

FLASH REPORT OF THE MUSLIM OPINION LEADERS FOR GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROJECT

JANUARY - SEPTEMBER 2024



Muslim Opinion Leaders (MOLs) Delegates with His Eminence, Sheikh Ahmed El-Tayeb, The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar in Cairo, 18-29th August 2024



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BACKGROUND

In January 2024, the development Research and Projects Centre (dRPC) launched an exciting new project - Muslim Opinion Leaders (MOLs) for GBV Prevention in Northern Nigeria, designed to address the increasing rates of GBV identified by the dRPC in a 2023 baseline study. Our new project builds upon 20 years of dRPC's work engaging MOLs, strengthening and positioning them to communicate, advocate for, and model change to prevent GBV. With funding from the Ford Foundation, this project targets male and female Muslim Opinion Leaders (MOLs), equipping and positioning them to use their influence to shift attitudes, behavior, and practices among the faithful, to guide the interpretation of religious precepts in state religious bureaucracies; and to increase commitment within secular government Ministries Department and Agencies (MDAs) to implement policies and laws which empower women and girls, protecting them against Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

This flash report highlights important activities, discussions, and reflections from the pre-and post-peer-to-peer study tour to Egypt, including critical engagements and changes in knowledge and perceptions resulting from the learnings.

THE TRANSFORMATIVE ROLE OF THE MOL4GBV PREVENTION PROJECT ON GBV PREVENTION STUDY TOUR- THE PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Twelve influential MOL delegates from Kaduna and Kano states were selected as the first cohort for the peer-to-peer study in Egypt, which was conducted in collaboration with the Institute for Training and Research in Family Planning. The study tour aimed to increase the capacity and understanding for addressing GBV within Islamic teachings. The following highlights their transformative journey.

The newly appointed Grand Mufti of Egypt, His Eminence Sheik Nazir Mohamed Ayyad, holds his first official engagement with dRPC MOLs - August 22, 2024.

The Grand Mufti, Egypt's top religious authority, receives the MOLs as his first official engagement and focuses on the religious frameworks that protect women's rights. The Mufti analyzed the Islamic provisions safeguarding women from violence, emphasizing that any practice that leads to harm or injustice is contrary to Islamic teachings. The Grand Mufti's explanation helped delegates understand Islamic jurisprudence mechanisms within Islamic law that can be leveraged to prevent GBV. This session was significant for the Grand Mufti's tenure.



Roundtable engagement with the Grand Mufti- His Eminence Sheik Nazir Mohamed Ayyad in Cairo, 22nd August 2024



Roundtable meeting with Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, His Eminence Dr Ahmed El-Tayeb in Cairo, 21st August 2024

The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar and Chairman of the Muslim Council of Elders, His Eminence Sheik Ahmed El-Tayeb, Shares Insight with MOLs on Preventing GBV from an Islamic Perspective- 21st August 2024

The MOL's engagement with Sheikal Al-Azhar was a highlight of the tour. As the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, one of the most prestigious Islamic institutions, his words carried significant weight. The Sheik emphasized the comprehensive nature of Islamic teachings on the protection of women and condemned all forms of violence against them. He underscored that Islam categorically rejects GBV and that religious leaders have a duty to uphold and promote these values within their communities. The session was particularly impactful, as the Sheik's authority and deep knowledge reinforced the delegates' commitment to preventing GBV.

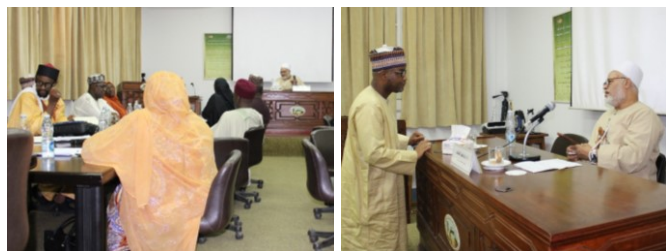
The International Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research (IICPSR) at Al-Azhar University, Cairo, hosts MOLs on GBV and women's rights - 20th August 2024

The delegation's visit to the International Islamic Centre provided a broader perspective on the global efforts to address contemporary issues within Muslim communities. The International Islamic Centre for Population Studies and Research, led by Prof. Dr. Gamal I. Serour, promotes reproductive health within an Islamic framework. It aligns health practices with religious teachings, encouraging positive health behaviors in Muslim communities. Through advocating for family planning, campaigns against GBV and harmful practices like Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), and educating religious leaders, the IICPSR acts as a bridge between faith and science, ensuring reproductive health initiatives respect cultural and religious values.



Interactive sessions with Prof. Dr. Gamal I. Serour, Director of the International Islamic Centre and Prof. Dr. Mahmoud Seddik, Vice President of Al-Azhar University for Graduate Studies and Research in Cairo, 20th August 2024

Quote from MOL delegate **Sheikh Muhammad Khamis Muhammad:**
"I have changed my perception on how I viewed GBV"



Interactive session with Prof. Dr/ Ibrahim Al-Hudhud- Former President of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, 22nd August 2024

Renowned Egyptian Scholar Prof. Ibrahim Al-Hudhud- Former President of Al-Azhar University, engages MOLs on the intersection of GBV, Culture and Religion - 22nd August 2024

Prof. Al-Hudhud, a renowned Islamic scholar, led a session that explored the intersections of religion, culture, and GBV. The session examined how cultural practices have sometimes been misinterpreted as religious mandates, perpetuating GBV. Prof. Al-Hudhud argued for a return to authentic Islamic teachings, prioritizing women's dignity and protection. Delegates appreciated the professor's nuanced approach, recognizing the complexities of cultural and religious interplay in GBV issues.

The Secretary General of the Islamic Research Academy, Egypt and Forensic Medicine Expert, Prof. Dr. Elham Shaheen, enlightens MOLs on GBV prevention - 25th August 2024

Prof. Ilham's session focused on the root causes and psychological and social dimensions of GBV. The professor highlighted the severe psychological impacts of GBV on women and communities. She stressed the importance of addressing these issues through religious counselling and legal frameworks. The session included case studies that illustrated successful interventions in GBV cases, providing delegates with practical tools to implement in their communities.



Interactive session with Prof. Dr. Elham Shaheen in Cairo, 25th August 2024

The National Council for Motherhood and Childhood builds MOL's capacity for GBV prevention and support

This visit provided insights into Egypt's national strategies for protecting women and children from violence. The Council shared its initiatives, including educational programs, awareness campaigns, and support services for victims of GBV. The discussion highlighted the importance of a multi-faceted approach that combines legal, educational, and social interventions. Delegates recognized the potential for adapting some of these strategies to the Nigerian context, particularly the emphasis on education and legal protection.

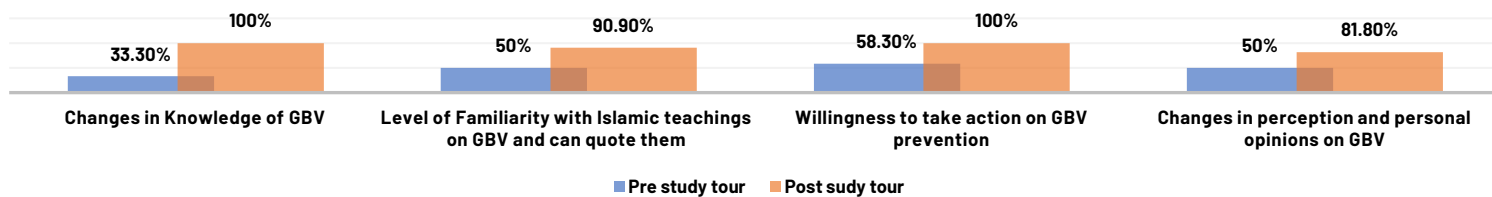


Interactive session with the National Council for Motherhood and Childhood in Cairo, 24th August 2024

TRANSFORMATIVE STUDY TOUR YIELDS 81.8% SHIFT IN PERCEPTION OF GBV - THE LEARNING AND IMPACT POST STUDY TOUR

The MOL study tour evaluation method involved pre- and post-evaluation tools and a daily study tour evaluation tool. The pre-evaluation tool assessed participants' knowledge and expectations before the tour, while the post-evaluation tool evaluated acquired knowledge and change in perception after the tour. The daily study tour evaluation tool gathered real-time feedback and insights during the tour, ensuring its value and relevance for all participants.

Key Pre-and-Post Study Findings from MOL Evaluation Survey



- **100% Expectations met** - The study tour fully met the expectations of all the delegates.
- **100% New Knowledge Gained on Islamic Perspective of GBV Prevention**—Post-study tour findings revealed new knowledge gained from the study tour on the Islamic perspective of GBV prevention. The entire delegation (100%) could identify instances of GBV in the Quran and Hadith, providing specific citations and references to texts on GBV against women, including directives on the treatment of women.
- **81% Change in perceptions and opinions**—During the study tour, 81.8% of the participants experienced a change in their perceptions concerning GBV.



Section Photo of Delegates, PAC Members and Past MOLs during the 2-day Orientation Meeting in Abuja- 17th August, 2024

PRE-PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED

After the project rollout, several structured processes were carried out to facilitate the implementation of the MOLs4GBV Prevention Project. This included consultations with stakeholders in the field, selecting the Project's Advisory Committee (PAC), and commencing the MOLs' selection processes. Curriculum development, planning for a study tour in Egypt, and developing evaluation tools were also conducted. A pre-peer-to-peer orientation program was held in August 2024, providing a comprehensive overview of the project and engaging participants in various activities and discussions.

MOL DEBRIEFING - 31ST AUGUST 2024

The debriefing and post-study tour evaluation meeting held on 31st August 2024 in Abuja was a reflective session for the delegates who participated in the Egypt study tour on Islamic perspectives in protecting women and girls from harm. The session included a recap of key activities during the tour, personal and professional insights shared by the delegates, and presentations on state action plans and implementation strategies tailored to Kano and Kaduna states.



Debriefing Meeting Group photo with the delegates, past MOLs, and dRPC Staff in Abuja, 31st August 2024

MOLS ENGAGES WITH THE WEE POLICY DOMESTICATION COMMITTEES TO MAINSTREAM GBV IN KADUNA AND KANO STATES

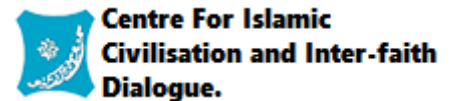
At the end of the study tour, the MOL delegates commenced working together to advocate for the Women's Economic Empowerment Policy Committee to mainstream GBV in the policy domestication process for Kaduna and Kano states.



MOLs sharina their opinions on the intersectionality between WEE and GBV in Kano and Kaduna State (Kano 6/09/24. Kaduna 17 /09/2024)

THE dRPC COMMENCES INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING FOR THE CENTER FOR ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUE OF BAYERO UNIVERSITY KANO AS A LEARNING HUB

The dRPC is working with the Centre for Islamic Civilization and Interfaith Dialogue (CICID) of Bayero University, Kano, to replicate a training program for religious leaders to address gender-based violence (GBV) through education and community engagement. Dr. Taufiq Abubakar Hussain, Director of CICID, participated in a study tour in Egypt, and the dRPC engaged with CICID to assess its capacity and readiness for replication. CICID will work with the Muslim Opinion Leaders (MOL) in Kaduna and Kano States to implement the work plans. The dRPC supports CICID in incorporating key learnings and practices related to GBV prevention from an Islamic perspective and facilitates peer-to-peer knowledge sharing by engaging an organizational effectiveness consultant to support the centre in designing a tailored program.



Dr. Taufiq Abubakar Hussain meeting with dRPC 31st August 2024