



# GUIDELINES FOR MUSLIM OPINION LEADERS (MOLs) TO PREVENT STIGMATIZATION

A FORM OF DOUBLE GBV, FACED BY  
SURVIVORS OF CONFLICT-RELATED  
SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE  
IN CONFLICT AFFECTED AREAS IN  
NIGERIA



**This guideline was compiled in collaboration with the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN), Niger State Chapter for the development Research and Projects Centre (dRPC), under the Muslim Opinion Leaders for the Prevention of GBV with support from Ford Foundation West Africa Office**

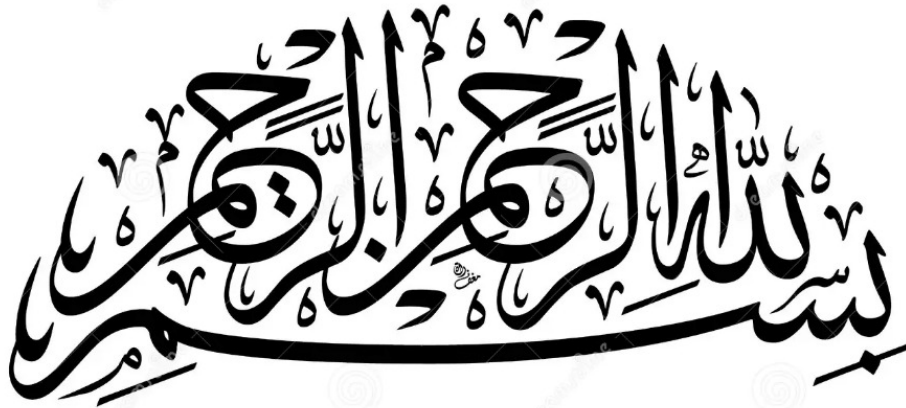
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*In the Name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful  
Al-Fatihah [1: 1], Noble Quran*

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## Preamble

In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Compassionate. Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds, and peace and blessings be upon His noble Messenger, Muḥammad ﷺ, his family, and his Companions.

We, the undersigned Muslim scholars, community leaders, and custodians of the sacred trust of guidance, mindful of our responsibility before Allah and humanity, affirm the following principles concerning the rights, dignity, and protection of survivors of gender-based violence (GBV).

This declaration is rooted in the Qur'ān, the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ, and the moral tradition of Islam which upholds justice (ʿadl), compassion (raḥmah), and human dignity (karāmah).

## Background

Despite progress in addressing GBV, stigma continues to hinder effective prevention and survivor support. Stigma, rooted in harmful cultural norms, victim-blaming attitudes, and systemic gender biases, isolates survivors, discourages reporting, and perpetuates impunity for perpetrators. In the ongoing struggle against gender-based violence (GBV), we have made significant strides; however, stigma remains a formidable barrier that undermines our efforts toward effective prevention and support for survivors. As highlighted by UN Women, stigma is deeply rooted in harmful cultural norms, victim-blaming attitudes, and pervasive gender biases.(UN Women 2023 Annual report)

These factors collectively isolate survivors, deter them from reporting incidents of violence, and ultimately allow perpetrators to evade accountability. This handbook, therefore, looks at the Islamic perspective to double stigmatisation prevention against survivors, providing a unique viewpoint drawn from the Holy Qur'an and Hadeeth of the Prophet SAW. Islam strongly denounces any form of stigma or discrimination against individuals, particularly those who have experienced violence.

The teachings of Islam emphasise compassion, support for the vulnerable, and the importance of safeguarding one's dignity. The Qur'an instructs followers to promote justice and discourage wrongdoing. For instance, in Surah An-Nisa (4:135), believers are called to uphold justice, even if it is against themselves or their kin, indicating the paramount importance of accountability and protection for victims. The Prophet Muhammad SAW further illustrated the essence of empathy and support, encouraging the community to extend kindness and aid to those who are suffering. While GBV prevention is a proactive intervention to mitigate the occurrence of GBV, stigma prevention is another decisive preventive intervention.

The rich teachings of Islam inspire us to confront stigma on multiple levels, promoting an environment where survivors are not shunned but rather supported and uplifted. Research from UN Women highlights the complexities of stigma and its far-reaching impacts, underscoring that combating stigma is essential not only for the well-being of survivors but also for the health of our communities. Thus, the Islamic perspective serves as a vital foundation for this handbook. It reminds us that

through compassion, understanding, and a commitment to justice, we can effectively challenge the stigma surrounding GBV and foster a supportive environment for all survivors.

The Handbook therefore aims to serve as a guide for Islamic Scholars, Service providers, government Officials, Civil Society Organisations, and other stakeholders working in the area of stigmatisation prevention in Muslim majority communities in Nigeria and elsewhere. The collection of evidence from the Qur'an and Hadeeth is done in collaboration with the Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria, FOMWAN, Niger State Branch, under the Muslim Opinion Leaders for the Prevention of GBV in Northern Nigeria's Project, anchored by the development Research and Projects Centre, dRPC, with support from the Ford Foundation West Africa office.

# Foundational Principles on Prevention of Survivor Stigmatization

## 1. Human Dignity: Allah says:

"وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ"

***"Indeed, We have honored the children of Adam." (Qur'ān 17:70)***

Every human being, regardless of gender, race, religion, or socio-economic class, is endowed with dignity by Allah. Any act of GBV is a violation of this sacred honor.

## 2. Prohibition of Stigmatization: Islam forbids the humiliation or rejection of survivors. This can be deduced from the following verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا نِسَاءٌ مِنْ نِسَاءٍ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهُنَّ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ

***"Believers, let not a group (of men) scoff at another group, it may well be that the latter (at whom they scoff) are better than they; nor let a group of women scoff at another group, it may well be that the latter are better than they. Do not insult one another, nor call each other by offensive nicknames." (Qur'ān 49:11)***

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"المسلم أخو المسلم لا يظلمه ولا يسلمه"

***"A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim: he does not wrong him, nor abandon him." (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim))***

He also said:

"...الْمُسْلِمُ مَنْ سَلِمَ الْمُسْلِمُونَ مِنْ لِسَانِهِ وَيَدِهِ"

***"A Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand other Muslims are safe"***

3. **Protection of the Innocent:** Survivors of abduction, abuse, and violence are blameless. Hence, they should be protected. Allah states:

"وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ"

**"No soul shall bear the burden of another." (Qur'ān 6:164)**

4. Obligation of Rendering help, providing Relief and showing Mercy: The Prophet ﷺ declared:

"من فرج عن مسلم كربة من كرب الدنيا فرج الله عنه كربة من كرب يوم القيامة"

**"Whoever relieves a Muslim of a burden from the burdens of this world, Allah will relieve him of a burden from the burdens of the Day of Resurrection." (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim)**

## Commitments Expected from the Muslim Ummah

In light of these principles, the Muslim Ummah should affirm the following commitments:

1. **Restoration of Dignity:** Survivors must be reintegrated into society with honor and respect. To reject or mock them is a grave betrayal of Islamic ethics.
2. **Justice and Reparation:** Survivors are entitled to material, social, and emotional support that restores their dignity and rights. Reparations must be survivor-centered, transformative, and responsive to gender-specific needs.
3. **Inclusive Protection:** Men, women, children, and families affected by GBV are all entitled to care and protection. Children born of war or violence must be recognized with full rights and dignity.
4. **Restraint of Oppressors:** The community must protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable, in line with the Prophet's ﷺ command:

"انصُرْ أَخَاكَ ظَالِمًا أَوْ مَظْلُومًا قَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ هَذَا نَنْصُرُهُ مَظْلُومًا فَكَيْفَ نَنْصُرُهُ ظَالِمًا قَالَ تَأْخُذُ فَوْقَ يَدَيْهِ"  
**"Help your brother, whether he is an oppressor or oppressed." The Companions said, "O Messenger of Allah, we can help him if he is oppressed, but how can we replied, "By restraining his hands (from ﷺ help him if he is an oppressor? He wrongdoing), that is how you help him." (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī)**

### To Leaders and Communities

1. **Religious and Community Leaders:** Leadership is an amānah (trust). Leaders are commanded by Allah:

"إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا"  
**"Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due." (Qur'ān 4:58)**

Leaders must therefore:

- Speak openly against GBV in sermons and gatherings.
- Educate communities using Qur'ān and Sunnah.
- Advocate for survivor dignity and equality.

- Ensure children born of violence are respected and integrated.
- 2. **Muslim Communities:** Communities must establish faith-based strategies to counter stigma, including:
  - Positive sermon messaging.
  - Community dialogues on mercy and justice.
  - Trauma-informed, judgment-free healthcare services.
  - Support for survivors' economic reintegration.
- 3. **Training for Leaders:** Leaders must be equipped with knowledge and skills in:
  - Islamic ethics and human dignity.
  - Survivor-centered support.
  - GBV prevention and community mobilization.
  - Monitoring, evaluation, and reflection for continuous improvement.

### ***Policy Guidelines for Prevention***

- Integrate GBV education in mosques, schools, and premarital counseling.
- Collaborate with Muslim women's organizations and civil society to provide advocacy, legal aid, and empowerment.
- Embed GBV prevention strategies in community programs as part of Islamic social responsibility.

## Concluding Declaration

In conclusion, we declare that:

- Gender-based violence has no legitimacy in Islam.
- Survivors are honored members of the Muslim ummah whose dignity must be restored.
- Stigmatization is a sin that should not have a place in any community guided by the teachings of Islam.

We affirm Allah's timeless command:

"إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ"

**"Indeed, Allah commands justice and excellence." (Qur'ān 16:90)**

Justice is the right of survivors. Showing compassion is the duty of believers. Protection and upholding dignity are obligations of the ummah of Muhammad ﷺ

And Allah is Witness to what we declare.



Since its establishment in 1993, the dRPC has identified Muslim Opinion Leaders (MOLs) as key stakeholders capable of driving meaningful change within communities. MOLs, predominantly men, are recognized for their authority to provide moral and religious guidance. Their influence spans both traditional and contemporary spheres of society, where they advise adherents and policymakers on issues ranging from religious practices to social justice, including gender equality. In recognition of this influence, the dRPC adopted a strategic approach to development programming that prioritizes working with MOLs. Between 2002 and 2006, the dRPC, through its *Leadership Development for Mobilization in Reproductive Health (LDM)* program, provided opportunities for members of Islamic medical associations, Muslim doctors, Sharia Commissions, independent scholars, women activists, and senior civil servants in health administration to participate in short-term overseas training. These programs, hosted in Egypt, The Hague, and Sudan, covered areas such as Islam and family planning, reproductive health management, and gender and reproductive health. Among these, the *Islam and Family Planning* study tour in Alexandria proved particularly impactful. Adapted over the years to address the needs of Nigerian participants, the tour gave senior Islamic scholars firsthand exposure to best practices and opened space for debate on sensitive issues such as early marriage, HIV/AIDS, family size, birth spacing, and women's rights in Islam.

To know more visit

<https://drpcngr.org/project/muslims-opinion-leaders-mols/>