

Religion and the Adolescent Girl

A formative study in Kaduna state

January 2017



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Cover photo: Adolescent girls in places around the world are forced into marriage, compromising their chances for education and economic empowerment

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Authors:

This research was carried out and documented by Ifeanyi Okekearu with support from Christian Aid staff: Temitope Fashola, Theresa Adah, Talatu Aliyu, Adebola Fatilewa and Mercy Okeke

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Contact us

Christian Aid Nigeria
Plot 802 Ebitu Ukiwe Street
Off Mike Akhigbe Street
Jabi
Abuja
T: +234 (0) 703 255 9282
E: Nigeria-info@christian-aid.org
W: christianaid.org.uk/nigeria

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Temitope Fashola

Programme Manager, Governance and Gender
Christian Aid, Nigeria Country Programme

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List of Acronyms

AG	Adolescent Girls
CAAGI	Collective Action for Adolescent Girls Initiative
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
CII	Council of Islamic Ideology
DPI	Development and Peace initiative
ECWA	Evangelical Church Winning All
FA	Faith Actors
FBO	Faith Based Organisations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FMWA&SD	Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development
GAT	Gender Awareness Trust
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GL	Girls Light
IPs	Implementing Partners
JNI	Jama'atu Nasril Islam
KIs	Key Informants
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGAs	Local Government Areas
NAN	News Agency of Nigeria
NCE	National Certificate of Education
NDHS	National Demographic Health Survey
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
PHC	Primary Health Centre
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
TBA	Traditional Birth Attendant
UNESCO	United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
VVF	Vesico-Vaginal Fistula

Executive Summary

Project Description

The Collective Action for Adolescent Girls Initiative (CAAGI) is a two-year pilot funded by Christian Aid, and jointly implemented by Development and Peace Initiative (DPI) and Gender Awareness Trust (GAT). The project aims to improve significantly the choices and opportunities for adolescent girls in Kaduna state to live productive and meaningful lives.

The project recognises that faith leaders are strong opinion leaders in the society and can influence positive attitude and behavioural changes within the society. Therefore, it seeks to achieve its aim by supporting faith actors and faith based institutions at community and state levels to take action around major issues affecting adolescent girls in the context of Northern Nigeria. Three interlinked issues that significantly affect the welfare and wellbeing of the girl child have been identified and will be addressed by the project:

- Education,
- Early marriage
- Economic empowerment.

The project will be implemented in 12 communities in three Local Government Areas (LGAs) - Makarfi, Chikun and Zango Kataf – all spread across the three senatorial districts in the state.

Methodology

This formative study aimed to understand and document how religious and traditional leaders and institutions are influencing and reinforcing both positive and negative attitudes and behaviours towards adolescent girls' issues in Kaduna state.

The study design took on a quasi-experimental approach, while adopting a mixed method based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques. All 12 communities in which the CAAGI project will be implemented were selected in addition to three communities to serve as the control group.

1,134 survey questionnaires were administered in 15 communities across six LGAs - Chikun, Ikara, Kachia, Makarfi, Igabi and Zango Kataf – spread across the three senatorial districts of Kaduna state. The male-female respondent ratio constituted of a percentage of 49.5% to 50.5% with a slightly even representation across age groups.

In addition, 57 Key Informant Interviews (KII) and 47 Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were conducted with Christian and Muslim faith actors at community and state levels as well as traditional and community leaders and community members; inclusive of men, women, young men, young women, adolescent boys and adolescent girls.

The Role of Culture and Religion

It was identified that faith leaders are challenged by multiple barriers that reduce their capacity to respond to these adolescent girls' issues; including institutional, cultural and financial barriers, as well as inadequate government response and provision of public services. Other challenges were a lack of support, interest or

awareness from adolescent girls, their parents/families, and the community, and lack of unity and security within the communities. Most significant though is the conflict between faith teachings and culture or tradition.

The findings showed that while religious and cultural practices have near equal impact on adolescent girls, the latter is skewed towards disempowerment compared to the former that is tilted towards self-realisation. For instance, respondents emphasized that culture, rather than religion drives superiority of male children, early/forced marriage for adolescent girls, and denial of inheritance for girls. The findings also indicate that a significant number of faith-based leaders interviewed believe that religion has a part to play in some of the issues and challenges experienced by adolescent girls, but were quick to point at culture and tradition as the main obstacles faced by faith-based leaders in dealing with issues of adolescent girls.

In summary, while there are clear areas of difference between tradition (or culture) and religion, in practical terms, there is a very thin line when interpreting the actions of people on the basis of these when it relates to treatment or actions for or against adolescent girls.

Key Findings

General Findings

- Barriers that exist to improving choices for adolescent girls in Kaduna state are deeply rooted in cultural and religious norms and practices that have existed for many years.
- The most common barrier is the overlap between faith teachings and deeply rooted cultural practices or traditions that make it difficult to clearly assign certain behaviours to the influence of one or the other.
- Responses show that religious teachings (35%), culture/tradition (27.6%) and family values (22.4%) top the list of factors that influence the way the adolescent girl is treated or regarded in their communities. They are regarded as key in shaping perceptions, attitudes and behaviour of boys, men, girls and women around adolescent girls' issues.
- Adolescent girls are perceived as immature and unable to make decisions, with their role being to learn about their traditions and perform domestic chores. This perception therefore deprives them of any decision-making roles in the household or about their lives. This has an impact on the decision to marry, get an education or be involved in economically empowering activities.

Education

- Access to education for all is supported by religion. 86.2% of respondents thought that their religion supports access to education for adolescent girls, just by virtue of the Holy Books encouraging the seeking of knowledge by all groups of people.
- The social norm of early marriage for girls reduces the value placed on an unmarried girl. This translates into the lack of access to education as families fear that the girl may never get a suitor or marry, as she will be considered old by the time she completes her education.
- Educating an adolescent girl is considered in some of the communities as a waste of resources, however, this is not influenced by religion.

Early Marriage

- Early marriages occur not only because of religion or because of culture, but can also be a measure taken when an adolescent girl gets pregnant. Although such unplanned pregnancies can be avoided, adolescent girls fear to seek Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services to avoid being labelled as immoral or wayward.
- Only 38.9% are aware of groups that exist to create safe spaces for adolescent girls. These spaces do not exist because the culture does not respect or support such groups. The lack of access to education and early marriage is also a barrier for adolescent girls to interact in safe spaces.

- Where safe spaces exist, they are most commonly religious groups, peer and community age groups, and this is an entry point for issues that specifically affect adolescent girls to be addressed.
- Despite the aversion to discussing issues of sexual and reproductive health for girls even with the effect on early marriage and education for the girl child, faith leaders can mobilise to increase uptake in SRH services.
- Some Muslim respondents (34.8%) affirmed that Islam supports early marriage, however, in all cases, regardless of religion, all respondents attested that forced marriage is not supported by religion.

Economic Empowerment

- Access to forms of economic empowerment for the adolescent girl is influenced by family situations.
- Economic hardships within a household affects the girl child more adversely than a boy child. This is influenced by the perception of the role of the adolescent girl as being only useful for domestic chores which extends to supporting with income generation. These are placed above education for a girl child.
- Although no specific religious teachings or references were quoted in support of economic empowerment of the adolescent girl, 75.6% of survey respondents felt that religious teachings support economic empowerment, a belief reiterated in the Key Informant Interviews (KII).

Key recommendations

- Parents and guardians should be involved in any adolescent girls' intervention strategy as facilitators and moderators to ensure proper leveraging on existing structures in the community for ownership and sustainability.
- Misinterpretations and abuse of religious texts as regards adolescent girls should be addressed using existing forums and opportunities that abound in routine religious activities.
- Adolescent girl interventions should consider working with policy makers to ensure appropriate policy environment and protection to implementers is recommended to as to guarantee enabling intervention environment for implementation team and community facilitators.
- Given the indications that sexual and reproductive health services are not easily accessed by adolescent girls, it is recommended that CAAGI implementers engage with community gatekeepers to explore how these services will be packaged to make it more accessible, acceptable and uptake more feasible.
- It is recommended that in developing intervention guides and tools for implementation of any programme(s) to address the issues of adolescent girls, religious leaders, traditional leaders, parents and the adolescent girls should be made to have meaningful inputs into such tools and guides.
- Advocacy efforts are required for the establishment of schools and financial support to indigent girls to encourage attendance. Efforts are also required to establish community laws and penalties against early/forced marriage, Gender Based Violence (GBV) and denial of inheritance rights for women and girls by community leaders, as well as to support uptake in SRH services.

1.0 Introduction

This baseline research was conducted as a formative study to frame the implementation of the Collective Action for Adolescent Girls Initiative (CAAGI) project in selected locations in Kaduna state Nigeria. The Collective Action for Adolescent Girls Initiative (CAAGI) is a two-year pilot implemented by Development and Peace Initiative (DPI) and Gender Awareness Trust (GAT) with technical support and funding from Christian Aid Nigeria. The project aims to improve choices and opportunities for adolescent girls in Northern Nigeria, and Kaduna in particular, to live productive and meaningful lives. It seeks to achieve this through supporting behavioural changes among faith actors and faith based institutions at community and state levels, around major issues affecting adolescent girls, including education, early marriage and economic empowerment. The project outcome will be seen in behavioural changes in faith actors, men, women and boys, around adolescent girls' issues of education, marriage age and economic empowerment as well as shift in cultural practices that re-enforce gender discrimination/inequality.

The project will be implemented in 12 communities in three Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Kaduna state – Makarfi, Chikun and Zango Kataf, spanning Kaduna North, Kaduna South and Kaduna Central senatorial districts. The project will increase gender awareness, challenge and change gender discriminatory cultural norms and practices demonstrated by faith actors, boys, men and women in the target communities.

The study was conducted in 15 communities across six Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Kaduna State, with respondents selected from among Christian and Muslim faith actors at community and state levels as well as traditional and community leaders and community members; inclusive of men, women, young men, young women, adolescent boys and adolescent girls.

The report begins with a brief background on the project, followed by some background information on intended project locations and some expectations. The report also explores within a concise literature review some background on the issues that militate against the agency and opportunities for productive and fulfilling life for the adolescent girls.

The section on literature attempts to contextualise and fit some of the text to the intended project locations. Given that the study was geared towards a deeper understanding of the project general environment and also to gauge the current attitude and behaviour of the people, the study methodology was therefore a mix of exploration and baseline survey. The results presented are mostly in forms of key findings and the last part is all about articulating suggestions and prompting users of the reports to keep in mind possible opportunities to explore, potent allies to partner with, envisaged obstacles which must not be ignored and suggestions from survey participants.

1.1 Background

The education and empowerment of adolescent girls has been shown to be one of the critical success factors required to lift families out of poverty. This is because development outcomes for individual adolescent girls benefit their families, communities and nations. However, northern Nigerian Adolescent Girls (AG) have limited choices and opportunities to reach their full potential due to cultural and religious socializations. These have resulted in adolescent girls feeling isolated and powerless and therefore conforming to cultural pressures.

Considering that religion and culture is deeply entrenched in society as the main source of inspiration, and people rely on scriptural guidance, which also influences the day-day decisions parents and society make about girls, the influence of Faith actors in Northern Nigeria is unique and huge.

The approval of faith leaders is the most important factor in determining the position of girls in a variety of activities, including finishing school, delaying marriage and gaining access to health services, but is rarely provided and even discussed. This is mainly because issues of adolescent girls and faith leaders are sensitive and easily misunderstood in parts of Northern Nigeria. Nevertheless, with the credibility faith actors have as trusted authorities within their communities, they are well positioned to be catalysts for change. The Collective Action for Adolescent Girls Initiative (CAAGI) seeks to support behavioural changes around major issues affecting Adolescent Girls including education, early marriage and economic empowerment by targeting faith actors (FA) and faith based organisations (FBO) at the state and community levels (and national as appropriate) and adolescent girls in their communities in Kaduna State. It seeks to achieve this through a combination of strategies focused on faith actors, adolescent girls and the media.

The choice to implement CAAGI in Kaduna State is informed by the state's history; with Kaduna State being perceived as the heart of the Northern part of Nigeria: the most influential political and religious leaders have strong roots in this state. Currently, Kaduna is the provincial and regional headquarters of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Catholic, Anglican and Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI) (Muslim counterpart to CAN) congregations. The narrative guiding this project from insights into the political economy of Northern Nigeria is that whatever systems and beliefs adopted in Kaduna is easily replicated across most parts of Northern Nigeria.

1.2 Rationale and objectives of the study

The overall aim of this study is to understand how religious and traditional leaders and institutions can influence and reinforce both positive and negative attitudes and behaviours towards Adolescent Girls' issues in Kaduna state.

1.2.1 Specific objectives

1. To explore how religious teachings and religious institutions/affiliation can shape perceptions, certainties, attitudes and behaviour of boys, men, girls and women around adolescent girls' issues such as access to education, early/forced marriage, access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, economic empowerment and gender-based violence.
2. Explore opportunities and barriers to faith leaders' action on adolescent girls' issues of education, early/forced marriage, access to SRH services, economic empowerment and gender-based violence; and identify the different levels of intervention by faith leaders
3. Explore how faith actors and traditional leaders can use their positions to influence behaviour change to empower adolescent girls
4. To explore the difference between cultural practices and/or religious practices that empower or disempower adolescent girls
5. Identify and profile religious leaders, institutions and teachings that promote/ influence positive values and behaviours change towards the advancement of adolescent girls in the communities
6. Identify practical suggestions and recommendations on how to harness the positive potential of religious teachings and institutions to promote positive behaviours and practices in ways that will ultimately benefit adolescent girls, exploring opportunities and barriers that exist.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

While children around the world continue to face various forms of adversity in the 21st century, female children in particular are subjected to multiple forms of oppression, exploitation and discrimination due to their gender. United Nations statistics, national reports and studies initiated by non-governmental organisations repeatedly show that girls, as a group, have lower literacy rates, receive less health care, and are more often impoverished than boys (Ijaiya, 2016). Forms of discrimination against female children are numerous and vary depending on the traditions, religion, history and culture of a particular society. Female children in Nigeria are subjected to all forms of gender discrimination such as female infanticide and sex-selective abortion, early marriages, female genital mutilation (FGM) and other forms of discrimination (Ijaiya, 2016).

The Nigerian Constitution makes provision for gender equality among male and female children. But as a result of culture and religious beliefs in the country, female children are often deprived of their fundamental rights to basic education, good nutrition, essential health care and all other basic needs, as well as protection against abuses, neglect, exploitation and slavery. Traditional practices such as early marriages and FGM are responsible for some of the discrimination against female children in Nigeria.

These traditional practices have negative impacts on the reproductive and health rights of the female children in Nigeria. Most of these practices have their roots in long-standing customs of particular communities in the country and they are often formulated ostensibly to achieve particular goals and often times these customs are entrenched or re-enforced by religious adherents (Ijaiya, 2006). While some of these practices may have noble goals and premised on sound moral principles, they nevertheless have adverse effects not only on the health, livelihood, performance and economic empowerment of female children, but their overall status in society.

One of the traditional practices common in many parts of Nigeria is early or child marriage. It is common in Nigeria to find girls under the age of 12 years being betrothed to adult males. Many pre-pubescent and adolescent girls are given away in marriage without their consent. Although it is a practice in vogue in several parts of the country, it is more prevalent among the Muslims of Northern Nigeria. This is often assumed to be predicated on religious injunction as contained in the Holy Koran (Ijaiya, 2006). The inconsistencies in the marriage age in Nigeria have negatively affected the rights of the female children. It limits the opportunities for them to accede to education, putting them in a disadvantaged position. The National Demographic Health Survey (NDHS) 2003 indicated that 19% of girls cited marriage as a reason for leaving school (Ijaiya, 2006).

In the Northern part of Nigeria, where the majority of female children face the prospect of early marriage, there are reported cases of Vesico-Vaginal Fistula (VVF), a condition caused by giving birth when the cervix is not well developed, because the pelvic bones have had insufficient time to develop to cope with child-birth. As regards access to education, the percentage of female children attending school in Nigeria compared with male children is very low. This is particularly the situation in the Northern part of Nigeria, where the highest rate of illiteracy (70%) was registered, and while female children attending schools are very few (UNICEF, 2011).

When it comes to education, some parents are very primitive when it comes to choosing what is right for their children. With all the civilization in the world, some parents still prevent their female children from going to school. Although many have observed that this practice is peculiar to Northern Nigeria, it is actually a

nationwide phenomenon (Tiffin, 2012). Some rural dwellers in Nigeria hold a cultural belief that domestic chores are the responsibilities of female children. It is believed that it is what God has created them to do and so they have a special ability to do it. To such parents, domestic activities are the vocations of the female children.

This impression is premised on the traditional philosophy of girls as prototype mothers whose major responsibilities in life are to take care of their children and husbands. The reactionary philosophy of the responsibilities of the girl child has heavily impacted negatively on female education. It can therefore be deduced that the traditional and religious institutions as managed by their gatekeepers, in the forms of religious and traditional leaders have great influence on how issues of adolescent girls are shaped. These groups have strong influence for obvious reasons and great command on their followers and subjects as the case may be (Osamiro, 2015).

While the brief literature reflection is generalised as could be at regional or national level, its contents and context could easily be a true reflection of what is obtainable in Kaduna, North West Nigeria. The study LGAs of Chikun, Makarfi and Zango Kataf, which are represented within the state of Kaduna form the envisaged intervention locations for this planned project it is imperative to have a brief background on these 3 LGAs as part of the literature review as below.

2.2 Historical Background of Chikun, Makarfi and Zango Kataf Local Government Areas

Below: Federal Senatorial District Map of Kaduna



Kaduna state is one of the largest states in Nigeria with twenty-three LGAs, which occupies a geographical area of about 17,781 square metres. It is popular as the capital state of Northern Nigeria and as such, has its share

of socio-economic and political endowments and challenges. The three LGAs planned for the intervention were selected from each of the three senatorial zones of the state.

2.2.1 Chikun Local Government Area

Chikun Local Government Area (LGA) was created out of Kaduna North Local Government Area by the former President and Commander-in Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria, Ibrahim Babangida in 1989. Chikun LGA has a population of 298,140, with a landmark of about 7,174 square metres (Oyeniya, 2013). Majority of the inhabitants of Chikun LGA are mostly professional farmers with few civil servants. This is because the land is very fertile, which attracts higher population of the area to engage in farming. Generally, Chikun LGA is one of the agriculture producing areas in Kaduna state, with some of their agricultural products being rice, beans, yam, guinea corn, maize, and soya beans.

Besides the farming which stands as a major occupation in the area, the people also engage in hunting during the dry season, rearing of livestock such as goats, pigs, chicken and cattle, making of handcraft, and petty trading. The female folk assist the men in farming and also the domestic activities. Chikun LGA has a good road network which links to its headquarters. It has some infrastructural facilities such as electricity, portable water, hospitals and schools which take care of the people. The Chikun Local government area consists mainly of the Gbagyi, Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups. Christianity is the major religion aside Islamic and traditional worshippers. The traditional worshippers are very minimal and not structured or open in their activities and practice like the Christian and Islamic groups (Oyeniya, 2013).

2.2.2 Zango Kataf Local Government Area

The headquarters of the Zango Kataf LGA is the town of Zonkwa, with a landmark area of 2,668km (square metres) and a population of 316,370 people as at 2006 population census. This community is dominated by the Jju (Bajju) and Tyap, with other tribes and Hausa settlers. Zango Kataf LGA used to be a part of Kachia LGA, and it consists mainly of two groups of people - the Kataf (Atyap) who are predominantly Christians, while in Zango towns one could easily identify the Hausas, who are mostly of Muslims sect (Zango Kataf, 2009)

Under the British rule, the Zango-Kataf was placed under the Zaria emirate. This LGA has endured ethnic and communal conflicts in the past (Kwekudee, 2014). There have always been episodes of conflict between these two groups-the Zangos and the Katafs. The first major outbreak was in 1992, which arose over a conflict regarding a market in the town. On April 18, 2011 there was post-election crisis in Zonkwa, followed by another crisis on the 20th of April 2011 at Anchuna Ikulli Chiefdom (Zwahu, 2012). There has also been religious war/crisis between the Christians and Muslims in this area.

2.2.3 Makarfi Local Government Area

The headquarters of Makarfi LGA is the town of Makarfi. This LGA lies between latitude 70 251 E and longitude 110 0 N1 and covers an area of about 7,627.2 square kilometres. It is located in the Northern part of the state bordering Kano state and Katsina states. It is also bound by Kudan, Ikara and Soba LGAs. Makarfi LGA has a population of 108,455 citizens, of which 52,399 are female while 56,056 are male, and a total household of 19,871 families (Jumare, 2006).

The people of Makarfi LGA are actively engaged in agriculture, their major economic activity. They engage in both crop production and animal husbandry, especially cattle fattening. The local populace is actively engaged

in the production of mainly grains such as maize, sorghum and millet. The area is also well known for sugarcane production and the cultivation of tomatoes. There is also a nationally recognised market that holds every Wednesday. The market is centrally located and easily accessible via a well tarred road that leads to Makarfi town (Jumare, 2006). All this stimulates a vibrant local economy in the locality and provides opportunities for any well focused and empowered individual -male or female.

2.3 Key Issues as relates to the Adolescent Girl

There are numerous issues affecting adolescent girls in Northern Nigeria, which include access to education, early/forced marriage, access to sexual reproductive health services, economic empowerment and gender-based violence (this includes physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, economic violence, verbal violence).

2.3.1 Access to Education

Traditionally in most parts of Nigeria, girls are considered to be mere visitors in the family who would someday pass or move on to another man's house and as such not a worthy group to invest in by the biological or early family unit. Tradition can therefore be regarded as the major problem with girl-child education in the Nigeria (Reporters365, 2016),

The girl-child has very limited time to spend with her family in the northern part of the country before she is being betrothed to a man. 'For that reason, any system of education that requires six years in primary school, six years in secondary school and four to five years in higher institution seems to present a problem to the family which would expect her to marry earlier as allowing such level may mean that the girl may not get married until she is 23 years or above. This is not acceptable to a community that marries out their daughters at the age of 13 (Balkisu Sa'idu in The Nations Newspaper, 2016).

There are also misconceptions that Western education exposes girls to some modern behaviours that are not acceptable to the communities. Thus, most girls do not have access to education despite the fact that it is their fundamental human rights. Even where education of some sorts if made available to the girl child, she is often saddled with many responsibilities which may make it difficult for her to obtain quality education (UNESCO, 2007). Some socio-cultural and political factors identified which affect the girl child education in the Northern part of Nigeria include the fear by some families of public criticism of sending their girls to school, cultural condemnation of mixing boys and girls together in schools, females being culturally meant for domestic works, lack of political will to enforce the girl's rights to education, among others (Eweniyi and Usman, 2013).

Some multilateral organisations have indicated from their studies that there is a lot of disinterest and ignorance concerning the education of girls. They observed that many Nigerian girls suffer the society's neglect of their education and that such children have become vulnerable to various ills in the society (World Bank, 2001; UNESCO, 2001). Also, their studies found out that some religious factors such as lack of religious obligation to western education, parental commitment to the girl-child marital life, moral condemnation of girl-child education, lack of religious legal action for girl-child education, fear of early pregnancy, preference for Qur'anic education, non-recognition of western education, fear of conversion to other religion, and undue exposure of girls to western education were regarded as deterrents to parents and guardians sending their female children to school (World Bank, 2001; UNESCO, 2001).

It is feared by many Muslim parents in the Northern part of Nigeria that the involvement of girls in education might bring about moral decadence such as female promiscuity, exposure of the female bodies, inducement by opposite sex, pre-marital pregnancy, and abortion or illegitimate children. These parents are concerned that girl-child education will threaten girl-child chances of legitimate, cultural and religious marriage. They also believe education will deprive the girls of Islamic moral training and orientation (Usman, 2007; Bagudo, 2007; Giwa and Abdulmalik, 2006 and Daiyabu, 2008).

One other important factor indicated by few researchers, is the economic burden saddled on women and girls which often results to their mothers involving their girl-child in income generating activities for the family. The categories of works including domestic services in private homes, and public settings, street hawking, shop and market stall minders and head loaders in the market places (Hodges,2001). It is argued according to the work from Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (FMWA&SD, 1996), that economic factors such as street trading and hawking serve as marriage preparation for girls since girls are expected to meet their suitors during trading; and in addition these girls help their mothers to raise sufficient money towards meeting their wedding obligations, without which marriage is regarded as having lost its esteem within this cultural context.

In spite of all the traditional and cultural factors which stand as a barrier for the promotion of the adolescent girls' access to education, both religious and traditional leaders in some Northern states have found common ground and come together in a bid to promote girl-child education. According to UNICEF (2011), in Kano state, the religious and traditional leaders in collaboration with UNICEF came together, and agreed to promote the education of girls, the religious and traditional leaders resolved to pursue advocacy visits to policy makers, parents, caregivers, communities and others to raise awareness about the benefits of girls' education. In a similar vein, they also agreed to sensitize adherents of Islam and Christianity on girls' education through regular sermons in mosques and churches. This courageous and giant stride is something that gives hope to addressing the issues of girl child education in the northern Nigeria communities (UNICEF, 2011).

2.3.2 Early/Forced Marriage

Most African countries with high rates of child marriage have civil laws that prohibit child marriage and set minimum marriage ages but the situation persists in part because strong traditional and religious practices make it difficult to enforce the laws. In fact, research shows that tradition and religion are one of the strongest of all the major causes of child marriage, which include poverty, gender inequality, limited education and economic options, and insecurity in the face of conflict. In many societies, parents are under pressure to marry off a daughter as early as possible to prevent her from becoming sexually active before marriage and bringing dishonour to her family and community. Because marriage often determines a woman's status, parents also worry that if the girl is not married off according to social expectations, she will not be able to marry at all (African Union, 2015).

One of the misconceptions about Islam is that it approves of early marriage and is therefore looked down upon as medieval, oppressive and illogical by non-Muslims. This misconception has been due to wrong interpretations of the Qu'ran. They are records of some Islamic countries that have countered these misconceptions. The Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) passed a ruling that "Pakistani laws prohibiting marriage of underage children are un-Islamic and that according to Islam there is no minimum age of marriage. Rather

indicating that Rukhsati (consummation of marriage) is allowed only in the case that both husband and wife have reached puberty (Anon, 2014).

The Qu'ran provides as, "O you who have chosen to be graced with belief! It is not lawful for you to force women into marrying or holding them in marriage against their will (Qu'ran 4:19). This provision emphasizes that the Qu'ran forbids forcing women/girls to marry by compulsion. The Qu'ran also provides as follows; "and test the orphans (in your charge) until they reach a marriageable age, then if you find them to be mature of in/sound in judgement hand over to them their possessions..." (Qu'ran 4:6). These provisions of the Qu'ran go further to emphasize the stance of Islam on child marriage.

2.3.3 Access to Sexual Reproductive Health Services

Adolescence is often considered a period of relatively good health. However, adolescents (aged 10–19 years) face particular health risks, especially in relation to reproduction and sexuality (Patton, 2009). Eleven percent of all births and 14% of maternal deaths worldwide are among 15- to 19-year-old females with 95% of adolescent births taking place in developing countries. Adolescents are also vulnerable to unwanted pregnancies; each year 7.4 million Adolescent girls are especially vulnerable to HIV acquisition due to poor orientation and sensitisation on Sexual Reproductive Health and HIV/STIs issues (Denno, 2015).

The rather low status of women and girls serves to reduce their decision making capabilities in matters affecting their health. In the absence of husband and other male relatives, she can hardly decide to seek care outside the community especially from health facility in case of complication. In particular, the low status of women and their limited education hinder their ability to make decisions about reproductive health matters. A study conducted in Kebbi state Nigeria revealed that the problems begin from the fact that women and girls are not involved in the choice of marriage partners as they are married off in their early and mid-teens.

Once married, the girl-wife is confined within the four walls of the harem. Consequently, due largely to the restriction imposed by male household heads via the institution purdah or 'kulle' (wife seclusion), few pregnant women attend ante-natal clinic, while child birth taken place in the home and some 97% of these deliveries were attended to by unskilled traditional birth attendants (TBAs) or friends and relatives. The report indicated that only 2.3% of the deliveries were conducted at health facility (Shehu, 1999). Using the sisterhood method of estimating maternal deaths from six villages, the study research team found that women in the childbearing age group in the area have a 1 in 17 lifetime risk of dying during pregnancy or childbirth. Thus, 60% of the maternal deaths occur at home 7% on the way to the health institution (Shehu, 1999). Opportunities for child spacing and use of family planning services is often not accessible or forbidden in some of these context.

2.3.4 Gender Based Violence

The UN General Assembly, in adopting the 1993 declaration on the elimination of violence against women defined gender-based violence as any act of violence that results in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women; including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (Population Reference Bureau, 2001).

The world we live in is characterized with violence against women and adolescent girls. This is universally present in many forms like wife battering, sexual assault and abuse, female genital mutilation and rape (in war and peacetime alike). Gender-based violence is the fate of millions of women all over the world. These

violations affect women and adolescent girl's productivity in the homes, communities and places of work, and as such their livelihood.

Other forms of GBV which affects adolescent girls include forced labour regardless of their biological frail natures, maltreatments in work places and the exploitation and commercialization of their bodies. Some commentators have indicated that the social exclusion of women in some parts of the world in general and the purdah system as practiced in the northern part of Nigeria in particular should be considered among the violence against women that are perpetrated by the state (Jekayinfa, 1999).

The causes of gender-based violence are many and varied depending on the types of violence. Traditional attitudes towards women around the world help perpetuate the violence. Stereotypical roles in which women are seen as subordinate to men constrain a woman's ability to exercise choices that would enable her end the abuse.

2.3.4 Economic Empowerment

An adolescent girl is economically empowered when she has both the ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions (Golla, 2011). Research demonstrates that economic empowerment can be a critical facilitator of change in the lives of adolescent girls. Promoting economic empowerment for young women during adolescence can help them gain financial independence, establish good saving habits, and improve their future prospects for participation in the labour force (Meyers and Sebstad, 2003; Kilara, 2012). It can also provide girls with more mobility, promote their confidence, and strengthen their social networks. Along with increasing an adolescent girl's financial capital, economic empowerment can promote their social capital and decision-making capabilities (Meyers and Sebstad, 2003)

Other studies also reveal that economic empowerment of adolescent girls increased girls' self-esteem and the likelihood that they would marry later (Amin et al, 1998), gave them a new voice in family discussions about their marriage and mobility (Assaad and Bruce, 1997), and prevents young women from being dependent on men for economic security and thus better able to negotiate for safer sexual and reproductive health practices (Wolday, undated). Furthermore, according to the World Bank (2010), empowering adolescent girls has positive multiplier effects across their families and communities, as economically empowered girls can help alleviate the strains of poverty on their parents and siblings, as well as build more financially stable futures for their own children and families. However, cultural norms, religion, and inadequate government policies for women upliftment have been found to be the hindrances to women and girls empowerment, including their economic empowerment (Ocholi, 1999).

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Study Design

The study was a quasi-experimental design, which adopted a mixed method approach based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques. This design was informed by the need to estimate, at the end of the project, the impact of the intervention in the communities where it will be implemented. By including both intervention and control communities in the baseline study, future evaluation of the project can adopt findings from this study to explore if, and to what extent changes in the communities can be attributed to the intervention. The study also provides for opportunities to ascertain through participants' suggestions, observations and systematic programme analysis of key findings what key activities that may add value to the intervention.

Qualitative information was collected using participatory techniques such as Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) in each of the sampled target groups and communities. Semi-structured FGD and KII interview guides were developed tailored to themes that relate to the project objectives and outcome areas. Quantitative information was collected through a semi-structured questionnaire also tailored to the project objectives and outcome areas. This questionnaire was served to individuals within the sampled communities.

3.2 Rationale for Mixed Study Methods (Qualitative and Quantitative)

The use of mixed methods - quantitative and qualitative, for this study aims to provide a broader perspective and understanding of issues that affect adolescent girls. It also seeks to overcome the biases that could arise because of the sensitivity of religious discuss in Northern Nigeria. The use of quantitative methods balances the limitations of measuring the attitudes, perceptions and practices of faith actors, traditional leaders and communities towards religious teachings concerning adolescent girls.

On the other hand, qualitative methods used measure how and why these attitudes, perceptions and practices occur, as well as investigate unexpected outcomes from the locality. The combination of both data sources, as well as insights from the desk review enriches the findings, helps to explain the unanticipated findings from the quantitative study, and allows for triangulation (either by reinforcing or rejecting) of findings from the different data sources, ensuring a more robust evaluation.

3.3 Sampling Frame

The study employed purposive and random sampling to generate the needed number of participants to take part in the study. The study population included purposively selected faith leaders and actors of the two main religions in Nigeria – Christianity and Islam, based on the prevailing religions in the selected communities. Traditional leaders were also purposively selected for interviews, as these are very influential in the community, and were found to sometimes double as religious leaders. In addition to these, religious adherents from both religions were also randomly selected for focus group discussions, and for the survey.

3.4 Sample Population

The sample population was selected with an aim to conveniently include a balanced representation by gender, age, marital status and socio-economic profile. All 12 communities in which the CAAGI project will be implemented were purposively selected, spread across the three senatorial districts in Kaduna state. In addition

to these, one community in which the project will not be implemented was selected per senatorial district based on their availability to participate in the study over the specified timeframe, while recognising and allowing for cultural and economic events in these communities at the period of sampling.

Within these communities, faith actors and traditional leaders were purposively selected for in-depth interviews. In addition, community members, inclusive of men, women, young men, young women, adolescent boys and adolescent girls were randomly selected to participate in FGDs, or to respond to the study questionnaire, based on their availability and consent. However, due to ethical considerations regarding consent, adolescent boys and girls were not selected to respond to the study questionnaire.

3.5 Sample Size

A total of 1134 survey questionnaires were administered in 15 communities across 6 LGAs in the 3 senatorial districts in Kaduna state. Furthermore, a total of 57 KIIs (51 pre validation meeting, and 6 post validation meeting) and 47 FGDs were conducted across faith actors, and traditional and community leaders at community and state levels. A pre-assessment was also carried out among the CAAGI project implementing partners.

3.6 Study Procedure

3.6.1 Desk Review

The study commenced with a review of the project documents including the concept note and log frame. In addition, the relevant grey literature and published national and sub-national survey reports related to religion and key issues that affect adolescent girls such as gender based violence, access to education; economic empowerment, early/forced marriage and access to sexual and reproductive health services were reviewed. These reviews informed the development of the data collection instruments for the evaluation, as well as the discussion of the findings of the study.

3.6.2 Pre-Evaluation

To provide insights on the strengths and linkages of the project implementing partners (IPs), a pre evaluation form was administered to Christian Aid IPs on the project. This form explored their experience working with women and girls, their understanding of the issues and challenges of adolescent girls, and the level of institutional support and supervision required from Christian Aid to implement the project. They also highlighted the peculiarities of the communities in which the project is to be implemented, providing more information for the selection of locations for the study. Findings from the desk review also allowed for validation and triangulation (Please see Appendix 1 for the Pre Evaluation Form).

3.6.3 Data Collection and Data Analysis

Key informants (KIs) purposively selected from among faith actors and traditional or community leaders were interviewed. In addition, FGDs (comprising of a maximum of 12 participants each) were held with randomly selected members of the communities in which the study was conducted. Following each interview, the interview team developed a summary report of the interview. A semi-structured questionnaire was also used to collect data from randomly selected respondents within the focus communities.

Data analysis using SPSS for questionnaire data and content analysis for the data from FGD and KII, enhanced the opportunity to compare findings and to make linkages between these various data sources. This therefore

allowed for confirmation, corroboration and validation of study results through triangulation. (Please see Appendices 2, 3 and 4 for the KII and FGD Interview Guides, as well as the survey questionnaire).

3.6.4 Validation of Findings

Following analysis of the data collected, a validation meeting was held to share key findings from the base-line evaluation with key stakeholders, reviews findings with stakeholders to ascertain congruence and make further contribution by way of evidence, ensure correct terms and nomenclature are used and clarify any misrepresentation(s) of the respondents and findings. This also served to enrich the report with new evidences and recommendations.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Consent was sought from respondents after explanation of the purpose of the study, as well as assurances of confidentiality. Agreement by respondents to participate in the study was indicated on the respective study instruments. Names of respondents were not sought for the study questionnaire and FGDs, while permission to mention names and designations of respondents to the KIIs was sought and secured. In addition, consent was secured from parents and guardians of adolescents before their participation in FGDs, via signed consent forms. (Please see Appendix 5 for the sample consent form).

3.8 Study Limitations and Challenges

3.8.1 Limitations

- The study is limited in scope and may have limited data to discuss policy challenges of programming in the locations. Such policy will include issues of policy commitment by local and state governments, especially as it relates to Nigeria ratification on the rights of children (the girl-child inclusive).
- Data collected and the scope of research may not allow for establishment of causality (cause-effect relationship) for some of the responses and issues observed with adolescent girls in the study locations as this is largely a qualitative study. Test of significance may not be established with some of the findings from qualitative data as obtained in FGD and KII approach.
- Some of the issues of young men, older men and women which may have an or some influence on project implementation were not explored, as emphasis of the survey and interviews were dominantly about adolescent girls.

3.8.2 Challenges

- The short timeframe allocated to the study did not allow for collection of the number of survey questionnaires initially planned for the study. However, as the short fall was relatively low at 5%, and adequate qualitative information was collected to the point of saturation, findings from the various data sources are robust enough for triangulation.
- Lack of telephone network in some communities in which the study was conducted hindered swift communications, and mobilisation of study participants.
- The study was conducted during the farming season, as well as during the examination period for adolescents in school. These activities also slowed down the mobilisation of study respondents, as data collection had to be rescheduled to accommodate these.

- Poor prior familiarisation and entry into some communities affected the number of persons mobilised for the study, as well as increased mistrust of data collectors by community members. It also contributed to the demands for monetary benefits by respondents. Addressing these challenges resulted in loss of time and meant additional efforts and resources were spent.
- Security concerns, especially in Rigasa, and poor weather conditions also affected the number of respondents mobilised for the study. This part of the state has previously been challenged with internal conflicts and tensions.

4.0 Findings

This chapter presents some of the pertinent results after quality check, collation and brief analysis of the raw data. Some information considered as raw data have been sieved, but however all raw data is available as attachment to this report. Key findings are presented for the quantitative survey through structured interview using questionnaire guides. Also presented are results of in-depth interviews with key informants and the focused groups.

4.1 Demographics

The demographic presentation of collation of the questionnaire, interviews and focused group is presented in this section.

4.1.1 Interview Respondents

For the qualitative study, a total of 51 KIIs and 47 FGDs were conducted across the 15 communities, while 6 KIIs were conducted at state level. However, following quality checks, only findings from 30 KIIs from the 15 communities were included in this study, especially as contributions from respondents were repetitive. While there was an almost even balance between Christian and Muslim key informant interviews from which information was gleaned, (16 Christians and 20 Muslims), most of them were male adults and youths (33 males, 3 females).

For the FGD, interviews were conducted with 26 male groups, and 21 female groups. Table 1 below shows the breakdown of FGD respondents by age group.

Title of table: Number of focus group discussions by age group

Adult male	Adult female	Youth male	Youth female	Adolescent male	Adolescent female	Total
10	9	8	8	4	8	47

4.1.2 Survey Respondents

A total of 1134 questionnaires were filled across 15 communities in 6 LGAs in Kaduna state – Chikun, Ikara, Kachia, Makarfi, Igabi and Zango Kataf. Respondents were almost evenly split by sex (Male 49.5% and Female 50.5%). Furthermore, respondents aged 25 – 35 years were the largest group interviewed (36.9%), followed by those aged 18 – 24 years (31.7%), and 26 – 45 years (18.5%). Slightly over half of respondents were married (53.3%), while 34.0% were single, or had never been married.

Regarding the highest levels of education completed, 44.1% had completed secondary school, 19.0% had completed primary school, 12.3% had completed teachers' college, including National Certificate of Education (NCE), 6.2% had completed Polytechnic, and 4.6% had completed university. In addition to this, 4.1% reported completing Koranic education, while 1.5% reported completing seminary, or a faith based college.

In addition, respondents were mostly Hausa (37.5%), Bajju (15.8%) and Gwari (9.3%) by tribe. The main occupations reported include self-employment (23.0%), farming (22.5%), students (21.2%), and civil servants (12.0%). Furthermore, almost all respondents were resident in their communities (93.7%), with over half of these (58.7%) reporting having lived in their communities for over 10 years.

More than half of all respondents were Christian (60.1%), with 38.5% being Muslim. The major Christian sects specified by respondents include Catholic (20.3%), Evangelical Church of West Africa AKA Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) (14.0%) and Baptist (10.0%). For Muslim sects, Sunnah (16.2%) and Darika (12.1%) were the two most mentioned, while Shi'a was mentioned by only 0.5% of respondents. Basic worshippers, or persons who had no specific roles in their places of worship made up 32.5% of respondents, while singers or choristers, and teachers for children or adults made up 15.7% and 10.4% of all respondents, respectively. Appendix 7 of the report shows the demographics of survey respondents.

4.2 Knowledge, Attitude, Perception and Action Gauge

85.4% of survey respondents mentioned that adolescent girls fall under the age range of 13 – 19 years, with 62.5% and 42.4% of respondents reporting having female adolescent siblings, or female adolescent children respectively. From the interviews, adolescence is seen as "... the stage or process one passes through to become an adult" (FGD, adolescent female, Chikun).

Adolescent girls were also perceived to be immature, dependent on their parents and unable to take care of themselves. Their role at this stage is to learn and perform domestic tasks, as well as learn about their traditions.

"Adolescent girls (12-17years) primarily should be seen and known to cook, clean up the house, wash dishes and fetch water for use in the house" FGD, adult female, Gwanki-Ungwan Sarki, Makarfi LGA

"...the community sees adolescent girls as persons who should learn about their traditions, dress decent, respect their elders and also learn at to keep their homes in order..." FGD, Adult Male, Gumel, Kachia LGA

Perceptions on the role and status of adolescents supported by religious teachings, as presented by respondents are summarised in Table 2 below. Please note that these quotations of religious scripture are captured as expressed by respondents, and reflect the possible misinterpretations by these respondents.

Title of table: Role and status of adolescents girls supported by religious teachings, as presented by respondents

S/N	Perceptions on roles and responsibilities of adolescent girls	Quotation	Source
Christianity			
1	Adolescent girls as helpers in church, running errands and supporting the elderly	Ephesians 6:1 - Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.	FGD, male youths, Kujama community in Chikun LGA
2	Adolescent girls as home and community helpers	Proverbs 31 – The virtuous woman	KII, Rev. E. Kajare in Chikun LGA
3	Carry-out domestic work and help in community market and church	1 Timothy 4:12 - Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity	FGD, adolescent males, Rido Gbagyi in Chikun LGA
4	Respect elders within the community, attend school	Matthew 1 to the end and Ephesians 6: 1	FGD, female adult, Rido-Gbagi, Chikun LGA

	and do home chores		
5	Adolescent seen at home as future leaders	Ephesians 6:1-6 and proverbs chapter 23	KII, T. Yusub, Kachia LGA
6	Adolescent seen as mothers of tomorrow and future leaders	Ephesians 6:1-6	KII, Zonzon, Zango Kataf LGA
7	On adolescent duties, "Mata Sune Tushin Gari" i.e. Women are the foundation on which the society is builds on".	Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians 6: 2-6 and the Book of Genesis where God said to Adam "... let make you a helper..."	FGD, adult female, Mayare, Makarfi LGA
Islam			
1	Responsibilities of adolescent girls in the Mosque	Suratul Maryamu and Hadici 4 & 6.	FGD, Male Youth, Kujama, Chikun LGA
2	On training adolescent girls	The prophet (S.A.W) said you should go seek for knowledge even if it means going to china from the Arabic peninsula. Hence, Islam support access to education not only to adolescents but every muslim	KII, Traditional leader, Chikun LGA
3	Provision of community support, attend schools and abide by laws	Religious teaching from the Qu'ran it says ya'ayuhallazinaamaulzanul yalsalati	FGD, Adult male, Igabi LGA
4	Adolescent girls are expected to do home chores and learn the Qu'ran	Qu'ran Aladof 1 Suratulbilizaminsfalidah.	FGD, male youth, Chikun LGA
5	Adolescent girls to support in home chores, clean mosques	Suratu Maryama, Hadici 4 and 6 where it says if your heart is clean then your whole body is clean	KII, D. Yakubu, Zango Kataf LGA
6	Adolescent girls are to perform home chores as well as sweep and wash the mosque and also to arrange chairs for meetings	Aladof 1 Suratul bilizamins falidah.	FGD, Adolescent female, Rigasa, Igabi LGA

Less than half of respondents (38.9%) mentioned that groups for adolescent girls exist. Of the 49.0% who mentioned that such groups do not exist, the most common reason proffered for this include that the culture does not respect or support such groups. Other reasons include a lack of motivation, knowledge, unity and cooperation on the part of the girls, lack of funding, lack of security, lack of education on the part of the girls, and early marriage.

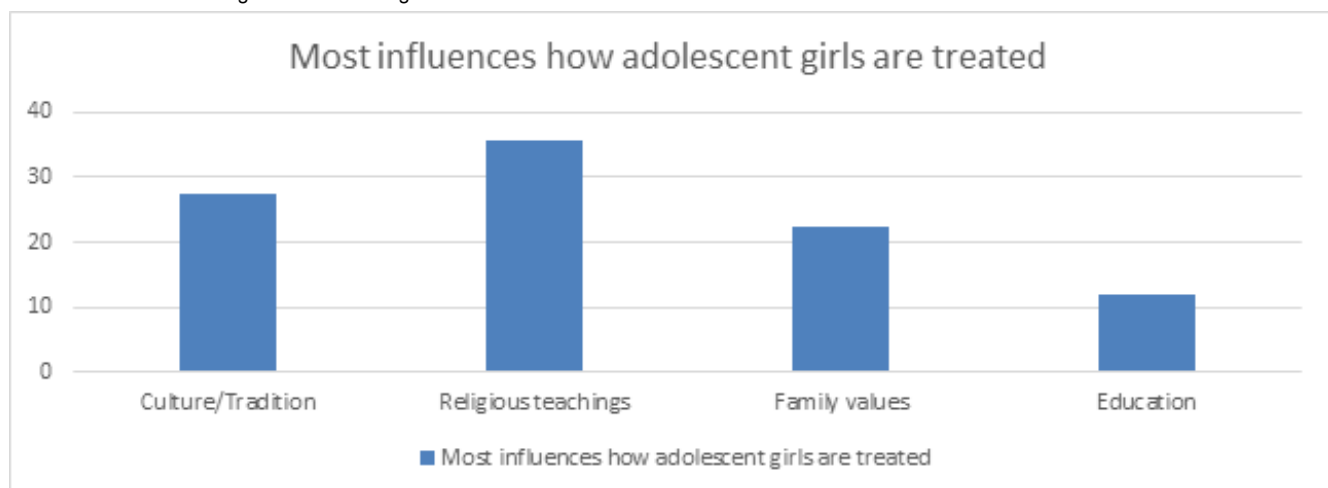
The most common examples of groups that exist for adolescent girls mentioned include Church associations such as the Choir, Block Rosary, and Church Youth groups, as mentioned by 49.2% of those who said groups exist for adolescent girls. 13.4% of respondents who mentioned that such groups exist also referenced Community age groups and peer groups, while 8.8% mentioned that Islamiya and other Islamic groups for adolescent girls exist.

4.2.1 What most determines/influences how adolescent girls are treated

About 35% of survey respondents felt that religious teachings is what most determines or influences the way the adolescent girl is treated or regarded in their communities, while 27.6% and 22.4% felt this was determined by culture/tradition, and family values, respectively. This was collaborated with findings from the interviews in which respondents acknowledged religious teachings and religious institutions such as churches and Mosques have huge influence in shaping perception, certainties, attitudes and behaviour of boys, men, girls and women around adolescent girls' issues.

However, the family or home was mentioned as the most common source from which respondents heard or learnt about what determines or influences the way the adolescent girl is treated or regarded at 46.3% of responses. To support this, the following Hadith from the Holy Qu'ran "the best among men is he who treats his family with compassion", was also cited (Feedback from participant at validation meeting). Religious institutions (Mosque – 13.7%; Church – 10.2%) were the second most common source of such information. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the workplace were the places in which such information was least likely to have been heard or learnt.

Below: Factors influencing how adolescent girls are treated



4.3 Findings by Study Objectives

4.3.1 Objective 1

How religious teachings and religious institutions/affiliation can shape perception, certainties, attitudes and behaviour of boys, men, girls and women around Adolescent Girls issues such as access to education, early/forced marriage, access to SRH services, economic empowerment and Gender-based violence

4.3.1.1 Access to Education

Christian and Islam adherents interviewed in the course of this study, regardless of location and age group, were almost unanimous in the claim that access to education is supported by religion. This view was also supported by findings from the survey questionnaire, in which 86.2% of respondents thought that their religion supports access to education for adolescent girls. However, in the survey, more Christian respondents (90.7% of all Christians) compared to Muslims (79.6%) held this view.

The Village Head of Zonzon Community of Zango Kataf LGA aptly validates this view in his statement “teachings from the church helps adolescent girls to study hard and have the fear of God”. Overall, respondents maintained that faith based teachings are tailored towards encouraging adolescent girls to seek education which in turn affords them opportunity to give back to the community.

“The church strongly supports girl child education because educated women serve in various leadership positions in the church and most members of the church are educated to some level and therefore understand the value of education. There is greater awareness of the impact of education on women in the community and therefore more support for girl-child education by community members. Traditional leaders are beneficiaries of western education and fully support girl-child education. Adolescent girls are allowed to go to school and on their return from school, support their mothers in their income generating activities. Parents who can’t afford private schools send their daughters to public schools which are virtually free”. KII, Women Leader, Gbagyi Ridido, Chikun LGA

Religious support for education was not specific to adolescent girls. Instead, religion supports access to education for all persons, regardless of age or gender. As expressed by a religious leader in Kujama, Chikun LGA, “In Islam, seeking knowledge is a must on every Muslim irrespective of gender or age”. This was also collaborated by Adult males in Mayare, Markarfi LGA, “Christianity allows access to education for all irrespective of his/her gender”, and supported by State level religious leaders:

“There is no specific teaching or scriptures regarding the adolescent girl child but rather the bible says in psalms 127:3 that children are gift from God and as such they should be handled with care as treasure, so both the male and the female adolescent should be given access to education”. KII, Catholic Archbishop, Kaduna

“Islam is a very beautiful religion. It allows every person irrespective of age to seek for education. So, Islam encourages it. The first revelation to the prophet (PBUH) came with an instruction to read”. KII JNI State Secretary, Kaduna

However, adolescent girls in Fadan Kamantan of Zango Kataf LGA expressed that, “The adolescent girls in some homes of Fadan Kamantan are not allowed to go to school because they feel that it is a waste of resources”. It was not specified though that religion was the reason adolescent girls in the location were not allowed to go to school. On the contrary, a traditional leader, and male youths in the same LGA felt that adolescent girls are provided with access to education, but sometimes waste the opportunity.

“They [adolescent girls] have been encouraged to go to school in spite of the fact that some of them disappoint us”. KI, Male

Traditional&Religious Leader, Zonkwa, Zango Kataf

“Most of the adolescent girls have access to education despite their behaviour and stubbornness in their homes and they are easily allowed to attend school but don’t pay attention in school because of lack of interest”. FGD Male Youth Fadan Kamantan, Zango Kataf

This view was however only expressed in two communities Zango Kataf and was not mentioned in other communities and LGAs in which the study was conducted.

4.3.1.2 Early/forced Marriage

From the survey, only 22.7% of respondents agreed that religion supports early or forced marriage for adolescent girls. These comprised of 15% of all Christian respondents and 34.8% of Muslim respondents. Discussions by the interview respondents focused on two main themes in relation to early/forced marriage: a face saving exigency where pregnancy occurs for early marriage, and a negation of faith teachings for forced marriage.

Across the communities and LGAs, and regardless of religion, it was mentioned that forced marriage was not supported by religion. In Islam it was mentioned though, that parents could chose spouses for their children. As expressed by a Muslim Religious Leader in Fadan Kamantan, Zango Kataf LGA, “Religion does not support forced marriage but parents can select husbands for their children”. However, early marriage was mentioned to be supported by Islam.

“Islam does not allow forced marriage but some of our ignorant parents force their children. But early marriage is encouraged in Islam”. KII Muslim Religious Leader, Kujama, Chikun LGA

“Forced marriage is not encouraged in Islam. Even though the parents may decide to give out the daughter to a man they feel can take good care of the wife and provide her daily needs. Most daughters don’t complain. However, early marriages have no problem provided the conditions for the marriage are met”. KII, JNl State Secretary, Kaduna

To further support that religion does not support forced/early marriage for adolescent girls, a quote from the Qu’ran (Q2: 195), which addresses mankind thus: “spend of your substance in the cause of Allah, and make not your hands contribute to (your) destruction; but do good; for Allah loveth those who do good”, was cited by an adult male in Ikara, Ikara LGA.

While female youths mentioned that the age at which adolescent girls can choose to get married as from 12 years,

“we are allowed to marry willingly and not forcefully and it is from the age of 12 above” FGD Female Youth, Sabo Gayan, Chikun LGA

Adult females felt it was from 17 years, *“Religion does not encourage early marriage. You only marry when you are 17 years...”* FGD Adult Female, Mayare, Markafi LGA.

Age for marriage not mentioned by any male respondents, nor was it mentioned by respondents in other LGAs. While it was suggested that the age at which adolescent girls should decide whether they want to get married is 17 years, occasional cases of unplanned pregnancy often result in parents compelling adolescent girls to marry early.

Adult females in Gwanki-Ungwan, Makarfi LGA maintained that Christian teaching does not encourage early/forced marriage. According to them, this is supported by religious teachings such as the epistle of Paul to the Ephesians as stated in Ephesians 6: 2-6, as well as the Book of Genesis where God said to Adam “... let us make you a helper...”. However, this religious scripture does not specify the age at which one becomes a ‘helper’.

Furthermore, in addition to religion, early marriage was found to occur when adolescent girls got pregnant, the family could not afford to send their adolescent girls to school, or the adolescent girl was perceived to be a “nuisance” to the community. However, this was mostly influenced by culture and not religion.

“Women are not forced into early marriage except if the girl is put into a family way outside wedlock”. FGD Adult Male, Mayare, Makarfi LGA

“The adolescent girls are not forced into early marriage only in few occasions where she gets pregnant and has to marry the person responsible. Because culture dictates that a girl who gets pregnant doesn’t give birth at home, so she is punished into marriage but it is a warning”. FGD Adult Male, Zonkwa, Zango Kataf LGA

“Traditional law also dictates that no girl should get pregnant at home”. KII Traditional Leader, Zonzon, Zango Kataf LGA

“They [adolescent girls] are discouraged not to, but some out of poverty want to marry”. KII Christian Religious Leader, Gumel, Kachia LGA

“We their mothers we married early so it is our tradition. We don’t force them to marry, it is only when a girl is becoming a nuisance to the community, in order not to bring shame to the family we will then decides to marry her off immediately. Also if the parents can’t afford to send the girl to school or learn hand work in order not to stay at home idle we then marry her off than staying at home doing nothing”.
FGD Adult females, Rigassa, Igabi LGA

4.3.1.3 Access to Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) services

Overall, most respondents believed that religion was in support of access to SRH services, confirming the non-existence of any religious teachings that prevents adolescent girls from accessing SRH services (for both Muslims and Christians). This was also collaborated by findings from the survey in which 59.5% of respondents mentioned that faith teachings support access to SRH services for adolescent girls, with an almost equal proportion of Christians (60.1%) and Muslims (58.8%) supporting this view. However, no specific Christian or Muslim religious teachings that support access to SRH services were mentioned by respondents.

“Not specific, that is the bible did not say anything about that.” KII, Catholic Archbishop, Kaduna

“SRH services as well as other health seeking behaviours are allowed in Islam.” KII JNl State Secretary, Kaduna

When asked about access to SRH, adult females in Gwanki-Ungwan Sarki, Markarfi LGA, pointed at the direction of the Primary Health Centre (PHC) where adolescent girls access SRH services such as family planning, as well as ante-natal and post-natal services. Although SRH services are readily available, issues around sex education appeared to receive less attention. As noted by adult female and male respondents in Zonkwa, Zango Kataf LGA,

“... adolescent girls are shy to discuss about sex in other to know the good and bad side of it” FGD Adult females, Zonkwa, Zango Kataf LGA

“The adolescent girls do not make use of SRH services because they are shy when talking about sex” FGD Adult Males, Zonkwa, Zango Kataf LGA

While it was believed that religion supports access to SRH, open discussion about sex education was reported to not be encouraged in religious institutions and in the society.

“The religious institution encourages members to access healthcare services at the health centres including women to go for SRH services. The churches cannot guaranty healthcare services provision to its members who may choose not to patronize health facilities. Women remain ignorant on issues affecting their SRH because the religion does not allow open discussions on SRH. Few churches allow experts to sensitize their congregations on matters relating to SRH. The fellowship groups may conduct introductory aspects RH without the sexual part.” KII Adult Female, Rido Gbabyi, Chikun LGA

“Society is not comfortable addressing SRH issues.” KII Traditional Leader, Kamuru, Zango Kataf LGA

Another view, held by a traditional leader, was that while adolescent girls can access SRH services, they required the permission of their fathers to do so. “They can access SRH but only with the approval of the father, especially strict fathers” (KII Traditional Leader, Rigassa, Igabi LGA).

4.3.1.4 Economic Empowerment

75.6% of survey respondents felt that religious teachings support economic empowerment, with 81.2% of Christians and 67.5% of Muslims alluding to this belief. In addition, from the interviews conducted, it was mostly mentioned that religion supports economic empowerment of adolescent girls. It was mentioned by a Muslim religious leader in Kujama, Chikun LGA that, “The first Wife of the Prophet (S.A.W) was a trader, so women [and girls] are allowed for [economic] empowerment). In addition, as expressed by the JN State Secretary of Kaduna State, “In an ideal Muslim family, economic empowerment is very much allowed. Any member of the community irrespective of his or her age can be involved in either small scale or large scale businesses”. However, no specific religious teachings or quotations were mentioned in support for economic empowerment of the adolescent girl.

“Religious teachings [on economic empowerment of the adolescent girl] are not specific” KII, Catholic Archbishop, Kaduna

Respondents across locations, age groups and religions felt that adolescent girls were encouraged to have access to economic empowerment.

“The adolescent girls within the community are encouraged to get involve in “hand work” FGD Adolescent Female, Fadan Kamantan, Zango Kataf LGA

“The community encourages for a girl child to be independent and not be a liability to anybody in the future. Their parents also supports them by putting up to learn hand work/skills such as tailoring, hair dressing and catering.” FGD Male Youth, Rido Gbanyi, Chikun LGA

“Every young girl is being brought up to learn trades of her choice in order not to depend on her husband or family.” FGD Adult Female, Mayare, Markarfi LGA

Access to economic empowerment for the adolescent girl was found to be influenced by family situations. It was also seen as the role of mothers to bequeath such skills to the adolescent girls.

“They are encouraged but, it also depend on the parent for support and ensure consistency and determination of their adolescent child.” FGD Adult Female, Zonkwa, Zango Kataf LGA

“Adolescent girls are not usually allowed to acquire skills, most parent will rather prefer their children to hawk after she arrived from school.” KII Imam, Rido Hausa, Chikun LGA

“Mothers are responsible for teaching especially the girl child ways she can be empowered.” FGD Adult Male, Mayare, Markarfi LGA

However, it was identified that a lack of skills to bequeath, coupled with the lack of community or government led economic empowerment initiatives pose a challenge to economic empowerment of the adolescent girls.

“No economic empowerment from the government. The churches take it upon themselves to encourage them to get involved in handcraft instead of roaming about the community if they cannot cope with school.” FGD Male Youth, Fadan Kamantan, Zango Kataf LGA

“There are no entrepreneurship programmes within the community but adolescents are encouraged to learn skills.” KII Traditional Leader, Kamuru, Zango Kataf LGA

“No economic empowerment programme is going on in our community. Mothers are rather left to support them adolescent girls economically” KII Imam, Mayare, Makarfi LGA

4.3.1.5 Gender Based Violence

Respondents interviewed across locations, age groups and religions expressed that religion does not support GBV. Again, no religious texts or teachings were mentioned in support of this. However, findings from the survey indicate that 28.0% of respondents feel that religious teachings support GBV, while 12.2% were unsure. Just above half of respondents (55.1%) felt that religious teachings do not support GBV. Furthermore, over a quarter of all Christian and Muslim adherents (26.4% and 30.9%, respectively) believe that religious teachings support GBV.

“We do not support or encourage any form of molestation especially on the girl child because she is fragile.” KII with Zumunta Mata Women Association Leader, Gumel, Igabi LGA

“The community discourages the act of rape and sexual molestation among Adolescent girls. The law in the community does not allow Adolescent girls to suffer molestation and rape. Adolescent girls are always encouraged to speak out incidents of molestation for proper action to be taken on their behalf.” FGD with Male adults, Zonzon community, Zango Kataf LGA

“The church forbids violence and openly condemns gender-based violence. The church leadership has mediated and worked with families involved in these traumatic experiences to alleviate the suffering of adolescent girls. Some men in the community persist with gender-based violence and members of the community often condemn these acts which are often carried out under the influence of alcohol. The community leadership plays an active role in settling these disputes and taking steps to prevent its occurrence.” KII, Women Leader, Magajiya Gbagyi Rido, Chikun LGA

However, despite these attestations, adolescent girls in Fadan Kamantan reported that they experience molestation. This was also mentioned by male youths in the same community.

“Adolescent girls are been molested especially at night and are been threatened not to voice out the act which was carried out on them.”

FGD Female Adolescents, Fadan Kamantan, Zango Kataf LGA

“Some of them are been raped or molested but they don’t speak out due to fear of stigmatizing from the community. The adolescent girls are even willing to give themselves and explore what they watch on movies.” FGD Male Youth, Fadan Kamantan, Zango Kataf LGA

Women in Zonkwa, Zango Kataf LGA mentioned that cases of GBV had reduced as a result if community laws.

“The issue of rape and molestation has gone down a bit in the community because they have passed serious laws against rape in the community.” FGD Adult Female, Zonkwa, while men in Mayare, Makarfi LGA mentioned that expressed that *“wife battering was there before but has stopped over twenty five years ago in our community. The girl child is viewed as fragile specie.”* FGD Adult Male, Mayare

However, the perception that indecent dressing by adolescent girls contributes to their risk of being molested was expressed. Interestingly, all respondents who mentioned this were male adults and youths. It was also interesting to note that most mentions of current molestation of adolescent girls were in Zango Kataf LGA.

“Nobody tries to violate them as far as this community is concern, except they cause it themselves to be violated by doing what they are not supposed to do, and dressing indecent which could give such opportunity to be violated.” FGD Male Youths, Rido Gbabyi, Chikun LGA

“They are restricted on what to wear. The society encourages them to dress decently.” KII Christian Religious Leader, Fadan Kamantan, Zango Kataf LGA

“Our tradition encourages decent dressing.” KII, Traditional Leader, Kamuru, Zango Kataf

4.3.1.6 Inheritance

62% of survey respondents believe that religious teachings support access to inheritance by adolescent girls. Supporting this, religious and traditional leaders across LGAs stated that:

“They [adolescent girls] should be given access to inherit what the family has in terms of assets and that’s what Islam teaches.” KII, Imam, Rido Hausa, Chikun LGA

“Islam protects women inheritance and it is practiced in this community.” KII Youth Leader, Rigasa, Igabi LGA

These views were also supported by state level religious leaders, both Christian and Muslim, although gain, no specific religious scripture were mentioned in support of inheritance by adolescent girls.

According to the teachings of the Qur'an, inheritance is a right and not an opportunity.

"...infact, Islamically speaking, inheritance is guaranteed in every Muslim household except if the person in charge decides to be wicked or looks the other way round." KII JN1 State Secretary, Kaduna

"The Bible did not specify particularly on adolescent girls but it says inheritance should be giving to the children of the late in case he doesn't have child it should be giving to his wife if he doesn't have wife it should be giving to his relatives if he doesn't have relatives it should be giving to his neighbours... There is no place in the bible that say that inheritance is just for the male, so inheritance should be giving to both male and female child." KII Catholic Archbishop, Kaduna

It was revealed that the practise of denying adolescent girls access to inheritance is rooted in customary practices, and not religion.

"Girls in general are not allowed to partake in the inheritance of the father because they would be married out to other men where they can claim inheritance." FGD Female Adolescents, Fadan Kamantan, Zango Kataf LGA

"They give inheritance but some traditions do not allow inheritance for female" Female Youth, Rido Gbabyi, Chikun LGA

"The Church plays no role in promoting access to inheritance for adolescent girls and has no clear rules governing or guiding the process of inheritance. The members therefore hold unto cultural and traditional dictates to share inheritance. They may resort to legal action if enlightened or economically buoyant enough." KII, Adult female, Rido Gbabyi, Chikun LGA

In some cases, adolescent girls do share in inheritance, although they got a smaller share compared to male children, and were not allowed to inherit land. They were also allowed to inherit only from their mothers.

"They give inheritance but shared unequally amongst the males and females." FGD Adult Female, Rido Hausa, Chikun LGA

"Based on the southern Kaduna tradition, the girl is not entitled to inheritance. Although their parent can consider them while they live with them but when they get married it is difficult for them to access inheritance. The rights given to the male by the fore fathers are stronger than that of the female." FGD Male Youths, Fadan Kamantan, Zango Kataf LGA

"Adolescent girls can only inherit properties from their mothers." KII, Traditional Leader, Kamuru, Zango Kataf LGA

“Yes, they do inherit their father’s wealth but land is excluded.” KII

Traditional Leader, Rigasa, Igabi LGA

“Female do not have any share of inheritance. Few families does that but shared unequally among the male and female child. They cannot inherit farm lands.” FGD Adult Female, Mayare, Makarfi LGA

Such perceptions were widespread in the responses provided. Thus, while more 70.9% of Muslims and 56.5% of Christians felt that religion supports access to inheritance for adolescent girls, religious teachings appear to be overwhelmed by culture/traditions, and its implications.

4.3.2 Objective 2

Opportunities and barriers to Faith leaders’ action on Adolescent girls’ issues of education, early/forced marriage, access to SRH services, economic empowerment and Gender-based violence; and identify the different levels of intervention by faith leaders.

Only 29.0% of survey respondents think that there are challenges or barriers that religious or traditional leaders, and religious institutions face that may hinder them from promoting equality for male and female, other positive values, behaviours and ideas about what the role and status of adolescent girls are. Of these 63.8% are Christian, while 35.0% are Muslim, implying that Muslim religious leaders may face more barriers in the promotion of issues that concern the adolescent girl.

Findings from the interviews reveal faith leaders wield enormous opportunities in taking action on issues of adolescent girls. Many people consider them opinion moulders and as such these faith leaders possess huge influence on parents’ perception on education, marriage and sexual reproductive health as well as GBV as it affects adolescent girls. Faith Actors were also identified to have easier access to political leaders, compared to the general population.

A key opportunity identified is that faith actors now speak about sex and sexuality in the church and mosque. This implies that it will be easy to address SRH issues. There are also a lot of female church and mosque groups for girls like girls fellowship, girls’ brigade, Islamiya and youth groups that can be engaged with to advance adolescent girl issues. Faith leaders also promote education and respect among individuals especially through the establishment of Islamic and Christian schools for boys and girls, while faith and community leaders are able to leverage on their social capital to ensure the well-being of adolescent girls.

“The Reverend in charge of Baptist church in Riddo is an advocate for girls’ freedom to choose their suitor for marriage. When his attention is drawn to cases of abuse or neglect against adolescent girls, he takes immediate steps to address the matter and is known to punish culprits severely for such acts.” Community Leader, Riddo Gbagyi,

Chikun LGA

However, faith leaders are equally challenged by multiple barriers that reduces their capacity to respond to adolescent girls issues, including institutional, cultural and financial barriers, as well as inadequate government response and provision of public services.

“Lack of institutional co-ordination and management of adolescent girls’ issues induced by lack of amenities, infrastructure and financial support from the government continue to hamper adolescent girls’ development.” FGD with male youth in Fadan Kamantan, Zango Kataf LGA

The most commonly mentioned barrier was a conflict between faith teachings and deeply rooted cultural practices or traditions. In addition, it was revealed that young faith actors are usually unable to speak freely about certain issues such as sex education. Furthermore, faith actors who lack integrity or in-depth knowledge of religious teachings as regards adolescent girls’ issues are unable to speak up for adolescent girls. Another barrier identified was the misinterpretation of faith teachings, with 1 Corinthians 14:34 from the Bible cited as an example of how faith teachings have been misinterpreted and used against women and girls.

Furthermore, despite recommendations that faith actors provide scholarship for adolescent girls who cannot afford to go to school, faith actors were found to not be financially capable enough to help afford such scholarships. Other challenges mentioned were a lack of support, interest or awareness from adolescent girls, their parents/families, and the community, and lack of unity and security within the communities. These claims were buttressed by the absence of a direct link between policy formulation and cultural reality. In addition to these, the lack of education and exposure on the part of religious followers, scepticism by religious followers on the issue of gender and western education, sectarian differences, and the low economic status of religious leaders were also mentioned, albeit mostly by Muslim respondents.

Regarding the roles of parents, the respondents stated most men believe it is not their responsibility to educate the adolescent girls. This is coupled with the notion that women are materialistic, collecting the gifts adolescent girls bring home without scolding them, or confirming where they were coming from. More worrisome for some of the respondents is the practice of disparity between adolescent girls and boys to the advantage of the latter.

“Deeply rooted in the Gbagyi culture is the superiority of male children over females. Male children support the fathers on the farms and therefore are considered by the head of the family (the father), more useful to the family. Gender roles have always curtailed the ability of girls to break away from stereotypes. The adolescent girl is expected to remain by the mother’s side learning to cook and provide food and comfort for the entire family. She is a ‘good’ girl when she supports the mother’s income generating activity tirelessly from sun up to sun down. The family will invest in her educational pursuits and her role in the family. This will not challenge her access to education, but will undoubtedly affect her freedom to move around freely or having access to space to play with her friends” KII with female Community leader, Magajiya-Gbagyi

4.3.3 Objective 3

How Faith Actors and traditional leaders can use their positions to influence behaviour change to empower adolescent girls

Overall, sensitisation and awareness raising was the most frequently mentioned way in which faith actors, traditional leaders and religious institutions could influence behaviour change to empower adolescent girls. Other recommendations include the passing and enforcement of laws that protect adolescent girls, and punishments as deterrents for bad behaviour. It was also mentioned that a reward system be set up to reward those who support adolescent girls' issues.

Faith actors and health experts were identified as key persons to raise awareness on adolescent girls' issues, with suggestions that faith leaders focus their sermons around adolescent girls' issues, and health personnel be identified to train adolescent girls and their parents on adolescent girl's issues. Furthermore, personal testimonies of educated people should be used to change perceptions of adolescent girls, as supported by Revelation 12:11, and adolescent girls should be trained as role models to other adolescent girls as supported by 1 Timothy 4:12.

4.3.3.1 Access to Education

Most respondents, regardless of religion, gender or age group, believe Faith actors and traditional leaders could promote education for adolescent girls through sensitisation and promotion of girl child friendly activities in the church and community. They could also sponsor scholarships for adolescent students and leverage on their widespread acceptance to advance girl child education. In addition, traditional leaders were believed to possess the additional capacity to liaise with government to provide better infrastructure that will encourage adolescent education. Faith institutions, on their part, could promote adolescent groups that will teach and mentor adolescent girls as well as establish schools and offer scholarships to indigent girls in those schools.

4.3.3.2 Early/forced Marriage

Evidence presented by respondents regardless of religion, age group and gender, indicates that Faith Actors can through awareness creation and preaching on the consequences of early marriage discourage early/forced marriage. Respondents believe that if Faith Actors take an open position on early/forced marriage, this will further encourage parents to discontinue the practise of early/forced marriages. It was also suggested that traditional leaders, riding on the sphere of influence they have over community members, could establish community laws banning early/forced marriage, and enforce strong penalties for defaulters. Faith institutions, on their part, could create awareness raising platforms such as seminars and workshops where issues of early/forced marriage will be discouraged.

4.3.3.3 Access to SRH services

Respondents submitted that faith leaders could invite specialists to sensitize women on SRH as well as mobilise members to access healthcare services from health facilities. It was believed that such a pronouncement by faith leaders can increase uptake in SRH services. Similarly, traditional leaders were said to have the ability to mobilise health facility staff to conduct community level services targeting women for SRH. Faith institutions could also organise peer education trainings to equip adolescent girls with SRH counselling and referral services to health facilities.

4.3.3.4 Economic Empowerment

Generally, respondents emphasised the strength of faith leaders preaching against idleness, and providing mothers of adolescent girls with seed-money for business development in order to enhance their livelihoods. For traditional leaders, the priority according to respondents is to identify poor women in the community and provide land for farming. It is believed that adolescent girl will benefit from this since they support their mothers with domestic activities and businesses. Faith institutions could also influence adolescent girls positively through the conduct of seminars to increase entrepreneurial and financial management skills.

4.3.3.5 Gender Based Violence

Evidence centred on faith leaders preaching against violence through the dissemination of relevant Biblical and Qu'ranic tenets that discourages gender-based violence. Respondents also believed that sensitisation on the legal implications of GBV should be provided, through the help of a legal practitioner. Faith leaders can also provide shelter within the church premises for survivors of violence.

Conversely, for traditional leaders to curb GBV, adolescent girls, female and male adult respondents asserted the institution and enforcement of punishment to anyone who engages in violence or other forms of molestation. Similarly, faith institutions have the capacity to mobilize the community and organize seminars highlighting the legal implication of gender-based violence. In addition, training of women on human rights as well as equipping counsellors to provide support to victims of abuse and violence were adjudged the function of faith institutions.

4.3.3.6 Freedom to move around without molestation

Respondents posited that more outdoor activities for youth groups in faith institutions, as well as the introduction of martial arts classes will enhance self-defence. Similarly, capacity building could be provided to counsellors who will serve as confidants to survivors of molestation in the community. The establishment and organisation of community police, as well as the encouragement of adolescents to report molestation cases to the community police were suggested as a role for traditional leaders. Lastly, faith institutions ability to organise training for community police to tackle and arrest molesters was emphasised.

4.3.3.7 Freedom of verbal expression in private and public spaces, and space to be assertive and not intimidated by others

It was suggested that faith leaders review and up-date training programs to empower adolescent girls with life building skills. Traditional leaders could partners with religious bodies to organize trainings on life building skills targeting adolescent girls as a means to addressing self-confidence. Faith institutions could also train peer educators and counsellors on life skills through youth and women groups in the community, churches and mosques.

4.3.3.8 Access to Inheritance

Majority of adult male and female respondents suggested that faith leaders preach about unbiased and fair access to inheritance by female children, inclusive of adolescent girls. Traditional leaders, on their part could pronounce a law focused on discrimination against women and girls in cases of inheritance. Furthermore, adolescent girls asserted that traditional leaders could act as advocates to make cases for women denied their inheritance.

4.3.4 Objective 4

The difference between cultural practices and/or religious practices that empower or disempower adolescent girls

Respondents admitted that cultural and religious practices are critical determinants in the entire trajectory of an adolescence life. With the right message and guidance, adolescent girls become enlightened and grow into an adult who can take key decisions that will lead her to be a standard and contribute to community and societal growth. Adolescent practices are influenced by teachings that promote positive values. Offered mainly in schools, churches, mosques and village town halls, these teachings empower adolescent girls on attainment of education goals, health services, self-esteem amongst other salient aspects of adolescent lives.

“The adolescent girls are empowered to participate in community activities that improves their skills and empower them to have sustainable source of income where they so desires.” FGD with female adults, Kamuru community, Zango Kataf LGA

“Religious ideals certainly support the positive role and status of adolescent girls in this community. It dictates that as early as four, a girl-child is enrolled in ‘Tamrari’ which is an age group in the church conducting various activities suitable for the age group. Between ten and eleven, they graduate into ‘Girls Light (GL) group’, which is another girl’ group running appropriate programmes for that age group. At fourteen, the adolescents graduate into Lydia group and continue their programmes until they get married and would graduate into women’s fellowship. However, all adolescent girls may not be captured by the program which exists in one denomination in the community.” KII Community Leader, Gbagyi Riddo, Chikun LGA

However, adolescent girls face cultural practices that disempower them from achieving their full potential, majorly gender disparity and violence against girls. From the respondents, these are subtly entrenched in culture.

“Men and women in the homes may be perceived to be anti-culture and/or tradition if they give their children all the liberty to speak and express or participate in affairs that concern the society.” KII, Chief Imam, Tarshan Yari, Makarfi LGA

“The adolescent girls in some homes of Fadan Kamantan are not allowed to go to school because they feel that it is a waste of resources.” FGD with adolescent girls, Fadan Kamantan, Zango Kataf LGA

However, while culturally it is believed that males are superior, the bible in Genesis 1:27 states that God created man in His image and blessed them male and female. Genesis 5:2 also supports the equality of men and women. Compounding this challenge is the absence of alternative methods in handling issues of early

pregnancy that often results in forced marriage. While majority of the respondents were of the opinion that early marriage is disallowed, same stance cannot be held where pregnancy is involved.

“The adolescent girls are not forced into early marriage only in few occasions where she gets pregnant and has to marry the person responsible. Because culture dictates that a girl who gets pregnant doesn’t give birth at home, so she is pushed into marriage, but it is a warning.” FGD with Adult females, Zonkwa, Zango Kataf LGA

“We do not support early/forced marriage but agree partially” KII, Muslim male youth leader, Ridido Hausa, Chikun LGA

From religious teachings, it was identified that while the Bible encourages inheritance by girls (as seen in Numbers 27:7). However, denial of the right of inheritance as a result of culture/tradition reinforces the disparity between adolescent girls and their male counterparts.

“Girls in general are not allowed to partake in the inheritance of the father because they would be married out to other men where they can claim inheritance.” FGD with adolescent girls, Fadan Kamantan, Zango Kataf LGA

“Females do not inherit the property of their father ...” FGD, adolescent females, Kujama, Chikun LGA

“Female access to inheritance is not encouraged because of our customs and culture.” KII, traditional ruler, Zonzon, Zango Kataf LGA

“...our culture does not allow the girl child to inherit her parent’s property.” KII, Chief Imam, Tarshan Yari, Makarfi LGA

Despite these challenges, some families have started to reconsider traditional inheritance practices, although this is yet to be widely spread and supported within the communities.

“Inheritance is meant for the male children but today some families do share... one out of ten, excluding lands/farms of their inheritance to the girl.” FGD with adult male, Mayare, Makarfi LGA

Overall, respondents surmised that while religious and cultural practices have near equal impact on adolescent girls, cultural practices are skewed towards disempowerment compared to the religious practices which are aimed at self-realisation. In the validation meeting, some participants confirmed that females are able to inherit from their mothers. However, within a patriarchal setting where the wealth of mothers can easily be taken away or regarded as the property of the Man, then the mere fact that girls or females can inherit from their mother may not be adequate to address the issues of dis-inheritance of the girl child.

4.3.5 Objective 5

Profile of religious and traditional leaders, institutions and teachings that promote/ influence positive values and behaviours change towards the advancement of adolescent girls in the communities.

57.3% and 46.3% of survey respondents know of any religious faith teachings or institutions respectively that promote positive values, behaviours and ideas about the role and status of adolescent girl. The table in Appendix 6 of the report shows the details of such leaders, teachings and institutions. Please note that where names are not mentioned, it was not provided by the respondents.

4.3.6 Objective 6

Practical suggestions and recommendations on how to harness the positive potential of religious teachings and institutions to promote positive behaviours and practices in ways that will ultimately benefit adolescent girls, exploring opportunities and barriers that exist.

Respondents emphasised measures such as awareness creation on gender equality, harmful traditional practices, economic empowerment, skill acquisition interventions, and leveraging on the influence of role models and parents.

“Skill Acquisition centres should be established by faith communities to be able to empower the adolescent girls and the community in general.” FGD, adult female, Zonkwa, Zango Kataf LGA

“Traditional leaders should ban harmful traditions on the girl child.” KII, Religious Leader, Fadan Kamantan, Zango Kataf LGA

“... the community needs to provide self-reliant interventions, moral support and provision of scholarships to adolescent girls.” KII, Traditional Leader, Kamuru, Zango Kataf LGA

“Build schools and vocational centre for skill acquisition like tailoring, beads making, salon, knitting and many more. Also organize programs to empower them.” FGD, Youth Female, Gayan, Chikun LGA

There was also an emphasis on the role of parents, families, and teachers to pay more attention to the needs of adolescent girls.

“Parents should give them attention to know who their friends are. Their teachers in school should give them attention to ensure they are doing the right thing while in school. Youth leader should ensure that in all their gathering, they always discuss issues that will help their gathering. Religious leaders should preach and tell them the danger of those challenges with scriptural backings.” KII, Imam, Riddo Gbabyi, Chikun LGA

“Training on contemporary issues as well as awareness creation should be provided for parents and those who teach both the faith and morals in schools.” KII, Male Islamic Teacher, Nasarawan-Doya, Makarfi LGA

However, some male respondents felt that such interventions should be expanded to include both adolescent boys and girls as a means to promote equality.

“Since this intervention is for adolescent girls, there is need to also have another intervention for the adolescent boys to ensure that both genders are fully aware on the consequences of their adolescent actions, focus should include boys and not be on female alone.” FGD

Adult Male, Gumel, Kachia LGA

Furthermore, a respondent highlighted observations pertinent to the strengthening and sustainability of the intervention, expressing their concerns as follows:

“There have been visitors coming to the community in the past to conduct similar surveys and raising the hopes and expectations of community members. There has never been a follow up project or visit after they are done which is very disheartening. I hope that this time around, a project will be sited in the community and the community would have the opportunity to participate in a development project.” KII Community leader, Gbagyi-Riddo, Chikun LGA

Other suggestions include leveraging on religious concerts and testimonies, interdenominational camp/retreat meetings, training and conferences, quizzes and debates, as well as role modelling. There was also the suggestion that parents lead by example, while encouraging the teaching and living of religious tenets, and praying with their adolescent girls as a family. Furthermore, it was suggested that traditional leaders be empowered so that they can talk about the issues of adolescent girls without fear or favour.

Overall, parents, traditional leaders, pastors and Imams, as well as the Governor and Council Chairman were seen as key agents capable to manage these interventions. From the survey, religious leaders (29.3%), followed by mothers (23.8%), fathers (19.8%) and traditional leaders (12.4%) were recommended to lead these interventions. When asked, almost all respondents (93.6%) welcomed the idea of such an intervention in their communities, with 89.0% agreeing to allow their adolescent daughters or siblings participate in the activities of such an intervention.

4.4 Perceptions and Actions of Faith-based Leaders

This section aims to distil out from the data collected, especially from faith-based leaders their perceptions on issues of adolescent girls, what opportunities they see for change, their challenges and recommendations.

4.4.1 Faith-based perceptions on issues of adolescent girls

Most faith-based leaders interviewed indicated by their statements that the religion and religious teachings do not support any negative and oppressive actions on the girl child. Rather most citations received as presented below, tend to suggest that the faith-based leaders are often the ones challenging actions and practices which deprive the girl child. For instance the interviewed religious leaders will quickly acclaim that religion supports girl education and by default economic empowerment, leadership skills and power to make appropriate decisions that is associated with good education.

“There is no specific teaching or scriptures regarding the adolescent girl child but rather the bible says in psalms 127:3 that children are

gift from God and as such they should be handled with care as treasure, so both the male and the female adolescent should be given access to education.” KII, Catholic Archbishop, Kaduna

“Islam is a very beautiful religion. It allows every person irrespective of age to seek for education. So Islam encourages it. The first revelation to the prophet (PBUH) came with an instruction to read.” KII JNI State Secretary, Kaduna

“They [adolescent girls] are encouraged to have access to education.” KII Christian Religious Leader, Zonkwa, Zango Kataf LGA

The interviewed faith-based leaders also posit that their religion or its teachings do not support forced or early marriage but rather indicated that culture and some traditional practices are responsible for such practices or actions against adolescent girls. However it is important to note that some Religion (Islam in this instance) seems to have some tolerance for early marriage as long as it is not forced on the girl.

“Islam does not allow forced marriage but some of our ignorant parents force their children. But early marriage is encouraged in Islam.” KII Muslim Religious Leader, Kujama, Chikun LGA

“Biblically there’s no specification but they have their right in choosing who they want to marry and when, but it encourages that they go to school first.” KII Catholic Archbishop, Kaduna

4.4.2 Opportunities envisaged by faith-based leaders

From the interviews with faith-based leaders and commendations from other respondents, it is obvious that they are faith-based leaders who are deviants and will challenge cultural and traditional practices which suppress the girl child. These leaders from their comments and actions see opportunities through their preaching and interaction with the traditional institutions and gatekeepers to address issues of adolescent girls. They also agree from remarks made that the faith-based are often compelled to condone some of the traditional practices.

“We do not support early/forced marriage but agree partially.” KII, Muslim male youth leader, Riddo Hausa, Chikun LGA

According to the teachings of the Qur’an, inheritance is a right and not an opportunity.

“...infact, Islamically speaking inheritance is guaranteed in every Muslim household except if the person in charge decides to be wicked or looks the other way round.” KII JNI State Secretary, Kaduna

“Adolescent girls are usually allowed to acquire skills, but most parents will rather prefer their children to hawk after she arrived from school.” KII, Religious Leader, Rido Hausa, Chikun LGA

“In an ideal Muslim family, economic empowerment is very much allowed. Any member of the community irrespective of his or her age can be involved in either small scale or large scale businesses.”

KII, JNI State Secretary, Kaduna

“They should be given access to inherit what the family has in terms of assets, and that’s what Islam teaches.” KII, Imam, Rido Hausa, Chikun LGA

4.4.3 Challenges and Barriers anticipated by faith-based leaders

The interviews with faith-based leaders also indicated some challenges which they see in dealing with some of the issues of adolescent girls in the communities. One challenge, which is overarching, is the role of culture and traditional practices.

“...our culture does not allow the girl child to inherit her parent’s property.” KII, Chief Imam, Tarshan Yari, Makarfi LGA

“Men and women in the homes may be perceived to be anti-culture and/or tradition if they give their children all the liberty to speak and express or participate in affairs that concern the society.” KII, Chief Imam, Tarshan Yari, Makarfi LGA

Poverty and the quest for survival often dictates actions of both parents and the adolescent girls. Few respondents posit that economic hardship often pushes the adolescent girls to early marriage, thus depriving them of other things such as education and learning skills for livelihood and economic empowerment.

“They [adolescent girls] are discouraged not to, but some out of poverty want to marry” KII Christian Religious Leader, Gumel, Kachia LGA)

4.4.4 Recommendations by faith-based leaders

Based on the comments received, the key recommendations by faith-based leaders include sensitisation of traditional leaders; training and awareness for parents and their teachers and educating the adolescent girls through the support of the governments.

“Traditional leaders should ban harmful traditions on the girl child.” KII, Christian Religious Leader, Fadan Kamantan, Zango Kataf LGA

“Training on contemporary issues as well as awareness creation should be provided for parents and those who teach both the faith and morals in schools.” KII, Islamic Religious Teacher, Nasarawan-Doya, Makarfi LGA

5.0 Discussions and Recommendations

This chapter looks at the implications and insights for programme implementations and intervention strategies based on some of the key findings from this study. Some recommendations are proffered based on analysis of findings and also hinged on support from pertinent studies.

5.1 Culture, Tradition, Religion and Issues of Adolescent Girls

This study deliberately did not start off by seeking to know who or what is responsible for allowing some of the issues that militate against the growth and development of adolescent girls. Experiences during the pilot of tools have shown that seeking to ascertain if Religion or culture (or tradition) often creates a tendency for bias by respondents and makes responses non coherent. For instance, while a Religious leader is quick to agree that old and unreligious traditions are responsible for denying the adolescent certain rights such as freedom to worship, get baptised and associate with members freely, such person may be quick to agree that traditionally that girls should obey parents, help at home, dress modestly and remain at home if so wished by parents.

It is therefore difficult to have a clean margin to ascertain if Religion or Culture (Tradition) is responsible to perpetuating marginalisation or the deprivations suffered by the adolescent girls. However, some indications are obvious from this study and some deductive reasons will suffice; these include but not limited to those discussed below.

5.1.1 Areas of Congruence

From the study, it is evident that respondents from the perspective of religion will argue that their religion (Christian and Muslims alike) supports that a girl child should be given opportunities and supported to have good and adequate education; must not be made to suffer violence, not forced into early marriage and be free from molestation from men or other persons. However, within same groups, there are respondents who will insist from a traditional point of view that girls have no business with inheritance as they will be taken care of when they marry and move on to their husband's house. Such commentators will by extension not see any reasons to delay the marriage or a girl for reasons of seeking academic or skills for livelihood.

In some of the responses, one could distil out comments that tends to blame the girls for molestations and violence meted out to them, by such comments such as "...girls should dress decently and not wander to avoid being raped.... they should cover themselves properly, so as not to attract men...". The argument comes from both from perspective of tradition and religion.

The tradition and religion are also very conservative when it comes to discussion on providing and allowing for extensive space for adolescent girls to discuss and be provided access to sexual and reproductive health services. Both are not comfortable with going beyond provision of basic sex education and reproductive organs hygiene for girls. None will promote the rights of adolescent girls to education on issues on family planning methods, ensuring safe and satisfying sex for the women and girls and allowing for discussion on sexual orientation and rights. Therefore, the study had limits to probing to such discourse as that may provoke negative reactions within the context of this study

5.1.2 Economic Pressures and Politics

Deductions from study confirmed some of established issues of the roles played by state of the economy and politics on how religion, tradition or culture can influence issues of adolescent girls. A common example from the responses received is the indications by most respondents that they expect girls to stay around, mostly at home or where ever the parents take them to (often farm and to do chores) and help out with the quest for economic reasons. In the study the religious groups (Christians and Muslim) alike will expect girls to help out and bring some income or engage in income generating activities such as hawking. Even though this same group had

earlier mentioned that their religion support that girls should get good education and be treated fairly like boys, they fail to recognise the implications to education of the adolescent girls stepping out so early in life to engage in income generating activities.

Political tensions, such as conflicts, insecurity and others often mean the adolescent girls are vulnerable. Getting them to stay close at home, go into early marriage and other discriminatory practices is often seen as stop gap for such socio-political challenges.

Depriving the girls of inheritance is also shrouded within the confines of political statements and ideas such as what she will do with the land or property considering that she will marry a man whom by religious and cultural standards should provide for her. More so, in a patriarchal, resource poor environment, not enough is available to go round the men and boys who are saddled with more than they can realistically handle. So the adolescent girl by traditional practices is cut off.

In summary, while there are clear areas of difference between tradition (or culture) and religion, in practical terms, there will be very thin line when interpreting the actions of people on the basis of these when it relates to treatment or actions for or against adolescent girls. However, most pundits will argue that religion and religious teachings do promote certain practices. For instance comments from faith-based leader indicate that the religious institution often will condone cultural practices such as early marriage or disinheritance of girls.

5.2 Implications for Interventions

This study has spotlighted some critical issues and observed some gaps which may pose as obstacles to the success of any intervention strategy as these gaps are deep rooted on cultural and religious norms and practices of many years of existence. Some of these can be claimed by communities and gatekeepers as useful as they are deemed to have kept adolescent girls safe and well mannered. An example is the near to confinement of young girls and keeping them away from tertiary level education for reasons of query on what value such education for the child on the long term. Basically, they fear that the girl may never get a suitor or marry as she will be considered old. It is therefore important to further analyse the value placed by the concerned society on ensuring that young girls are within the confines of cultural practice where they can get married.

Education seems to be the pivot for success in achieving the objectives of any intervention geared towards behaviour change or seeking space for the empowerment of the adolescent girl. The survey identified that less than 30% of the general respondents have tertiary level of education and this is mostly none degree programmes. This will be a major issue that the project will need to tackle as parents, guardians and possible relatives of the concerned adolescent girls who do not have higher level education may not see value in such and as such will perpetuate the low level of education and skills acquisition as aspired for the CAAGI project for adolescent girls.

Another major revelation from the study is that most of the participants interviewed indicated that they are self-employed and often need the support of their children and relatives in their quest for economic survival. The implication for programme is that there will be adequate number of adult participants who have indicated that they co-teach their children and as such are a veritable group to sensitise and mobilise in any project that aims to teach, re-orientate and empower the adolescent girl.

5.3 Recommendations

These recommendations are based on comments made by respondents, analysis of data and observations of researchers. It is advised that these recommendations be adopted within the context of the community and approached with caution and with gatekeepers who have been identified as allies or champions of gender justice leading and guiding in most instances.

One key recommendation based on analysis of data is to consider the involvement of parents and guardians in any intervention strategy as facilitators and moderators. While the project may have in perspective the Religious leaders as key influencers, the survey has indicated that parents and guardians play critical roles and should be significantly involved in programme design and implementation.

The survey like some similar studies have pointed at the problems mis-interpretation of religious text both by the Christian and Muslims as regards issues of education, time and how to marry for girls, economic empowerment, access to sexual and reproductive health rights and services and use of violence (beating and abuse) on girls. While many respondents may be quick to state they are against such deprivations, maltreatment or denials of rights of the adolescent girl, it is obvious that words are not often matched with actions.

The project will benefit greatly if religious leaders use existing forum and opportunities which abound in routine religious activities to correct these mis-interpretations and abuse of religious text when dealing with adolescent girls. The project may need to deepen conversation with religious leaders and allow for community conversation that is inclusive of parents, religious leaders, traditional leaders, and representatives of adolescent girls, men, youths and women to correct these errors which are often only in disfavour of girls and women.

The respondents have suggested that the project leverage on existing structures within the religious institutions and places such as prayer groups, choir, Islamiyah, discussion teams, play groups and others for programme activities rather than attempt to create new ones. The project implementers will need to review these suggestions and seek out what will work best. Creating new avenues within a context where the adolescent girls barely have free space may pose additional challenges.

In addition, the project should consider working with policy makers to ensure appropriate policy environment and protection. Apart from being a suggestion from the study respondents, the state government has spoken on the need to reprimand parents or guardians who deny education to their wards. The project could engage with policy makers and executive arms of government to ensure compliance.

The findings from the study suggest that sexual and reproductive health services are available to the adolescent girls, and that the challenge is that the girls are shy or unwilling to access the services. However, observation and deeper probing seems to suggest that the girls are afraid of seeking certain services or asking questions which may be misinterpreted as immoral or being wayward. It is discretely noticed that none of the SRH service centres will freely promote use of safer sex practices such as use of condom, use of methods that will protect against pregnancy and STIs and have available spaces to discuss sexuality issues. The adolescent girl will not be bold to visit community centres to discuss sexuality issues such as safer and satisfying sex practices in a health centre that she feels will judge her. The CAAGI project will need to explore how such services will be packaged to make access and uptake more feasible for adolescent girls.

The project may wish to seek other implementers within the intervention locations who may have programme activities that will work in synergy with the CAAGI project and explore useful partnership. In doing this the

project needs to have a clear performance monitoring plan or log frame which will enable it seek out attribution and authenticate the project contribution to any successful outcomes or otherwise.

Effective communication, mutual understanding, mutual respect and continuous improvement of congruence are critical success factors for implementing partners for any community level behaviour change intervention programme. Christian Aid, its implementing partners and community facilitators will need to hold very clear and mutual working partnership. Where possible a Standard Operating Procedure may need to be developed as guide to all partners and regular review meetings held to ensure focus. At the time of the survey, the implementing partners on this project seemed to misunderstand some of the directives from Christian Aid. There was also some observed lack of mutual respect between Christian Aid and its implementing partners.

Finally, it will be recommended that in developing intervention guides and tools for implementation of any programme(s) to address the issues of adolescent girls, religious leaders, traditional leaders, parents and the adolescent girls should be made to have meaningful inputs into such tools and guides.

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Contact us

Christian Aid Nigeria

Plot 802 Ebitu Ukiwe Street

Off Mike Akhigbe Street

Jabi

Abuja

+234 (0) 703 255 9282

nigeria-info@christian-aid.org

christianaid.org.uk/nigeria

@CAID_Nigeria



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