the opportunity arose, and hence his refusal to allow her to go to school. It could be that he has an inferiority complex as he does not have much of an education, Rashida is also a very attractive young lady. He made sure he severed all social ties between her and her friends by not allowing her to visit, and if her friends visited, he would treat them badly. He would also use her mother against her whenever there was tension between them. As he knew her mother would come to the house to find out what was going on, he would make sure there was food in the house.

Her mother on the other hand, emotionally blackmailed her by telling her she was the cause of her divorce with Rashida's father, because the divorce took place during her wedding. Rashida's mother would always enforce her decisions on Rashida each time she tries to rebel by blackmailing her with religion and forcing her to stay. She will always believe the husband each time he went to her and report her daughter without giving Rashida a fair hearing.

Rashida's in-laws only made matters worse, for since she married their brother they saw her as marrying him for his inheritance, and so they despised her and her children, even her housemaids were treated badly to the extent that they refused to stay in her house any more.

16 years of enduring this physical and mental torment led Rashida into a devastated feeling of wanting to douse the whole house with petrol and burn it down, and it also left Rashida with high blood pressure. At this time, she took the matter to court and demanded the marriage to be severed, of course her family who were never supportive, continued to be unsupportive.

Trajectory of self

Rashida has never had any support from her mother even when she was molested. Her mother's rejection of her and lack of love has affected her. She has continued to blame herself over the breakup of her parent's marriage, despite the fact that she herself acknowledged that her parent's marriage had always been a volatile one. Rashida's confidence and self-esteem were very low. This could be as a result of her unhappy and abusive marriage. Not being able to further her education or any source of earned income has not helped her in any way. This has had an effect on her health.

Rashida has slowly started to build up confidence in herself and this can be seen in the bold step she took when she initiated divorce proceedings against her husband in court, She still lacks the strong will to continue to pursue her case. For 9 months, the case has been in court as her family asked her to halt proceedings while they resolved the issue.

At 35 years of age, Rashida is still unable to come up with a progressive way to help herself or children. This could also be in part because she has no source of income that she would be able to support herself and her children. She is determined not to go back to her husband's house, despite the pressures of her family that she does so, Rashida feels very constrained as she does not have the support of her family.

Rashida is currently volunteering with an organization and this has helped to boost up her confidence. The timidity she displayed when she first started is gradually reducing and she is able to participate in activities.

In the long run, Rashida will succeed as she has displayed a determination to improve her lot in life.

***Qiwamah and wilayah* in Rashida's life**

Men generally are linked to the claims of guardianship and authority in our community *qiwamah* and *wilayah*. Rashida's husband generally did not exhibit any form of *qiwamah* and *wilayah* (authority and guardianship). He neither properly fed, nor provided for her and the children. there was no

guardianship as he did not treat them well, he could not even agree to simple conversation from his wife. He was also not a good guardian to his children, for he tried to spoil their innocent mind against their mother when she took him to court by telling them someone is luring the mother with gifts. In fact, his general conduct towards his family was bad because he emotionally tortured his wife, and was not being a good role model for the children. Her husband could not even protect her and the children from his relatives. He did not help with health issues, for at one time her mother incidentally came to the house, only to find her seriously ill and she had to be rushed to the hospital. She was pregnant at the time but the baby had to be aborted to save her life.

On her father's part however, he exhibited weakness because he could not make any positive impact to improve her life as a child, and also as an adult.

Influences in Rashida's life

Positive: Rashida had few positive influences in her life such as:

- **Friends:** her friends in the beginning of marriage tried to keep in contact, but her husband's rude behavior stopped them. After she took her husband to court and moved back to her parent's house, her friends also tried to keep in touch but her; while relatives limited her movements. They would warn the parents of her friends, and would blame them for her rebellion.
- **The court:** The court was a positive influence because it gave Rashida some sort of confidence that at last someone was willing to listen, even when the relatives interfered and told the court to hold on. They said they are trying an outside court settlement; however, the court still insisted on leaving the case open.

Negative: As opposed to positive influences, Rashida had her share of negative influence such as:

- **Mother:** Her mother could be labeled abusive, for she treated her badly as a child, always pushing her away and never believed in her, which affected her self-esteem and confidence even when she grew up. Her mother always took her husband's side whenever he made complaints against her without wanting to hear her side of the story. Her mother also resorted to emotional blackmail by reminding her that her (mother's) divorce was a result of Rashida's marriage. She also resorted to the use religion to make Rashida stay in her husband's house.
- **Father:** Rashida's father was weak and was not able to do anything to influence Rashida's life as a child, and as an adult
- **Islamic school teacher:** Her Islamic school teacher molested her as a child which made her develop a disliking for sexual activities even as an adult
- **Husband:** Rashida's husband violated her, he did not provide for her and her children, and was not gentle with her sexually, he refused to allow her to further her education from secondary school certificate, probably because he was a drop out, and severed her from all social ties including television. Should he perceive she has an intention to reveal him, he would quickly provide what they don't have and rush to tell her mother stories which she would believe and back him up because if she comes to the house at the time she would find provisions
- **Her family members:** Her family members never supported her which even made her feel more incapable
- **Husband's family:** Her husband's family resented her and was raising speculations about her marrying him for inheritance which led to her husband's initial ill treatment on marriage they even despise her children and would frustrate any housemaid or relative that comes for visiting.
- **Grandparents:** Now that she is living with the grandfather's wife that took care of her as a child, she is being ill-treated because the grand mum feels she is encroaching on her space.
- **Community:** The community is forbidding its children to interact with her.

Life Story #4: Murja – You will have a piece of wood as a wife

Name of Resource Person	-	Murja
Age at 1 st marriage	-	14 years
Marital status	-	married as first wife
No of children	-	3

I come from a big family and we live in a huge compound in Mubi, which is shared by my father and his elder brother. The compound is separated into 2 sections. (Mubi is a town in Adamawa North Senatorial Districts in Adamawa State.) The people are mostly Traders and it has a very vibrant cattle market mkt. It is part of the protectorate of Cameroun, and part of old Sardauna province. It is a hilly region with a beautiful scenery and during the rainy seasons it is lush with greenery.

My mother was forced to marry my dad at the age of 14 and was so unhappy that she wasn't an easy person to get on with. She gave birth to me when she was 15 ½ years old. Her requests for a divorce never yielded results, so when she threatened to walk out of the marriage and showed it by packing her things, she received her divorce letter. She wasn't allowed to take me with her, when she was ready to leave, my uncle asked her to leave me behind. So, she dropped me with his wife, as she didn't get on with her mate, my Yadikko (step mother) was very jealous of my mother, even though she knew my mother never loved my father, but my dad was obviously in love with her and he showed it, so my mum was scared she would harm me, even in her absence.

Thus, I grew up in my uncle's house, with his second wife, who was really very nice to me. But my Yadikko and paternal aunty Jummai connived to make my life miserable.

At the age of 5, I was registered in school, as my father insisted although his elder brother didn't like the idea at all. My uncle preferred I had Islamic religious knowledge only. Because my father supported me, I was able to get to my second year in Junior Secondary School. At this point my cousin Habu (Abubakar) told his father he wanted to marry me. When I heard the bad news, I went to tell my father, expecting him to support me, but because my uncle is the patriarch of the family, he couldn't do anything. He was even more unhappy when I told him I wanted to be a doctor. My uncle removed me from school supported by my step mum and aunty Jummai; these were the 2 women that made sure I wasn't happy with my life. They encouraged my uncle to withdraw me from school, because they said marriage was better than school. So, in my third year in school, I was withdrawn from school and married off to my cousin Habu, who was 28 and I was only 14 years old. I had told my uncle's wife (my guardian, and not Habu's mother) that I didn't love Habu and spent a lot of time weeping. But my guardian warned me that my uncle was harsh enough to send us packing out of the house and will also not spare my father.

The marriage took place. Habu was a successful business man, so we were comfortable. His formal schooling was limited to primary school, so he didn't value education, but valued only money. To him money is everything. Now everyone knew I didn't love or want to marry him and so he showered me with money, clothes, cosmetics etc. to make me fall in love him, but I told him the only thing that would make me happy was if he allowed me to go back to school. He told me he would never allow that to happen, so I told him, "you will have a piece of wood as a wife".

If we had any misunderstanding; which was often; he would tell his two supporters; my aunty Jummai, and my Yadikko, and all hell would break loose. They would come over to our section of the house and rain abuses on me, they would shut me up by calling me names and compare me with my mother blaming her for my "behavior". Knowing this would hurt me a lot.

So they advised my husband to marry another wife, which he did and I thought I would get some relief,

but the opposite happened. Zainab, my co-wife; became a thorn in my flesh. Our husband withdrew food items from the store and kept it in his room. I was to ask for anything I needed and she would give me what she felt like giving. This was breaking tradition, which gave the first wife the right to control if any control was to be exerted.

The turning for the worst came when I got pregnant, my mate stopped talking to me, she would just look at me, with deep envy and pain that I was pregnant instead of her. Zainab made sure I paid for this. *Murja took a deep shaky breath.*

I had a very difficult pregnancy, I threw up all the time, I couldn't take in anything except water melon, but Zainab doesn't eat water melon, so he refused to buy it and forbade it being brought to the house. But my guardian angel (my uncle's wife) Murja would buy some cut it up in small pieces and smuggle it into the house for me under her wrapper and would hide it under my bed. Hmm, I also had to do all my household chores, if I didn't do it, I would receive a good beating, I really suffered during the first 3 months of my pregnancy. He was so wicked, he would refuse to allow me visit my dad next door and always made sure I went days after I had sought permission. Anytime I went to see my dad I could see the pain in his (my father's) eyes for the misery I was going through. All the love he had for my mother had been transferred to me and that is what put me in trouble with my Yadikko and aunty Jummai.

My father was always buying me things he knew I wanted e.g. he bought fruits and sent it via my aunty Aisha...*she laughed.* My mother remarried. She came to visit me twice when I got married. She pretended that all was well, but I knew it wasn't... but the custom prevented her from confiding in me, as I am her first daughter/child; she doesn't call my name i.e. she refers to all of us as Dada Duniya (mother of the world). The culture frowns at the show of emotions to especially, your first child.

Let's go back to Habu's house (her husband's house). He had wanted to prevent me from attending ante-natal clinic, but I told him he had no right as it was my body and that of my baby's health and safety. So, he refused to give me the money I would require, my father paid for it. I had a safe delivery, a baby girl named after my guardian angel, Aisha. Even with the arrival of the baby the attitude towards me didn't change; as would be normal. Things got worse and now at every little misunderstanding with him or his wife, Habu beat me up.

One day his wife told him I had gone to see my father; which was true I hadn't asked his permission, because I was worried about my little Aisha who was ill, I had assumed Maryam (my maternal aunty); she was a tough woman, when she arrived she found Habu giving me a thrashing with an electric cable. When she witnessed this she exclaimed "What am I seeing? So, all the stories I am hearing are true?" He immediately stopped beating me and started pleading and promising he would never do it again. All she did was stare at him. His wife had been laughing and enjoying the drama, i.e. of my being beaten.

Aunty Maryam gently ordered me "Hauwa'unastusudu, hosulimse ma, be biya, awaraendilla" (get into your room, pack some clothes and child and let's go); at this point Aisha was 8 months; I went in packed and followed my aunt to her house. I stayed in peace, tranquility and bliss for 3 months. Even Habu's father was afraid of my aunty Maryam, I was so happy. My aunty then (after 3 months i.e. the 'iddah period) went to confront my father-in-law/my uncle, she asked him if he was aware what had been going on, and he said he was. So, my aunty asked him if that was what Islam recommended, that his son beat up his wife. He was mute, so she demanded an immediate divorce, as she put it "my daughter doesn't love your son and he hates her, why allow them to remain married". So, he (my uncle) summoned my father to discuss the marriage, but my father refused saying "I was never part of the marriage and will not get involved, as you are the head of the household, your word is law."

So, my uncle called for a meeting with my dad, my aunty Maryam, myself, Habu and himself on a Saturday morning. Before we left for the meeting, my aunty told me, she would understand if I wanted

to return to my husband, she would still support me and monitor that I was treated well in the house. In response, I burst into tears telling her I never loved him but no one listened to me when I said so, the marriage had been forced.

So, we assembled in my uncle's jauleru (reception room). My uncle opened the meeting with a reprimand to both Habu and myself. He showed his displeasure that we put him in bad light in the community, showing that his own son could not maintain a marriage with his own cousin. Habu then promised to change his ways and that he would take care of both myself and Aisha. So, I was asked what my condition was and I said I wanted nothing but to be allowed to go back to school, to realize my dream. My uncle got angry and declared that would never happen in his house. So, my aunty said then a divorce must happen. Meanwhile my father didn't utter a word.

My uncle was so angry he ordered his son to write the letter of divorce, which he did (pronouncing the divorce only once). Two days later I went and packed out of the house and went with my aunty as my father requested her to take me with her. I was 16 years old at this point. I did my *'iddah*.

One day Habu came to the house under the pretext to see Aisha, he just picked her up and took her home and handed her to his mother, this action was with the encouragement of his father. But my aunty Maryam went straight after him, to the house and demanded for Aisha back, threatening to take them to court for kidnapping a baby less than 7 years old from her mother. I have never seen anyone win an argument against uncle Sali, except aunty Maryam. I wish I was like her, I knew right from the beginning I could not marry a man I don't love no one would tell him. My father sent for my Yapendo and stay happily with him.

I was very happy and comfortable in aunty Maryam's house, my father contributed to my upkeep by sending food stuffs, i.e. sacks of maize, rice etc., and he also sent me pocket money. He encouraged me to go back to school, which I did. I got readmitted into JSS 3 (Junior Secondary School). I was in my final year in secondary school, when I met my present husband Mohammed. He encouraged me to study hard and we got married when I completed my secondary school. At this point my uncle insisted I return my daughter to his house, at the age of 5 years. I had made sure that Aisha knew my family, as I used to take her to visit. So, I took her and she now lives with her grandmother.

Mohammed and I are happy we have two children, a boy Ibrahim, and a girl Amina. I am going back to school next session; I want to go to the Federal College of Education (FCE) Yola. I now want to become a teacher.

I believe that forced marriage and withdrawing girls from school to marry them off is a very bad practice. It is very painful to sleep with a man you don't love. Sometimes it felt like rape, even though you are legally married. Withdrawing girls from school is the end of a dream and you don't know what potentials you are snuffling, as they could be of immense benefit to the society, if they were allowed to have a good education. I believe the education of a woman is more important than that of a man.

You know if aunty Maryam had not saved me, I would have left Aisha with her grandmother and run away, never to be seen again. I lost my "mother" Aisha, it was so devastating. Aisha was my mother for all intents and purpose. Another thing I didn't tell you is that my mother was a very beautiful woman and I took after her. I have always been told how beautiful I was and I had a herculean task to ward off men, before I got married to Mohammed. I appreciate being given this opportunity to share my story and hope when it is read, it will serve as a warning to parents and the society, to stop this wicked practice.

When Murja had come to my house for the interview, I had provided snacks and mineral water to make her relax. As she was narrating her story I observed the emotions on her face. The pain, the tears and

the wish that she could turn back the hands of the clock. She is a soft-spoken woman. She said one of her biggest pains, was not being close to her mother. Now her Yadikko and aunty Jummai are no longer trouble, as “they are also afraid of aunty Maryam.” She said and laughed.

Analysis of Murja’s story

Patriarchy

In some of the diverse cultures we have in Nigeria the husband/father’s family claim some rights in the matrimonial home, these claimed rights sometimes even allow them to make certain vital decisions in the family concerning the wife or children. Murja was a victim of such circumstance as her paternal uncle (father’s elder brother) who is the head of the family, took many decisions, sometimes against her wish and her father’s that affected her life. Decisions like her first marriage, her going to school, her divorce, and he also took the decisions of children's custody in the family.

Child guardianship

It is a common culture in the north, for parents to give away their children to elder relatives whose children are grown ups and are now on their own, or to relatives with no issues of their own, sometimes children of broken marriages are forced by the patriarch family to be separated from their mothers and are given away to either their step mothers, or to any member of the family as is the case for Murja. Her mother was quite young and Murja was also quite little when her parents got divorced and Murja’s uncle insisted that she did not go with her, so Murja's mother chose to leave her to the care of one of the uncle’s wives whom she was confident would take care of her daughter. This culture has over the years negatively affected the lives of children, Murja’s mother was even lucky to be allowed to choose the person she gives the custody of her child to, as this is not always the case.

Child marriage

Murja was forced into a marriage by her uncle at the age 14 to her cousin Habu, who at the time was 28 (twice her age), and whom she had no feelings for. Murja was in her third year in secondary school when she was forced to drop out and was then helplessly married to her cousin against her wish.

Polygamy

Murja was a victim of some of the disadvantages of polygamy, her step mother was so jealous of her mother and she extended it to Murja with the help of her sister in-law (Murja’s paternal aunt). They made sure they made her miserable, they supported Murja’s uncle to remove her from school saying that "marriage is better than school". They would also support her husband each time they had an argument and also encouraged him to take a second wife.

On her part, Murja’s mate (Zainab) was very unkind to her, their husband gave Zainab more authority over Murja defying the tradition of the first wife having more authority, Murja had to go to her to get food stuff to cook, she would in turn give her what she felt like, she would report Murja to their husband just to enjoy Murja being beaten up. She would also have a different choice of food than that of Murja, so that Murja would be denied that food since Zainab has total support of their husband.

Domestic violence (physical and emotional)

Murja was tutored in different ways by her husband. Physically her husband would beat her up on slight provocations, and would sometimes use electric cables to beat her. She was made to do her house chores even when her pregnancy made her ill and weak, else she would also receive a good trashing despite her condition.

Emotionally, Murja’s co-wife was made to have more authority over her just to disregard her, he would refuse to allow her visit father, living next door because he knows that would hurt her, when she was pregnant he refused to buy her the fruits she wanted to eat and forbade it to be brought to his house

because his favorite wife does not like fruits, and worst still he would trash her in front of his wife while the wife would be laughing and enjoying seeing her being battered.

Cultural barriers

While there are lots of positive cultures that have shaped the lives of different societies and have made each society distinct from the other, there are others that negatively affected the members of the society, and also deter the society from moving forward and dancing to the tune of time, in Murja's case some of the cultural barriers that negatively affected her childhood are:

- Her paternal uncle (the patriarch) did not believe in education to the extent that he had better sever the marriage of his son and niece than to have an educated daughter in-law. To further strengthen the belief, her step mum and paternal Aunt Jummai both supported him saying "marriage is better than school".
- In a patriarchal culture, everyone submits to the patriarch, and his word was regarded as law, that was what prevented her father or even her guardian (the uncle's wife) from standing up against the uncle, or her husband for her
- Murja also suffered from the culture of giving up the custody of your child should a woman decide to leave a marriage, despite the fact that the religion of Islam gives automatic custody to the mother. Her mother was forced to leave her to the care of another woman, and Murja was also forced to take her own daughter back to her grandfather's house at the age of 5
- Finally, the cultural practice that affected Murja the most was the culture that frowns at mothers showing affection to their children, especially their first child. This culture is so extreme that the mothers do not even call the children by name, they often look for a general nick name attached to the name and address the children as such. This practice has negatively affected Murja like she said herself; her greatest regret in life is not being close to her mum.

***Qiwamah and wilayah* issues in Murja's story (authority and guardianship)**

It is expected that the guardianship and authority of a female (a child, or a grown-up woman) usually belong to either the husband or the father; however, there are varied situations like in Murja's case, where the authority belongs to the patriarch head of the family. Murja's *qiwamah* and *wilayah*'s situation is a bit complicated because her uncle's decision is final, despite the fact that some of the decisions are against her wish and that of her father's, her father cannot exercise his full right as her guardian and protector. He is compelled to resort to other means of doing so through his brother's wife, or through her maternal aunt to help protect his daughter against her tyrant husband. On his part, the husband did not exercise his duty of a provider and a protector, instead he became a tyrant that would come between her and life necessities including proper feeding, health care, and protection against harm. Though her uncle reserved the final authority in the family, he did nothing to protect her from her tyrant husband, he was only vocal when Murja voiced out her needs through her aunt of going to school and keeping her daughter. That was when he showed disagreement to the extent that he preferred her to be divorced by his son, than to allow her go to school because it was against his principle.

Murja's trajectory

Murja's story actually entails a lot of issues ranging from child marriage to denied education, polygamy issues, divorce, child custody, and patriarchy. Murja was lucky to be saved from her difficult marriage by her maternal aunt who stood up against her patriarch uncle, and is now happily married with two children to Mohammed, her second husband whom she met in her last year in secondary school, and they got married after completing her secondary education. Murja's father supported her during her stay with her aunt with food items, school fees, and other things before she got married. On Murja's part however, she does not exhibit any inner strength to will herself out of difficult situations. Murja's

story does not exhibit any personal economic strength to fend for herself, if Murja did not have her father and her maternal aunt to stand for her she might not have been saved from that difficult situation. Murja's father supported her still after the marriage until she finished her schooling, and she eventually remarried. One thing is she has always been determined to obtain an education, in that she has never wavered.

Influences in Murja's story

Murja has, over the years, had her share of positive and negative influences in her life as enumerated below:

Positive influences

- **Aisha:** The patriarchal uncle's wife (first husband's stepmother) who took care of Murja from childhood since the time her uncle demanded she should be left under his custody. Aisha continued to take care of Murja even when she was having problems in her first marriage. Murja's first daughter was named after her
- **Murja's father:** He has been supportive towards Murja, but passive, he did not have the strength to outwardly protect and support his daughter because he did not want to go against the patriarch culture, he had to support her through her guardian Aisha and her maternal aunt, Maryam.
- **Aunty Maryam:** She also was very supportive towards Murja. She stood against Murja's paternal uncle, and made sure that Murja was relieved of the first marriage, made sure Murja got what she wanted, and also forced Murja's child to be brought back to her when the father took the child at barely the age of one. Murja sees her Aunty Maryam as her role model, as she said when narrating her story "I wish I was like her"
- **Mohammed (second husband):** She met him when she was in her final year in Secondary School, and his encouragement and support also contributed in making her succeed in her exams. Murja also narrated that he is in support of her to further her education. She is happily married to him and they have two children.

Negative influences

- **Murja's step mum (Yadikko):** Her step mum was in support of removing her from school and be gotten married, she was jealous of her mother and transferred the hatred to Murja. She was among those whom encouraged Habu (her first husband) to take another wife. She would always back him up each time they have an argument with her first husband telling her things she knows will hurt her feelings.
- **Aunty Jummai (Goggo):** she also contributed in making Murja's life miserable, and supported in marrying her off to the man she didn't love. She and her step mum would always support her husband and connive to make her life miserable. The two women would rain abuses on her each time she had an argument with her husband.
- **Habu (first husband):** He insisted on marrying Murja, even though he knew she did not love him. He showered her with gifts and money to try to win her love but when she did not reciprocate, he changed towards her and started to maltreat her physically, sexually and psychologically. He has also deprived her of her right to education.

Life Story #5: Safiya – Now I had made my bed, I had to lie in it

Name: - Safiya
Age at Marriage: - 15
Marital Status: - Married
Children: - 9

The culture where Safiya was born into, allows for siblings of parents, the patriarch of the family etc., to take a child of the family to “look after it”. This was how Safiya was given to her paternal aunty to bring up, when she was weaned at the age of 2 years, this was in Mayo Lope, Taraba State. Her aunt’s husband was a Qur’anic school teacher, but her aunt prevented her from acquiring the knowledge of the Qur’an at the age of 5 years, as is the normal practice in Muslim families in the area, instead she was sent out to hawk kerosene from house-to-house in the neighbourhood. I got to know of her story through a friend who assists her to process groundnuts, for the extraction of oil and groundnut cakes. When I invited her for the interview, she appeared anxious. During the interview, she said:

“I was married off at the age of 15 years to a 65-year old man, a friend of my auntie’s husband (uncle). We learnt he (my uncle) had been receiving “*kudintoshi*” (money to show his interest). My auntie had not taught me any housework, every morning I left the house at 6.30 a.m. to hawk pancakes and bring her back money. My breakfast was from my wares. I would return home by 11 a.m. to pick up a tray of groundnut cakes and oil, to return home for lunch and then take kerosene to go from house-to-house to sell. I will finally return home at 6 p.m. That was my daily routine.”

“No one invited me to join the children learning the Qur’an, a class which my uncle ran in front of the house. When my maternal uncle suggested I be registered in school my uncle said “*bokoaisaikaaruwai*” (western education is only for commercial sex workers) but I was hawking all over the town, with no guardian, wasn’t that enough for me to go astray?” “They used to catch us and take us to school, but my uncle always used to come to the school and take us back home. Sometimes he even hid us in the rumbu (local silos). “*Konawi am ni, da hubirde ha yonde, amma be hollai am jangugo*” (what hurt most was that the fire of learning was lit on our door step, but I wasn’t taught to read and write).”

“When I reached 15 years, my auntie’s husband informed me I was to be married to his friend *MallamSani*, from Kano, whose wife was old and they needed support. In reaction, I informed him that I had someone I was in love with, whom I would like to marry.” She was overruled and married off to *MallamSani*. “I resisted and kept running away, I never spent a week in that house. Once I even left through the back door, before my escorts had left. This continued for about a year, so *MallamSani* decided to divorce me and sent the divorce letter to my guardians (my uncle and aunty). But I wasn’t allowed to pack out of the house, by my guardians as they continued to try to persuade me to go back. But life continued the same as I refused to stay.”

“He gave me a second divorce but this time handed the divorce letter to me, I went straight to the motor park, hired a truck, packed all my things and went back to my father’s house in Kunini (a village in Taraba State, close to Zainabwa State). After my ‘*iddah*’ (4 months, and 10 days waiting period), I presented my father’s friend’s son, Mustapha to my dad as my proposed husband, but my father refused the marriage on the basis that he didn’t want to spoil his relationship with his friend.”

“I left for Yola with my sister, although my dad wasn’t happy I was leaving home, he let me go, as my sister would be my caretaker from that point on. My sister lived in a large compound with other tenants. I met an old woman there, whom I assisted in her chores. She was so happy with the assistance I was giving her that she knows the ethnic group of her father, whose father was a hunter in the Baissa area of Taraba State. “My father insisted that Mumuye men do not make good husbands. Trying to score points for the man, I informed my dad that he was related to my auntie’s husband, and he asked me if

my aunty was happy.

So, I requested he give me a letter to take to my older brother in Yola, he did though he was not happy doing so. When I got to my brother, he decided I should marry a man from his sect (Muslim - my brother is Izala). He refused the other man because he said, he was from a different sect (*Tariqa*). I tried to explain to him why I couldn't marry an Izala; i.e. Izala's did not allow women any freedom. I then threatened to disappear if he refused to conduct the marriage. A friend of his saved the situation and conducted the marriage and I have been married to my present husband since then.

I returned to my father's house, but my husband made no move for me to move in with him for a whole year. The look pasted on my father's face was "I told you so". My Yadikko advised me to go to my husband house and move in. I decided to go to Yola to seek for a divorce from the man. When I got there, I demanded why he hadn't made any moves for me to join him, but he pleaded with me to be patient as he hadn't been able to get the money to buy the wedding trousseau as demanded by custom and tradition. He pleaded with me to return home and this time within the week he appeared with the trousseau (4 wrappers, shoes, cosmetics etc.). At the time when I moved in to my husband's house, he already had a wife with 3 children.

Making preparations to move to my husband's house, my dad refused to contribute a kobo, as demanded by custom i.e. women are expected to take with them kayangara (grains such as maize, rice, groundnut oil, other food stuffs and snacks etc.). He insisted that the man had already proven he would not look after me and he didn't like him. I went to see my maternal uncle in Ganye, Zainabwa State, who gave me a sack of groundnuts (100kg), which I sold then for 3000 naira, then a lot of money, and it enabled me to get all my needs, which I added to my property from my previous marriage and moved to my husband's house.

Unfortunately, when I moved into my husband's house, my father's prediction proved to be correct. The man was completely irresponsible and didn't provide for me. Fortunately, and unfortunately all at the same time; I got pregnant. Unfortunately, because I was virtually looking after myself with no support from him, but fortunately because I had always wanted children. *Now I had made my bed, I had to lie in it.* He did not provide enough food for the house let alone other things, which I heard Islam says he is supposed to do. To survive I was forced to find a way to supplement his contribution, so I started petty trading. Hmmm you know what? The babies started coming every two years. I went through a lot of discomfort and misunderstanding within the family. The succor I had was, my father relented and "withdrew the sword". He sent me sacks of maize and rice and money and encouraged me to stay and look after my children. In all I had ten children but lost one.

The first four children didn't go to school immediately, as they were hawking pure water (potable water in plastic bags), *alale* (bean cakes), boiled yam etc., which I made, from house-to-house to make enough money for us to survive. One day my eldest child/son asked me why he wasn't going to school like all his mates in the neighborhood. I tried hard not to cry, but explained to him that I couldn't afford to pay the school fees, but that if they earned enough from the hawking, he can go to school. My neighbours offered to pay the school fees for him, while I provided books, uniform etc." My husband never contributed any money towards our children's schooling; he would always tell me that he did not have any money. I told elders in the community, whom I felt if they spoke to him about it, he would listen to them. I do not know if they spoke to him or he just did not bother to listen to them, nothing changed. So I stopped telling them to talk to him.

My husband wanted me to send our daughter to Kaduna state to go to secondary school and she could stay with a family who he said were really nice and they would look after her. I was not in favour of that because I remembered my own experience with staying with other people. I told him so and told him times had changed and people were not as willing to look after other people's children. Also, I did not

know this woman and if we sent our daughter to them, it could cause tension between our daughter and the man's wife, who might see her as a potential rival. My husband got upset and said I was trying to usurp his authority. I then acquiesced, we sent her to the family, and she was with them for almost a year when they sent her back without a word of explanation as to what had happened. I took my daughter to the woman's mother to find out what had happened but no one told me anything. Now that she was back with us, my husband did not do anything to help our daughter get schooling, I had to do all the struggling to get her into school.

I decided to go into full scale trading and so I went to a micro-finance bank, *Hududullah*, and borrowed 4000 naira to start trading and saving. When I finished paying the loan and asked how much money I had saved, I was told I had saved 4000 naira, so I started trading in vegetables and soup ingredients, luckily, we lived far from the market, so I was able to sell my wares. With the proceeds, I sent my children to school and met other needs of the house. By this time, I had 7 children.

Now let me return to my father, he was now very supportive for the sake of the children, but unfortunately he died when I had my eighth child. I now had to tighten my belt as I also had to cater for my mother, but she was strong enough to still farm and supported me with produce from her farm.

My husband was still irresponsible and didn't care to be productive at all. Both of us were illiterate, we neither had Islamic nor western education. I vowed that my children would be educated. I am sure if I had been educated my miserable life would not have been. By this time, I had 9 children all in public schools; 4 in secondary school, 3 in primary school, while 2 were still too young to go to school. After my ninth child, I was advised medically to stop giving birth, on consulting my husband he said he would have supported me to go for family planning if not for the fact that it was against religion. He did not see that him not taking care of us was against the teaching of Islam, as usual I went on my own and started injection but as God would have it, I forgot a dose and got pregnant again for my tenth. One thing now is our eldest son, left to go and see my mother and hasn't returned. You know my husband has never asked where he has gone to. And I have not been able to find out if the boy ever got there and what he was doing.

One thing I didn't tell you earlier is that I have a co-wife, she is worse off, as she isn't as industrious as me, so she isn't able to cater for her children. A good thing the government has done is provide children in public schools with free school uniforms.

Safiya advised that "three main things shouldn't happen to a girl: 1) lack of education, a girl should be educated to a least secondary school level, 2) child-marriage, 3) forced marriage. If these things happen to a girl, her life could be destroyed, if she isn't lucky. As she can't fight for her rights, she will not know what to do with her life and may even lose her family, if she went into commercial sex work for survival."

She believes that religion stipulates that a man should take care, and provide for his family but in her case this has not happened, and she is the one who has had to struggle and is still struggling to care for her children. To cope with the situation she is in, she prays to God to take her mind away from the problems her husband has put her in and to give her the strength to bear her burdens. She concluded by saying "Parents and Society should be careful".

Analysis of Safiya's life story

Patriarchy

There is a strong belief system across the diverse cultures in Nigeria that allows for husband/father's family to reserve certain rights and claims in the matrimonial home as regards the wife and the children, this practice is known as patriarchy. Safiya at a very young age (2 years) was given away to her father's sister. (It is expected that once a child is given away, full custody and guardianship belongs to the new

family).

Child abuse and child labor

Safiya experienced different forms of child abuse. Her aunty maltreated her by sending her to hawk for her from the age of 5 she hawked for most of the day but did not have a plate of food from the family's pot, but ate only from the food remains of the food she hawked.

Her aunty did not enroll her in Qur'anic school despite the fact that her uncle (aunty's husband) had a Qur'anic school right in front of his house. And when her maternal uncle visited, he suggested that she be enrolled in primary school, but that too was rejected. Her paternal uncle said western education was for commercial sex workers. Even though as her guardians, and being a minor, her aunty and uncle should have looked after, and provided for her, they did not do so. They did not have her best interests at heart but their own selfish interests.

Child marriage

Safiya was married off at the age of 15 years to a 65-year old man. The reason for the marriage was that his wife was old and needed support. Though she protested and said she had someone she wanted to marry, she was overruled. The marriage eventually ended as she refused to stay and kept running away.

Polygamy

When she finally married a man of her choice, things were not as she has hoped. She was faced with a lot of challenges, her husband took another wife and that was when life took a turn for the worse, his meager resources could not sustain the family and as rivals, they were at each other's throat despite their situation.

Education

Safiya has had no formal or religious education due to her guardian's not allowing her to attend any sort of school. Her uncle had an *Islamiyya* outside his house, where he taught other children and which she had to pass every day on her way out to hawk his wife's wares. Her uncle actively prevented her from attending western education as he did not believe in it.

The Qur'an stresses importance of knowledge and learning in order to be able to practice one's faith and lives up to its ideals. Her uncle who should have known better considering that he had an *Islamiyya* school, but did not consider it important that his ward should be imparted with knowledge, but rather pursued his own selfish ideologies.

Qiwamah and wilayah issues in Safiya's life

It is generally believed that men are supposed to be the providers and custodians of women, in Safiya's situation, right from the time she was born. Safiya's father, by giving her to her aunt and uncle to bring up, shirked his duties. She was then not maintained, nor protected by her aunt and uncle as they did not feed her from the family food, and sent her out to hawk at such a young age putting her at risk of molestation, or worse. Safiya was denied both Islamic and western education by her guardian.

When she got married, to her second husband, he turned out to be irresponsible and she had to maintain herself and her children. Her husband who could not adequately cater for her and her children, also took another wife who bore him children despite his meager earnings. He showed negligence on issues regarding her well-being and that of not only her children, but also to other children from his other wife. Safiya's husband would sometimes hide behind the façade of religion just to shy away from his responsibilities neglecting the fact that he does not conform to the teachings of Islam as regards to taking care of his family.

Safiya's trajectory

Safiya has gone through a lot from her childhood to her adulthood, but her strong personality has seen her through a lot of her problems, ranging from child abuse and child labor to deprived education, child marriage, negligence and lack of guardianship. Safiya was able to pull through all of this, and was able to set up a business to cater for herself and nine children. Another very commendable attribute of Safiya is her sense of responsibility. Safiya has accepted her responsibility as a mother of nine and is ready to do anything to protect and give them a good life including sacrificing her happiness and staying in an unhappy marriage, hence the title of her story "now I have made my bed, I have to lie in it". This is a persistent problem in the north, where women run off from an unhappy marriage and leave the children to the mercy of the society. These children later turn out to be thugs, drug addicts, or commit all sorts of social vices since they lack the love and support of both parents. This is very important in the life of children as it allows them to grow into responsible adults with a heart full of love to extend to other people within their environment. Should a child lack support or affection from both the mother and the father, the tendency of him growing up without any sense of responsibility and affection would not be ruled out. And finally, Safiya's ability to get over her problems, and not to allow her bitterness from both past and present experiences, affect her inwardly or deter her is a very commendable attribute that makes her a role model worth emulating by other women. Safiya has a very strong personality with determination to educate her children.

Circle of influence in Safiya's story

A number of people influenced Safiya's life negatively and positively as would be seen below:

Negative influences:

- **Safiya's father:** Safiya's father gave her away to his sister and her husband when she was barely an infant; he refused her choices of husbands, and at the beginning of her marriage withheld any support for her or her children.
- **Safiya's paternal aunt:** subjected her to child hawking at the age of 5 for almost 12 hours, denied her education even the Qur'anic education at their door stop where Safiya grew up without any love and affection from her aunt, she did not even have a plate in their cooking pot but ate from the remains of what she hawked.
- **Uncle (aunt's husband):** Safiya's uncle never had her best interest, he denied her both western and Islamic education even when he was teaching other children in his house, He did not believe in western education because to him "western education is for commercial sex workers," but would rather send her hawking for almost 12 hours despite the obvious dangers. When she was 15, he married her off to a man 50 years older, whom was his friend and from whom he has been collecting money in exchange for her hand. The man's reasons for marrying her was that wife was old and needed support
- **First husband:** was selfish enough to marry a young girl of that age for selfish reasons without thinking of what becomes of her future.
- **Second husband:** was never supportive despite the fact that she had ten children for him, she has to struggle to maintain herself and her children, he took no interest in their feeding, clothing, education, and health care.

Positive influences:

- **Father:** Safiya's father later dropped the sword and supported his daughter and her children with sacks of grains and other things; this encouraged her to endure for her children's sake
- **Siblings:** her siblings provided some sort of shelter for her in difficult times, she went with her sister after separation with her first husband, where she met her current husband, and also went to her brother when her father would not marry her to her second husband. Her brother, despite his reservations allowed his friend to contract the marriage on his behalf.

- **Neighbors:** Her neighbors provided some sort of comfort, they helped her to enroll her children into school and supported them with some of the items they needed for school:
- **Micro-finance bank:** The microfinance bank helped her with loan to start a business, they also help her to save her own capital in the course of her transaction with the bank, it encouraged her to continue her business and also allowed for the business to flourish.

Life Story #6: Zainab – The Inheritor is here, the prostitute’s younger brother

Name: Zainab
Age of marriage: 14 years
Marital Status: Married
Numbers of children: Seven (all girls)

My name is Zainab and I come from a family that consists of my father, three wives including my mother, and eight children – five from my stepmother and three from my mother in Michika, Yola.

It is part of the culture of people in Adamawa to give the child to a relative or friend to be brought up.

Generally, it is the practice of families that girls don't attend formal school, but only Islamic schools, and even then, girls are not encouraged to go beyond the last ten surahs of the Holy Qur'an. However, boys attend both formal and Islamic schools.

My father’s elderly friend, Mallam Jingi, lived alone in Yola with two wives. All their children are boys and they had at the time grown up and left home. At the age of twelve, Mallam Jingi asked my father if he would let me move to his house so that I can brighten his home and help his elderly wives with their chores. My father agreed. I did not enjoy staying with them as I was used like a slave and had to do all their chores.

Later, my older half-sister got married and came to live in Yola. One day when Mallam Jingi took me to visit her, I refused to go back to his house. My half-sister had by then set up a provision shop and kept me busy in it as a sales girl as well as a house girl in her home.

While working in the shop, a man by name of Mallam Baba frequently came and would buy provisions from me. Every time he bought something he would pay more than the requested amount and would not accept the change owed to him. When this happened, I would bring it to the notice of my sister and give her the extra amount with the intention that she would return the money back to him. Whether my sister actually returned it, I don’t know.

Michika is a local government in Adamawa State. It is bordered on the East by Cameroon. Michika is 96 percent Christian while the remaining four percent are Muslims and other traditional religions. Farming and fishing are the main occupations of the people.

One evening at the age of fourteen, two elderly men came into my sister’s house. I welcomed them, spread a mat for them and brought water. I never for one moment thought that these men were representing Mallam Baba, and had come to ask for my hand in marriage. No one informed me. Thereafter, all I saw was my sister buying bridal gifts, a bed, dishes, pots etc. It never occurred to me that they were for me. I only came to find out when one day Mallam Baba’s friend came to the shop and called me ‘amariya’ (new bride). I then asked him, “Who is the amariya?”

He then replied, “Don’t you know you are to be married on Friday (this day was a Monday)”.

Perplexed and with my heart in my mouth I asked, “to whom?” He responded – “Mallam Bala!”

It dawned on me that all the bridal shopping activity was for me! I started crying. I went to confront my sister and she confirmed it. I told her that I already had someone else that I loved and I did not love this person. With finality, she told me that I had to marry Mallam Bala! Friday came and the marriage took place without any other family members or relatives being around. My father was only informed

after the marriage took place. Our father was not happy about it but it was too late and there was nothing he could do about it.

The first year of marriage went without my becoming pregnant, and my husband's sisters started complaining and asking why I had not yet conceived. Thereafter, I got pregnant and had a girl. There was jubilation in the family. Having a baby girl as a first born is considered a blessing, and is respected as a mother. Not long after, I got pregnant and had another girl.

At this point my sister came to my house one day and asked me to leave my husband's house. I asked her why, and my sister said that the reason why she married me off to Mallam Bala in the first place was because she thought I was pregnant, and when Mallam Bala showed an interest in marrying me she was agreeable as she wanted to cover up the shameful act of having a baby outside wedlock.

Flabbergasted I asked her why she had not asked me at the time. I then informed her that I would not leave my husband's house. My sister got angry and said if I don't leave, she will take back all the bridal items that she bought me and ordered me to go and pack. I told her I will not leave my children and husband.

My sister packed everything that she personally gave me at the time of the wedding and left only those things that were bought with the dowry money – the bed, mattress, bucket, one big dish (*daru*), mortar and pestle. When my husband returned he found me crying. He asked what was wrong and I told him what happened. He promptly went to the market and replaced many of the items that were my immediate needs like pots, dishes and cutlery.

Ever since that time there was no peace between my sister and me. She was determined that I leave my husband's house. At last she got what she wanted, and my husband succumbed and divorced me when my second baby was 2 years old. Neighbours tried to prevent me from going, but my sister had come with a truck to pack my things. She left a small mattress for my children explaining that she would not go with them and would leave them for my husband to bring up. I was so unhappy and upset about this situation but there was nothing I could do.

I went back to my father's house in Michika, Yola. After the '*iddah*' period (waiting period of 3 months), I wanted to get married but my father refused and insisted that I go back to my husband. I then left for Gombe to stay with another older sister (maternal half-sister). I stayed with her for six months.

While I was away in Gombe, my husband came with a friend (he later turned out to be the father of a young girl that my husband would later marry) asking that I return as his wife. With this development, my father then sent for me. On my return, he told me to go back to Michika to the father of my children. I then packed and headed for Michika, and instead of going straight to my husband's house, I went to my sister's house. My sister immediately discouraged me from going back to my husband, but my mind was made up. When she realized she was getting nowhere, one night she asked me to leave her house. It was then I left for my husband's house. Very sadly my father died two weeks after my re-marriage.

Shortly after my return, I got pregnant and had another girl. After four girls, my husband's sisters started complaining about the number of girls that I was giving birth to. They suggested to my husband that he should marry again so that he could have male children. He married a woman called Bilkisu. (Her father was the man that accompanied my husband to my father's house requesting my return). Bilkisu soon got pregnant and had a baby boy. The day she returned from the hospital, they came through the back door for fear, that out of jealousy I may have planted something to harm the baby boy. They started taunting me and would bathe the baby boy under my window and would sing "*ansamumagaji, kaninkaruwa*". This literally means "*the inheritor is here, the prostitute's younger brother*". The word *karuwa* is an insult and heavily frowned upon, even if one is known as a sex worker.

[While narrating this story, due to the humiliation she felt, Zainab started crying.]

Bilkisu and her friends would not even allow my children to touch the baby boy. Not long after, the baby boy died. Bilkisu accused me of the death of the boy. I consoled my husband on the death but I refused to condole Bilkisu. The fact that I did not condole Bilkisu later proved to be a problem especially when my husband's sisters enquired whether I did. I explained I did not because when my brother died, Bilkisu did not condole me. At the time, I was pregnant with my 6th child. All Bilkisu commented on was the fact that I had come back from a scan and the gynecologist had confirmed I was pregnant with another girl! For that reason, I refused to condole her.

Things worsened in our household when Bilkisu announced that she knew the man that gave me the potion that killed her son. I was outraged and I told her I was going to take her to court for defamation. Our husband begged me not to go to court. Bilkisu got pregnant again and delivered a baby boy. Thereafter, I also became pregnant and all Bilkisu kept saying was "*zaayiabinkunya a gidannankuma*" (a shameful act is about to happen again in this house). I delivered my 7th baby, another girl.

Our husband at this point started to favour Bilkisu. I, however, stood up to him and told him to reflect back and reminded him that out of eleven of the children that his mother had, he was the last and only male. Further that from my mother, she had four boys and three girls. So as far as I was concerned my husband was the problem and not me. It was after I stood my ground, that the harassment on my inability to produce boys, reduced.

My husband does his best in looking after our children in terms of feeding, clothing and schooling. He contributes forty percent towards expenses as he is not very well off, and I pay the rest. I generate an income from groundnut cakes (*kulikuli*), groundnut oil, daddawa, soft drinks. I am also into tailoring ... anything to help put my children through school.

My first daughter wants to be a nurse, she is currently in her second year in senior secondary school; the second is in her third year in junior secondary school, and wants to be a lawyer while others are in primary and nursery schools. All I want is for Allah to help me in fulfilling my children's dreams.

Looking back on my life, I would not encourage parents to withdraw their children from school and marry them off to unknown elderly suitors. I would strongly advise all females to be educated to the highest level and let her choose the man she wants to marry. If my husband decides to take any of my children out of school, there will be war in our home.

Reflections

[During the discussion, Zainab's moods fluctuated depending on what she was narrating. If it was pain, her eyes filled with tears. I have known Zainab ever since she moved into my neighborhood. She is a hardworking and determined individual. She tries to give her best to her children, and ensures they do not lack anything. Her daughters are bright and are doing well academically. They are well disciplined and look up to her.

Analysis of Zainab's story

Child marriage and formative years

It can be defined as a formal or informal union before the age of 18. Some of the causes of child marriage include poverty, bride price, religion, dowry, and laws that allow child marriages. In many Islamic countries, child marriage is a very common practice; girls below the age of puberty are often forcibly married to older men for various gains by the girl's guardian, or parents, which goes against the doctrine of *Wilayah* that means guardianship as a form of control or protection of a person/child

which makes it incumbent on the guardian or parent to look out for the best interest of the child. This was not the case in Zainab's life, and has affected her greatly.

In this instance, Zainab was twelve years old she was sent to live with her Father's elderly friend's (Mallam Jingi) household. Her being sent to his house was so she could help his elderly wives with all the house chores. She recalls that she felt like a slave and did not feel welcome there, or like she was with her guardians who are supposed to look after her and not exploit her. She did not attend any formal school, neither did she attend Islamic school, she wasted a vital part of her youth doing nothing but working for people who did not treat her well.

When Zainab was fourteen years old, *Mallam Jingi* took her to visit her half-sister, when she stayed for a little while, she refused to go back to his house saying that she preferred staying with her half-sister who owned a provision shop. Unfortunately for her, she would also end up working very hard at her half-sister's shop, and when she closed, had to go home and do all the house chores. She was always overworked.

One day, two elderly men came into her half-sister's house; she served them water and spread a mat for them to sit on. Unknown to her, they had come to ask for her hand in marriage to a man (*Mallam Bala*) twice her age. She had no idea that this was what had brought the men and dutifully did what was expected of her and left. After her half-sister met with them, they agreed that Zainab would be married in a few days' time. At no time was she informed of the impending marriage. A date was set for the marriage and the next thing Zainab knew, she was married.

This in essence, shows the abuse of power on the part of Zainab's half-sister, her father's friend and *Mallam Bala* as her guardian and protector, who instead of looking after her and guiding her, took advantage of her age, her innocence and helplessness. They ruined Zainab's life, and instead of playing their roles correctly, they reiterated the fact that she lives in a patriarchal society where men are the dominant characters, and women are the passive ones who have no control or say in the way their lives are lived. In this life story, the doctrine of *qiwamah* has been misused- where man's claim to authority and guardianship are misused and misinterpreted for their pleasure and enjoyment. Zainab has had to suffer for this misguided understanding and implementation of *qiwamah*.

Polygamy

Polygamy is defined as a marriage where one man is married to more than one woman. In Islam, Polygamy is defined as a marriage where one man is married to a limit of four women at the same time. "...marry women of your choice, two, three, four, but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with them, then only one." (Qur'an 4:3). In practice, polygamy is different from the intention given in the Qur'an. Men use the scripture as a way to impose their authority and control over women (wives). This in essence, is what is known as *qiwamah*, this form of guardianship and authority/control.

Zainab was born into a polygamous home. Her father had three wives including her mother, and eight children- Five from her stepmother, and three from her mother. When she was twelve years old, she was sent to live with her father's friend Mallam Jingi, who had two wives. Zainab was made to do all the chores in the house and was not allowed to go to school like the other children. Already before the age of fourteen, Zainab had suffered the ills and abuse of polygamy from those who were supposed to act as her guardians and protectors.

Sometime after Zainab was married to *Mallam Bala*, she had seven baby girls in total; this did not sit well with the general African setting and particularly the setting at Yola, where Zainab came from. With influence from her in-laws and her husband's friends, *Mallam Bala* married another wife whose sole role was to give birth to a baby boy for the family since it was the belief that Zainab could not give them a boy.

Bilkisu (the second wife) would never let Zainab touch the new baby boy and would not let any of the seven girls touch him either. When the baby boy died, Zainab was accused of killing him. She was ostracized and treated very badly by her co-wife and in-laws, *Mallam Bala* was also very bad to Zainab. She was harassed constantly by her husband and he started to prefer Bilkisu to Zainab because she was able to produce a male child, while Zainab could not. This carried on for years and Zainab became sadder and more self-reliant. Polygamy affected Zainab's life from her birth and up until her marriage.

Zainab refuses to allow her past and present predicament to affect her and her children, so she struggles to work. She sews clothes (as a tailor), and she sells provisions so that she can generate an income to put her children through school. The role of her husband as provider and maintainer under the rule of *qiwamah-wilayah* has been neglected and luckily for Zainab, she is empowered enough to help her situation positively.

Zainab and child labor

When Zainab was twelve years old, she was given away to her father's best friend *MallamJingi* and his wives, where she was introduced into hardship. She was made to do all the chores, fetch water, cook, clean and hawk items from morning till evening. She recalls being treated like a slave for time there at the house.

By the time Zainab was fourteen years old, she went to live with her half-sister- which was just as bad as when she was living with *MallamJingi* and his family. She was made to do all the chores, cook, clean and work at her half-sister's shop. It was from this house that she was forced into Child marriage. Child labour deprives a child of education, love and a bright future. Zainab, was not educated and was taken advantage of by everyone that was meant to be her guardian (*qiwamah*), she was deprived of having a childhood and was expected to do everything an adult would do- including marriage. Unfortunately, as a result of this unfair treatment and lack of opportunity she faced, she has vowed never to let any of her daughters be engaged in any form of child labour, and /or child marriage.

Zainab's trajectory

Zainab had a very rough childhood full of child labour, and lack of affection by the people she lived with. Her experience with domestic child labour has made her to be self-reliant and economically empowered. Even when her husband used to provide, she was also contributing to the upkeep of the house.

With the marriage of another wife, Zainab found herself increasingly having to support and maintain herself and her children. She is having to pay for their education. Zainab has a soft heart and allows her co-wife to upset her with her venomous words. Even when narrating certain aspects of her story, she gets emotional and cries easily. Unfortunately, because of her nature and situation that she is in, it is affecting the way she thinks about the progress of her children in life. When her daughter told her she would like to study medicine, Zainab told her that she was being unrealistic. She feels that financially it is not possible considering their circumstances considering that she is trying to support them with meagre resources.

Influences in Zainab's story

Negative Influences

- **Father:** He was very strict and whatever he said, had to be obeyed, no questions asked nor tolerated. He gave her away to his friend who was an elderly man. Even when she was married, he was neither consulted, nor displayed any interest.

- **Mother:** Her mother was passive in decisions being made concerning Zainab. Her mother would not go against the father's decisions, nor raise any objections. She did not stop the family from marrying off Zainab.
- **Mallam Jingi and his wives:** They treated her badly. Child labour as a domestic, no education both western and religious. They did not show any interest when she ran off to her elder sister's house.
- **Zainab's elder half-sister:** She treated Zainab badly by overworking her in her shop and household chores. She also married her off against her wish to her husband. When Zainab's sister married her off, she did so because she thought she was pregnant but when she saw Zainab was happy in her marital home, she forced Zainab to leave her husband's home. It would appear that her half-sister was jealous of her and did not want to see her happy.
- **Sisters-in-law:** they made life difficult for her when Zainab did not get pregnant within the first year. They celebrated the first daughter as being of good luck but when each successive pregnancy resulted in more daughters, they started to make life difficult for her. They then instigated their brother (her husband) to marry again.
- **Co-wife:** Zainab was happy with her husband but when he married the second wife, their relation became difficult. This was further worsened by the fact that the co wife had a son while Zainab was only having daughters. She would taunt her about not having any sons and even referred to Zainab's daughters as prostitutes.

Positive influencers

- **Interviewer:** She is a source of strength and support for her as she can go to her when she is experiencing any difficulties. The Interviewer is a mentor to Zainab. The interviewer is the one who told her that determinant of sex of child during pregnancy is by the man not the woman. Since she told her husband that, he has not taunted her with giving him daughters anymore.
- **Her co-wife's father-in-law:** Zainab would go to report the quarrels between her and her co-wife (his daughter). He would call his daughter and rebuke her to the extent that it started to cause problems between him and his daughter.

Overall Analysis

In a land of diverse cultures like Nigeria, one would expect to see both negative and positive cultures. The negative cultures however are often to the detriment of females, starting right from childhood to adulthood. Northern Nigeria is not an exception in the practice of these cultures the major practices found in the analysis of our stories are enumerated below.

Patriarchy

A common culture in Africa is that the husband's family claim rights in the matrimonial home, such rights even extend to issues like custody of children. Such practices allow the patriarch to take decisions to the detriment of the wife and children sometimes even to the detriment of the father. This practice contradicts the Islamic position that gives custody of child to the mother and her family before the patriarch family.

Child marriage

Child marriage which is also seen as forced marriage, is the giving away of children below the age of 18 years into matrimony. This prominent culture is an ongoing problem in Northern Nigeria, which is detrimental to women. Most of the victims are not allowed to go to school, or are forcefully removed from school and then married off. This practice has led to the setback in northern Nigeria for it has given birth to generations of illiterates. Since the mothers are not educated themselves they see no reason to encourage their children, irrespective of gender, to also go to school. The girl child is often the most affected by this practice.

Polygamy

Islam has given room for men to marry up to four wives, if they are able to treat them justly. However, this has been abused in the sense that men are not able to control their emotion, which most often lead them to favor one wife over the other. This has often led to unfair treatment among co-wives and their children. The unfavoured ones are often subjected to several kinds of abuses and neglect, ranging from disparity in feeding, clothing, and even accommodation sometimes. They are even subjected to unjust treatment as regards important life decisions. Children who grow up in this kind of environment are often subjected to neglect and various types of abuses including, emotional and physical violence etc. Children sometimes become hardened and find it difficult to empathize with others.

The Nigerian marriage law does not recognize polygamy, as they adopted international marriage laws which allows a man to marry only one wife.

Child guardianship

Another common cultural practice that was captured in the stories, is the culture of giving away children to either relatives who have no children of their own, or relatives who are old and whose children have grown up and left home, or to some members of the patriarchal family. This often results in the maltreatment of children ranging from physical to emotional violence, deprived education, child hawking, and child labor.

This practice is against the teachings of Islam, as in Islam the custody of children belongs to the parents, and in case of separation to the mother and mother's family before the father and his family.

Child labour

Child labour featured in almost all the stories and mostly was a result of the girls being left in the care of others, not their birth parents. These new guardians of the children often tend to abuse those

children, subjecting them to domestic labor that is beyond reason, child hawking, battery and a lot of other forms of abuses. This practice is against the teachings of Islam as Islam preaches kindness to children.

Domestic violence

There was a common thread of domestic violence running through all the women's stories which included physical, emotional and sexual. Violence against women especially in the matrimonial home is not considered to be grave, as it is believed that a woman belongs to a man. She is supposed to obey him at all times and please him. This is due to cultural and religious interpretations of the scriptural books.

Lack of parental role and support

Most times this happens as a result of giving away the child to other relatives. These children often grow up without any love or support which results in them growing up with a sense of deprivation. It also affects their feelings towards other people later in life. These new families for some reason tend to always downgrade and maltreat the children. Islam preaches kindness to children and also kindness to others. This brings about peace and tranquility to the society.

Deprived of education

Most of the victims of child marriage are either not allowed to go to school, or are removed from school and married off. This was the case in all of the stories. Only one of the women was able to complete secondary education, but was not allowed to further her education.

Islam preaches education without any gender bias. History is replete with stories of women scholars in Islam who have taught for generations. *Hadith* has also been narrated by women, which are today, sources of guidance in our daily life.

Degradation of females

Another common practice found in our stories is the degradation of females. Women who give birth to only female children are subjected to victimization and stigmatization. They are looked down upon and are seen as incapable of giving birth to male children, sometimes even their husbands subject them to such insults.

Qiwamah and wilayah

It is generally believed that Islam imposes on men the responsibility of taking care of women, and also providing for them. In all the stories, the women's experiences were of men not taking full responsibility, causing the women and children to suffer hardship. This meant the women are forced to provide for themselves and their children, and due to their lack of education, their source of income is extremely low. Even though for some of the men, due to low income earnings, they were not able to take care of their families properly, it did not stop them from practicing polygamy.

The women have proved themselves to be resilient in order to survive by striving to eke out a living for themselves and their families. In order to lessen the pain they feel about the way they have been treated by their husbands, some have learnt to mentally block their feelings and to focus on their children instead as a way of dealing with their emotions. For one of the women, she continued to cry when relating her story, expressing the pain she is going through. Others have sought other means of dealing with their situation by either going back to school, or getting involved in activities away from the home. Some of the women suffer from low self-confidence. The lack of education is a serious impediment to the women and others like them.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Focus group discussions with women and girls

We conducted two focus groups in November 2012. All discussions featured several open-ended questions. The facilitator used probes at her discretion which varied based on group composition.

Group A

- Thirteen women from two wards (Kawari and Gurduba wards) of Ajingi LGA Kano State participated in the Focus group conducted at the *Islamiyya* in Gurduba on the 13th of November 2012.
- The group was made up of females within the age group 16 to 58. Three of the participants had attained the level of JSCE, four currently running basic literacy programme, while others are home makers.
- Some of the participants have been married for as long as 30 years and above, while others have just been married for 3 years.

Method: Focus groups

Focus groups are facilitated group discussions using scripted questions. They are generally made up of a homogenous audience of interest to the researcher. In most cases, (including this one), focus group studies are qualitative in nature

Approach used:

A structured approach was used. A set of 26 questions were used to guide the group responses on specific issues of concern. The guide used for group B contained different questions from that which was used for group A.

Results:

Women were asked their ages and how old they were when they got married to break the ice. Respondents were generally married between the ages 11–15 years. Those from the older group got married earlier than the younger group.

Questions asked ranged from why they were married off at ages mentioned, to whether they were consulted, and whether they chose their partners. These sets of questions were to answer the big question on consent.

Six out of the fourteen respondents who fall between the ages 38-60 said they were married off because their parents felt it was time, their parents chose the husbands, their consents were not sought before giving them out in marriage. Saude Muhammed said, "I was married off because I was growing lean and my parents said if I get married, I will fatten up again, I felt too young, I never felt it was time". The remaining 57.17% said they chose their own husbands and they fall into the younger group of the main group. They all seemed happy getting married as the time of marriage, except for about two persons who didn't know why they had to get married at that age in the first place.

71.42% of respondents started marital life in polygamous homes since they were either second or third wives at the time of marriage. Age difference was much between them and partners. Least age gap is 7 years above. They said if something happens, they are able to discuss with him, and they said being married to older man, your husband is always wiser than you.

Sometimes though, things may happen that you might have to involve elders and sometimes, you just have to go to your parents. Other times, you stay at home and ignore his needs.

When asked questions on challenges faced as a result of getting married early, the following were some of their responses.

1. Too much house chores. One of the respondents said, at a time I was burning my hands each time it was my turn to cook. I was cooking for over 20 people. I wasn't even cooking in my parents' house before then.
2. I had problem with pregnancy, I had swellings and I suffered a lot. Another said she suffered from prolonged labour, another said she had pains but didn't even know she was in labour.
3. I had my first child early, so one day, I was going back home after an outing. I met my friend's mom on the way. We were in the farm area, she took him from me to see him and say a word of prayer. I left the baby on the farm with her and went back home, after a while I remembered, but because he was my first, I could not say a word, he was later brought home by my friend's mom.
4. Majority agreed that they had problems with their in-laws. Some said little things like eating good food even annoys them, others said it's always a difference of opinion.

When asked what they would do if they had not got married, almost all said they would have got an education. One went further to state how she wanted to go to school and her father said, no, she had to marry. Another said she would have loved to farm.

Hafsatu said: "I am not happy I didn't get an education. If you have an education, life won't be so hard. For example, you are going to a place; you don't need to ask for directions, if you can read the number and all that".

On whether they enjoy any level of privacy, they said privacy does not exist. To use some of their words: "In early marriage, everyone is watching you". All the women said there is no privacy. In addition, to the findings, it was also found that the most influential person in their relationship is either the father in-law, husband, and in some rare cases his sister, mother, or the eldest wife. Dowry ranged from 2kobo being the least for those who got married many years ago, to N8000 (highest) for the most recent marriage in the group. One person could not remember her dowry, while another said she was given *sadaaq*.

When a question was raised on divorce and what they felt, five of the women who had been married more than once said, they did not find it hard to leave. They simply left the children behind. Women were also asked if they had any rights in their marriage, and also to mention some of those rights. Responses included: the man should clothe, shelter and feed the family, he should give the children spending money. The woman should be obedient to him and she should give him what he wants and be sexually available.

Furthermore, they said it's not their place to take or make any decision as it's only the husbands' opinions that matter. Permission has to be taken for everything except when there is an emergency situation in which about 60% of respondents said they will not wait for any permission. What they term as emergency, relate to health issues only.

In conclusion of the discussion two questions were asked as thus:

- Do you have any regrets about your life? Only two of the women responded yes. One said she should have preferred to be educated, while the other woman who is Sudanese by origin, said she should not have married here in Nigeria.
- The last question was if you could rewind the clock, what would you change? All respondents said they would have preferred to be educated, except one who said she would marry her husband over and over again.

Group B

Fifteen girls of ages between 13 to 15 participated. Just like the women, girls were also from the two wards (Kawari and Gurduba wards) and discussion took place between 2.15pm to 3.30pm on the same day and venue.

The girls were asked questions as to whether they were soon to be married and if they had chosen their potential husbands themselves. Apart from one girl who was soon to be married, all replied in the negative but all said they had chosen their suitors themselves.

8/15 girls said they had friends who were already married. Majority did not like the idea of being married off so early as they felt they were not old enough and it did not feel right.

When asked what they found attractive about their friends who were already married, they replied that they did not find marriage at an early age attractive. Reasons being that the girls aged easily probably due to responsibilities, and they did not take care of themselves like before. They also had problems during pregnancy.

When asked if their friends had wanted to get married when they did, they said yes. The reasons were that they were not going to school and it was better than sitting at home doing nothing.

The age range they gave for the men to be when they were ready to get married were between 17 -35 years. Some of the reasons were: to give the girls a chance to continue their education, they did not want the men to be much older than them. In the case of the girl who said 35 years old, she felt he would be a more responsible person and it would give her the chance to get an education, such as getting a diploma.

As to what they felt were a man's responsibility towards his family, responses ranged from:

- Clothing
- Shelter
- Food
- Care of the children
- While a woman's responsibilities towards her husband were:
 - Cook for him
 - Respect and obey him
 - Be sexually available
 - Protect his possessions

The number of children they wanted ranged from 2 -12. Most said they would like to delay childbirth for at least a year after getting married. Their dreams for their future with their husband and children were to be happy, successful, and rich.

Five of the girls had attended formal schooling while the remainder were attending *Islamiyya*. All said

a girl should get an education.

Some said marriage should not be the end of a girl's education, but the husband should support her to continue, even though it would be very hard for a young married girl to continue her education.

On being asked to share their inner feelings of what the life of a young woman should be. Their response was a girl should be disciplined, well behaved, educated and employed. They said with an education, she would be able to take care of herself if she encountered any problems in the futures. They did not think a woman should determine the number of children she should have, as only God could do that.

They also did not think it was right for a woman to do birth control without her husband's control, but should seek his permission. One said If he did not give his permission, she should look for someone who could talk to him. If that did not work, then maybe he should divorce her.

Aishatu Abubakar's Story Board

1



Aishatu given to her Aunt and husband.

2



Aishatu left home to hawk. Denied Islammiyya.

3



Aishatu spend day in hawking

4



Aishatu denied opportunity of going to school

5



Aishatu giving Aunt sales money

6



Aishatu married to 65 years old man

Aishatu Abubakar's Story Board

7



Aishatu running away from her husband

8



Aishatu gladly receiving divorce letter

9



Aishatu presents man of choice to father who refuses to consent.

10



Aishatu marries man of choice

11



Aishatu and her lousy husband

12



Aishatu and her 4 hawking daughters

Aishatu Abubakar's Story Board

13



Aishatu sets up business to cater for her kids

Sketches of Adama's Story Board



Adama doing some household chores.



Sister giving instruction while Adama sweeps



Adama and sister arranging things in the shop



Malam Baba buying things from the shop



Malam Baba refusing to collect his change from Adama



Malam Baba asking for Adama's hand in marriage.

Sketches of Adama's Story Board



Adama crying over sister's imposition of husband to her



Adama finally married to Mallam Baba



Adama, Malam Baba and their 2 female kids.



Sister advising Adama to break her marriage



Adama's sister packing Adama's belongings as Adama refuses to leave husband.



Adama finally received divorce letter from Mallam Baba

Sketches of Adama's Story Board



Adama returns to Mallam Baba and later had another baby girl.



Mallam Baba introduces his bride to Adama.



Mallam Baba favours new wife for giving him a baby boy.



Adama into petty trading to cater for her kids.

Appendix 3: Multi-layered mapping of *Qiwamah* and *Wilayah*-related issues

S/N	Issues	<i>Qiwamah</i> and <i>wilayah</i> issues	Lived realities	National laws & policies
1.	Child marriage	<p>A girl's consent is required before a marriage can be contracted.</p> <p>It is on record that the prophet's daughter Fatima was about 18 years when she got married.</p>	<p>The practice is girls are married off before the age of 18 years, but this is more common in rural areas than urban areas now.</p> <p>A father/guardian can give out their daughter/ward in marriage without her consent, in practice, though some girls resist this; others succumb.</p> <p>Young girls are forced to marry men old enough to be their father or grandfather.</p> <p>Parents or guardians of girls are supposed to look out for their best interests, but it is not always the case.</p>	<p>Nigerian law: consent of a spouse is an essential element of a valid marriage in Nigerian customary law, and a child under 18 is not capable of consenting to a valid marriage in line with s.21 of Child Right Act.</p> <p>S.42 of the constitution provides legal guarantee against sex discrimination, as such it is safe to say that it is the basis for equal rights in marriage including same rights to enter marriage.</p> <p>In 2003, the Child Right Act was passed by legislators from different cultures and religions in Nigeria, to provide protection for Children of all ages, religions, cultures and backgrounds. The Child Rights Act bans marriage or betrothal before the age of 18.</p> <p>The Lagos State House of Assembly domesticated the Act in 2007.</p> <p>Child Marriage is not illegal in Nigeria as such under Nigerian Law, but is covered under the Child Right Act, a federal bill which competes with state and customary law, and has not been enacted in 13 of Nigeria's 36 states.</p> <p>The Maputo Protocol (Nigeria is one of the first African states to ratify the Protocol) establishes the minimum age of marriage at 18. Nigeria has committed to ensuring that Nigerian women and girls are protected under this treaty.</p>
2.	Violence			
	Child abuse			

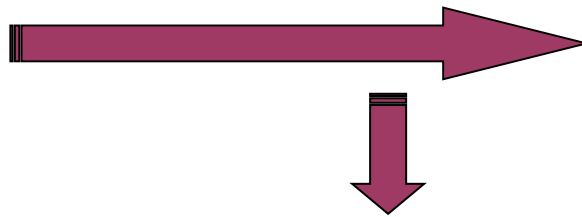
	Child labour and exploitation		<p>From an early age, girls are given the responsibility of household.</p> <p>Girls are also sent out to hawk from an early age, contributing to the household finances. The girls hawk from early morning to evening. This is exploitation as the girls do not earn any form of income from the hawking.</p>	Nigerian law: section 28 of child right Act 2003 prohibits child labour, that is by way of subjecting a child into exploitative labour.
3.	Domestic violence			
	Physical	<p><i>S4:34.....If you fear high-handedness from your wives, remind them [of the teaching of God], then ignore them when you go to bed, then hit them...</i></p> <p>S20:31 And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you, affection and mercy. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who give thought</p> <p>This verse opens up the floodgates to wife battering, cruel treatment, rape, sexual, emotional, psychological violence and reinforces that men are <i>qiwamah</i> of women, while they take the verse out of context.</p>	<p>Because of the shame that surrounds domestic violence, women and girls continue to keep quiet and continue with their lives, most often until they are murdered by their husbands, uncles, fathers or brothers. Silence becomes a weapon patriarchy and men use to continue to commit the various forms of violence against women</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Nigerian Law has not helped the cause against elimination of violence against women as only a few states have signed the “Violence against Women Prevention Protection and Prohibition Act 2002. • The Gender Nigeria Report 2012, by the British council shows that only four states, Ebonyi, Jigawa, Cross Rivers and Lagos State have signed this into law in a country that has 36 states. This shows that there is still a lot of advocacy to be done in ensuring a legal framework for elimination of violence against women. • Section 55(4) of the Penal Code (which is the law that operates in the Northern part of Nigeria only)- approves of corrective beating of a child, pupil, servant, or wife as long as this does not cause grievous hurt, as the license for men in some parts of Nigeria is to batter their wives.
	Psychological and verbal abuse			
	Sexual		<p>Women are expected to be available to men at all times. Men satisfy themselves without caring if the women are getting any pleasure during conjugal acts.</p>	
4.	Maintenance	The Qur’anic injunction on maintenance is that		

		<p>it is the legal duty of the husband to provide for the family.</p> <p>S4:34 Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So, righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard. But those [wives] from whom you fear arrogance - [first] advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed; and [finally], strike them. But if they obey you [once more], seek no means against them. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted and Grand.</p>		
5.	Polygamy	<p>The Qur'an states polygamy can be practiced but with conditions</p>	<p>The general belief is that it is a man's right to have up to four wives.</p> <p>Some consider it a <i>sunnah</i> that should be followed in line with the prophet. The part of the verse which ends by stating that if a man knows he cannot do justice, he should keep to one wife, is almost always overlooked and never mentioned.</p> <p>Women have been groomed to accept that it is a man's right to have more than one wife and she should not deny him that right.</p>	
6.	Divorce	<p><i>S4:34.....If you fear high-handedness from your wives,</i></p>	<p>Women can initiate divorce by going through the courts which can be a long drawn out and</p>	

		<p><i>remind them [of the teaching of God], then ignore them when you go to bed, then hit them....</i></p> <p><i>The Qur'an states that if a couple divorce, the man should not take back any part of his gift even if it be a heap of gold</i></p>	<p>costly process. If she is the initiator, she has to pay <i>Khul'</i>. Some men who divorce the women may ask them to pay back what he spent on them</p> <p>Women are told to have patience (<i>hakuri</i>) in a marriage they do not want to be in any longer. Girls may keep running away from a marriage and their families will keep sending them back until either the man gets fed up and divorces them, or the girl runs away.</p>	
7.	Education	<p>The Qur'an states that seeking for knowledge is compulsory upon every Muslim male and female</p>	<p>It is generally believed that it is the responsibility of the husband to ensure that his wife is knowledgeable in her religion by teaching her, or giving her access to learn. Parents do not consider educating the girl child as being of paramount importance, and it is considered a waste of sometimes scarce resource as she is going to get married and leave home.</p> <p>Many girls do not obtain Islamic nor western education. For those that do, more importance is laid on Islamic. If a girl gets western education, it may stop at primary or secondary level.</p> <p>Some husbands might promise they will support their wives to continue her education, but they normally always renege on their promise.</p> <p>Ability of illiterate women to access information on health, sexual reproductive health and economic activities are limited, or non-existent.</p>	<p>Nigerian law: the law mandates every parent that their child or ward attains and completes their primary and junior secondary school education. Which mean endeavouring to send the child to primary and junior secondary school pursuant to compulsory, free, universal basic education Act 2004</p>

Diagram 2: Mapping *qiwamah* & *wilayah* in Nigerian national laws & policies

1A. Men's status as 'head of household' is not stated anywhere in the Marriage Act, but is a presumption under Customary Law and Sharia Law which is also engrained in our social attitudes

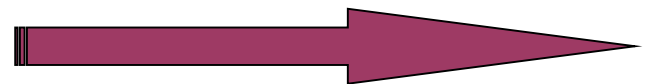


2. It is not stated that the responsibility for maintenance and protection of the family is on the husband in the Marriage Act and Matrimonial Causes Act



1B. Reflected in...

Presumption in practice that man = head of household



For example:

- Though it is not a requirement of the law, 'most' married women change their names to bear their husband's name out of practice.
- Under the 1999 Constitution, Section 26 (2) a, any woman who is or has been married to a citizen of Nigeria can be a Nigerian Citizen; but the same does not apply to a foreign man married to a woman that is a Nigerian citizen.
- A father's consent is a prerequisite while applying for the passport of minors.
- Prior to June 2009, a woman needed written consent from her husband to get her own passport.



- a) Passage of the Violence Against Persons' Prohibition Bill.
- b) Girls and Women negotiating their marriage contracts.
- c) Girls having a choice in marriage partner
- e) Girls staying in school

Rights to...

3. Greater share of inheritance

4 & 6. Control over wife/daughter/sister's autonomy

5 & 6. Control over wife/daughter/sister's bodies

7. Guardianship of children

For example:

In Islamic law, sons inherit double share than daughters.
If a Muslim woman marries a non-Muslim, she does not inherit from her father. Under the Marriage Act, if there is a will, then the stipulations of the will would be adhered to. Where there is no will, Customary Law dictates the inheritance rights. Daughters' inheritance rights under customary law, vary considerably across the country but in no region, does customary law grant women equal inheritance rights with men.

For example:

Women have equal access to divorce in law. But in practice, under *Shari'ah law*, they need to go to court to get it finalised. *Shari'ah* law permits the husband to beat the wife, the degree of beating is arguable. For a marriage to be valid, *Shari'ah* law requires consent of the *Wali*. But most times, a *Wali* is appointed by the girl's father. A father can give out his daughter in marriage without her consent. In practice, though some girls resist this, others succumb.

For example:

There is no clear provision in the law as to a man's control over his wife's/daughter's bodies. The social practice is different.

For example:

The law states that the best interest of the child is paramount when deciding who gets custody of the child. But the practice could defer according to the discretion of the judge. A woman can go to *Shari'ah* courts to seek maintenance for her children.

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