

GLOBAL
RIGHTS



20 BASELINE 25 ASSESSMENT

TO DETERMINE THE LEVEL AND IDENTIFY CHALLENGES
TO ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN KANO & SOKOTO STATES



BASELINE STUDY TO DETERMINE THE LEVEL AND IDENTIFY CHALLENGES TO ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN KANO AND SOKOTO STATES

Table of Contents

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....	6
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES	7
FOREWORD	9
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	10
I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1
1.1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.2. BACKGROUND ON KANO AND SOKOTO STATES.....	2
<i>1.2.1. Kano and Sokoto Context.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>1.2.2. Governance and Legal Context.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>1.2.3. Justice Sector Profile in Kano and Sokoto.....</i>	<i>4</i>
1.3. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE BASELINE	6
1.4. KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	7
1.5. GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY	8
2. GLOBAL RIGHT’S PROJECT OVERVIEW	9
2.1. PROJECT OBJECTIVE AND THEORY OF CHANGE	9
2.2. THEORY OF CHANGE.....	10
2.3. EXPECTED OUTCOMES.....	10
2.4. OUTPUT/ACTIVITIES.....	10
3. METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH	12
3.1. STUDY DESIGN.....	12
3.2. STUDY AREA.....	12
3.3. TARGET STUDY POPULATION.....	12
3.4. SAMPLING STRATEGY	13
<i>3.4.1. Sample Size Determination.....</i>	<i>13</i>
3.5. DATA COLLECTION METHODS.....	15
3.6. DATA COLLECTION MODE	15
3.7. TOOLS USED.....	16
3.8. TRAINING, FIELDWORK COORDINATION AND SUPERVISION	16
3.9. DATA ANALYSIS PLAN	16
3.10. DATA QUALITY ASSURANCE	17
3.11. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	17
3.12. STUDY LIMITATIONS.....	18
4. KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS	19
4.1. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS	19
4.2. AWARENESS AND PERCEPTIONS OF JUSTICE SYSTEMS.....	20
<i>4.2.1. Awareness of the Term “Access to Justice”.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>4.2.2. Knowledge of Justice-seeking Options.....</i>	<i>21</i>

4.2.3. Awareness of Legal aid Service Providers.....	23
4.2.4. Service Proximity.....	23
4.2.5. How confident are you that you understand your legal rights?.....	24
4.3. EXPERIENCE AND USE OF FORMAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS	25
4.3.1. Experienced a Legal or Justice-Related Problem in the Past 12 Months.....	25
4.3.2. Types of Legal or Justice-Related Problems Experienced.....	27
4.3.3. Help-Seeking Behavior for Justice-Related Problems	28
4.3.4. First Source of Help for Legal or Justice Problems	28
4.3.5. Satisfaction Levels with the Justice Response	29
4.3.6. Timeliness and Responsiveness of Justice Mechanisms.....	30
4.3.7. Access to Legal Advice and Representation	31
4.3.8. Outcomes of Justice-Related Cases.....	32
4.3.9. Barriers to Justice-Seeking Behavior.....	32
4.4. EXPERIENCE AND USE OF INFORMAL/TRADITIONAL MECHANISMS.....	33
4.4.1. Use of Traditional/Community Justice Mechanisms	33
4.4.2. Trust in Community/Traditional Leaders to Handle Disputes Fairly	34
4.4.3. Use of Legal aid or Paralegal Services.....	35
4.4.4. Perceived Solutions to Improve Access to Justice.....	35
4.5. BARRIERS TO ACCESSING JUSTICE	37
4.5.1. Financial Constraints (Cost/Fees)	38
4.5.2. Difficulty in Accessing Services (Distance/Transport Issues).....	39
4.5.3. Lack of Awareness of Existing Services	40
4.5.4. Lack of Trust in the System	41
4.5.5. Negative/Unfriendly Attitude/Distrust of Service Providers	42
4.5.6. Cultural/Religious Restrictions.....	43
4.5.7. Corruption/Delay in the System.....	44
4.5.8. Fear of Reporting the Offender.....	45
4.5.9. Fear of Stigma/Reprisal.....	46
4.6. PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF JUSTICE AMONG DETAINEES.....	48
4.6.1. Incidence of Arrest or Detention.....	48
4.6.2. Awareness of Reason for Arrest or Detention Among Detainees.....	48
4.6.3. Access to Family or Legal Representation During Detention	49
4.6.4. Timeliness of Arraignment Before a Judge or Magistrate.....	50
4.6.5. Duration of Detention Before Arraignment in Court.....	50
4.6.6. Access to Welfare and Medical Care During Detention.....	51
4.6.7. Experience or Witnessing of Mistreatment by Authorities During Detention	52
4.7. PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF JUSTICE AMONG SURVIVORS OF GBV	53
4.7.1. Prevalence of Reported Physical or Sexual Violence Among Respondents (Past 2 Years).....	53
4.7.2. Reporting of Gender-Based Violence Incidents Among Survivors.....	53
4.7.3. Institutions or Individuals to Whom GBV Incidents Were Reported.....	54
4.7.4. Level of Satisfaction with Services Received by GBV Survivors (Medical, Legal, or Psychosocial Support)	55
4.7.5. Access to Legal Protection Mechanisms Among GBV Survivors.....	55

4.7.6. <i>Reasons for Non-Reporting of GBV Incidents Among Survivors</i>	56
4.7.7. <i>Types of Support Received by GBV Survivors After the Incident</i>	57
4.7.8. <i>Awareness of Confidential GBV Support Services Among Respondents</i>	57
4.8. PERCEPTION OF INCLUSIVITY OF WOMEN, YOUTH & MARGINALIZED GROUPS	58
4.8.1. <i>Perception of Women’s Ability to Freely Seek Justice</i>	58
4.8.2. <i>Perceptions of Youth Inclusion in Justice Mechanisms</i>	59
4.8.3. <i>Perceptions of Fair Treatment of Marginalized Groups in Justice Processes</i>	60
5. CAPACITY AND RESPONSIVENESS OF JUSTICE SECTOR ACTORS IN KANO AND SOKOTO STATES	62
5.1. POLICE	62
5.2. COURTS	63
5.3. LEGAL AID AND PRO BONO SERVICES	63
5.4. SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENTS.....	64
5.5. COMMUNITY-BASED STRUCTURES.....	65
6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	66
6.1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	66
6.2. IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING.....	67
7. REFERENCES.....	68
8. ANNEXES.....	69

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACJA	Administration of Criminal Justice Act
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CDCs	Community Dialogue Committees
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CSSF	Conflict, Stability and Security Fund
FIDA	Federation of Women Lawyers
FGDs	Focused Group Discussions
FCDO	United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
GALS	Gender Action Learning System
GBV	Gender based violence
GBVRT	Gender-based Violence Response Teams
IDIs	In-depth Interviews
JDPC	Justice Development and Peace Commission
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
LACON	Legal Aid Council of Nigeria
MCAPI	Mobile Computer-Assisted Personal Interview
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NPF	Nigerian Police Force
PwDs	People with disabilities
SARC	Sexual Assault Referral Centres
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TOC	Theory of Change
UNDP	United Nations agency on International Development
UK	United Kingdom
WARDC	Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre

List of Figures and Tables

FIGURE 1: MAP OF NIGERIA SHOWING KANO AND SOKOTO STATES	Error! Bookmark not defined.
TABLE 1: SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC PROFILE OF KANO AND SOKOTO STATES	13
TABLE 2: JUSTICE SECTOR SNAPSHOT	14
TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION BY STATE AND RESPONDENT TYPE	22
TABLE 4: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS	26
TABLE 5: PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE HEARD OF THE TERM “ACCESS TO JUSTICE,” BY STATE	28
TABLE 6: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS AWARE OF VARIOUS JUSTICE-SEEKING OPTIONS BY STATE	28
TABLE 7: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF AWARENESS OF LEGAL AID SERVICE PROVIDERS BY STATE	29
TABLE 8: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF NEAREST SERVICE TYPE BY STATE	30
TABLE 9: PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS’ PERCEPTION OF CONFIDENCE IN UNDERSTANDING THEIR LEGAL RIGHTS BY STATE	31
TABLE 10: PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO EXPERIENCED A LEGAL OR JUSTICE-RELATED PROBLEM IN PAST 12 MONTHS, BY STATE	32
TABLE 11: TYPE OF LEGAL OR JUSTICE PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS BY STATE	33
TABLE 12: PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO SOUGHT HELP FOR JUSTICE-RELATED PROBLEMS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS, BY STATE	34
TABLE 13: FIRST SOURCE OF HELP FOR LEGAL OR JUSTICE PROBLEMS, BY STATE	34
TABLE 14: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS’ SATISFACTION WITH THE JUSTICE RESPONSE, BY STATE	35
TABLE 15: TIME TAKEN TO RECEIVE A FORMAL RESPONSE AFTER SEEKING HELP, BY STATE	36
TABLE 16: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO RECEIVED LEGAL ADVICE OR REPRESENTATION, BY STATE	37
TABLE 17: OUTCOMES OF JUSTICE-RELATED CASES, BY STATE	37
TABLE 18: REPORTED REASONS FOR NOT SEEKING HELP, BY STATE (MULTIPLE RESPONSE)	38
TABLE 19: USE OF TRADITIONAL/COMMUNITY JUSTICE MECHANISMS BY STATE	39
TABLE 20: TRUST IN COMMUNITY/TRADITIONAL LEADERS TO HANDLE DISPUTES FAIRLY, BY STATE	40
TABLE 21: USE OF LEGAL AID OR PARALEGAL SERVICES BY STATE	40
TABLE 22: SUGGESTED MEASURES TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO JUSTICE, BY STATE (MULTIPLE RESPONSE)	41
TABLE 23: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO PERCEIVE COST/FEES AS A BARRIER BY STATE	42
TABLE 24: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO PERCEIVE DISTANCE ISSUES AS A BARRIER TO ACCESSING JUSTICE, BY STATE	43
TABLE 25: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO PERCEIVE LACK OF AWARENESS OF EXISTING SERVICES AS A BARRIER, BY STATE	44
TABLE 26: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO PERCEIVE LACK OF TRUST IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM AS A BARRIER, BY STATE	45
TABLE 27: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO PERCEIVE NEGATIVE OR UNFRIENDLY ATTITUDE OF SERVICE PROVIDERS AS A BARRIER, BY STATE	46
TABLE 28: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO PERCEIVE CULTURAL OR RELIGIOUS RESTRICTIONS AS A BARRIER, BY STATE	47
TABLE 29: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO PERCEIVE CORRUPTION/DELAY IN THE SYSTEM AS A BARRIER TO ACCESSING JUSTICE, BY STATE	48

TABLE 30: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO PERCEIVE FEAR OF REPORTING THE OFFENDER AS A BARRIER TO ACCESSING JUSTICE, BY STATE	49
TABLE 31: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO PERCEIVE FEAR OF STIGMA/REPRISAL AS A BARRIER TO ACCESSING JUSTICE, BY STATE	49
TABLE 32: SUMMARY OF BARRIERS TO ACCESSING JUSTICE BY MEAN SEVERITY SCORE AND RANK	51
TABLE 33: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE EVER BEEN ARRESTED OR DETAINED, BY STATE	51
TABLE 34: AWARENESS OF REASON FOR ARREST OR DETENTION AMONG DETAINEES BY STATE	52
TABLE 35: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF DETAINEES ALLOWED TO CONTACT A FAMILY MEMBER OR LAWYER, BY STATE	52
TABLE 36: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF DETAINEES TAKEN BEFORE A JUDGE/MAGISTRATE WITHIN THE LEGALLY REQUIRED TIME, BY STATE	53
TABLE 37: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF DURATION OF DETENTION BEFORE ARRAIGNMENT, BY STATE	54
TABLE 38: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF DETAINEES WITH ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE, BY STATE	54
TABLE 39: EXPERIENCE OR WITNESSING OF MISTREATMENT BY AUTHORITIES DURING DETENTION	54
TABLE 40: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO EXPERIENCED PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE, BY STATE	56
TABLE 41: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF GBV SURVIVORS WHO REPORTED THE INCIDENT, BY STATE	56
TABLE 42: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF REPORTING CHANNELS USED BY SURVIVORS OF GBV, BY STATE	57
TABLE 43: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SATISFACTION LEVELS AMONG GBV SURVIVORS, BY STATE	57
TABLE 44: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF GBV SURVIVORS WHO RECEIVED LEGAL PROTECTION, BY STATE	58
TABLE 45: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF REASONS FOR NON-REPORTING, BY STATE	58
TABLE 46: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF GBV SURVIVORS BY TYPE OF SUPPORT RECEIVED, BY STATE	59
TABLE 47: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO KNOW SERVICES PROVIDING CONFIDENTIAL GBV SUPPORT, BY STATE	59
TABLE 48: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION THAT WOMEN CAN FREELY SEEK JUSTICE	61
TABLE 49: PERCEPTION OF YOUTH INCLUSION IN JUSTICE MECHANISMS BY STATE	61
TABLE 50: PERCEPTION OF FAIR TREATMENT OF MARGINALIZED GROUPS IN JUSTICE PROCESSES BY STATE	62

Foreword

Northwest Nigeria has, for decades, faced endemic insecurity and multidimensional violence, and systemic exclusion of critical groups, particularly women, from decision-making and peacebuilding processes. Weak governance structures, limited platforms for civic engagement, and marginalization of women and other vulnerable populations have contributed to cycles of social injustice and constrained communities' capacity to respond effectively to emerging threats. In this context, longstanding exclusion from governance and peace processes has perpetuated insecurity and limited sustainable development and resilience within these communities.

To better understand these dynamics and identify pathways for inclusive governance and access to justice, Global Rights commissioned this baseline study in Kano and Sokoto States. The research was conducted across selected communities, including Kawo, Kofar Gabas, and Sabon Gari in Kano, and Shuni, Chimola, Gagi, and Kware in Sokoto. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study engaged a diverse set of stakeholders through household surveys, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. Participants included women, men, youth, persons with disabilities, traditional and religious leaders, law enforcement, and justice actors, providing rich insights into the prevalence of insecurity, barriers to justice, and the participation of marginalized groups, especially women, in decision-making and peacebuilding processes.

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive picture of the challenges faced by these communities, including limited awareness of justice systems, low levels of women's engagement in governance and peace initiatives, and persistent gaps in institutional responsiveness. At the same time, the research identified entry points for strengthening community structures and expanding opportunities for women and other marginalized groups to contribute meaningfully to decision-making.

This baseline report, therefore, serves as both a critical evidence base and a guide for designing interventions aimed at promoting inclusive governance, improving access to justice, and building resilient, participatory communities in North-West Nigeria.

We are grateful to FCDO for their kind support, the research team at Nextier, the study participants, and all stakeholders whose time, expertise, and cooperation made this study possible, and we hope that the insights it provides will inform policy, advocacy, and programmatic efforts to build safer, more inclusive, and more resilient communities in the region.

Abiodun Baiyewu
Executive Director

Executive Summary

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT: This baseline study was conducted to determine the level of access to justice and identify key barriers affecting citizens – particularly detainees, women, survivors, and other marginalized groups in Kano and Sokoto States. The study was commissioned by Global Rights to generate empirical evidence to inform program design and advocacy for improved justice delivery systems. The baseline study was conducted in two states in the Northwestern region of Nigeria – Kano and Sokoto. In Kano State, the assessment focused on three communities: Kawo in Nassarawa LGA, Kofar Gabas in Tofa LGA, and Sabon Gari in Wudil LGA. While in Sokoto State, the assessment covered four locations: Shuni District in Dange Shuni LGA (Sokoto South Senatorial District), Chimola District in Gwadabawa LGA (Sokoto East Senatorial District), Gagi and Kware in Sokoto North Senatorial District.

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY: Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through community surveys, key informant interviews (KIIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs) involving survivors, traditional and religious leaders, law enforcement, and justice actors. A total of 263 respondents participated in the household survey conducted across the selected Local Government Areas in Kano and Sokoto States, distributed as follows: Kano (124) and Sokoto (139). Participants were randomly selected at the household level, ensuring a mix of gender, age, occupation, and socioeconomic background.

For the qualitative component, a total of 28 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) (12 in Kano and 16 in Sokoto) and 33 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) (15 in Kano and 18 in Sokoto) were conducted across the two states. The KIIs engaged a broad range of stakeholders, including Community Development Committee (CDC) chairpersons, detainees, police officers, judicial officials, legal aid providers, social welfare officers, civil society representatives, and traditional and religious leaders. The FGDs were conducted separately with men, women, youth, and persons with disabilities, drawing participants from the selected communities to capture diverse perspectives and lived experiences. Insights from these discussions provided a nuanced understanding of the prevalence, perceptions, and justice-seeking pathways related to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) within the targeted communities.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS: The key findings of the baseline research were organized into thematic sections that reflect the study's focus areas, highlighting knowledge and awareness of justice systems in the communities studied, as well as access to justice and barriers faced by detainees, GBV cases, and marginalized groups. Additionally, it addresses perceptions and experiences of justice among survivors of GBV and other marginalized populations, including their trust in institutions and willingness to report incidents.

I. AWARENESS AND PERCEPTIONS OF JUSTICE SYSTEMS

- The baseline results show that 68.6% of respondents across both states have heard of the term "access to justice," while 31.4% had not. Awareness levels were slightly higher in Sokoto (73.8%) than in Kano (62.6%). This pattern suggests that although the concept is moderately familiar to many, there are still knowledge gaps, particularly among rural and less-educated groups. These

findings underscore the importance of sustained community sensitization and legal literacy initiatives to strengthen understanding and utilization of justice mechanisms.

- The baseline findings reveal a pluralistic justice landscape. Across both states, community leaders (84.3%) emerged as the most frequently mentioned informal institutions for resolving legal problems, reflecting strong reliance on community-based and informal dispute resolution systems. This was followed by the police (76.6%), courts (67.0%), and religious leaders (58.2%). Awareness of specialized or support structures such as Legal Aid (11.5%), NGOs/CSOs (17.6%), and Referral Centres (14.2%) remains relatively low, suggesting limited visibility of non-state and survivor-focused services like SARCs.
- Respondents in Kano showed a relatively higher recognition of formal justice institutions (police, courts, legal aid), while Sokoto participants were more likely to mention informal options such as community and religious leaders. This variation reflects differing levels of exposure to civic education and justice programs between the two states.
- The baseline findings indicate that only about one-third of respondents (37.1%) are aware of any organisations offering free legal assistance. Awareness is notably higher in Kano (43.4%) than in Sokoto (31.4%), reflecting uneven visibility of justice sector interventions. The majority (50.6%) of respondents lack knowledge of available legal aid providers, which limits their capacity to seek justice, especially in cases involving vulnerable populations. These results highlight the need to strengthen public information campaigns, legal literacy programs, and community outreach by legal aid institutions and Global Rights.
- Participants during FGDs emphasized that the nearest justice service providers are usually traditional leaders within their community. Formal institutions like courts, police stations, or human rights offices are located far away, especially in Sokoto. Transport costs and mobility challenges for PLWDs further reduced access. Distance was not just physical but also social, as participants felt alienated by the attitude of officials in formal settings.
- Findings from the FGDs and KIs highlight significant knowledge gaps regarding available SGBV referral mechanisms and survivor support services. While some participants, mainly those in urban centres or who had previous NGO contact, could identify hospitals, social welfare offices, police, social welfare, human rights activists, and religious leaders, with fewer references to GBV desks, legal aid services, or psychosocial support centers as potential referral points, most rural participants were unaware of structured support pathways.

2. EXPERIENCE AND USE OF FORMAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS

- The baseline assessment reveals limited interaction between community members and formal justice institutions such as the police, courts, and legal aid services in both Kano and Sokoto States. While some respondents had encountered legal issues requiring formal intervention, the majority demonstrated low levels of engagement with these systems, citing barriers such as lack of awareness, cost, distance, distrust, and fear of reprisal.

- Overall, only a small proportion of respondents reported having ever used legal aid or paralegal services - about 39.2% across both states - with significant and higher utilization in Kano than Sokoto. This limited usage reflects both geographic and informational inequities, where urban populations have greater exposure to justice actors and NGO-led legal aid programs than rural communities.
- Among those who experienced justice-related problems, roughly 67% sought help, while 33% did not. Those who refrained from seeking help most often cited lack of awareness about where to go (45.5%), lack of trust in authorities (31.8%), and fear of reprisal or stigma (31.8%). Other notable factors included cultural/family pressure (18.2%) and the cost of services (13.6%) as key deterrents. Even among those who pursued justice, outcomes were mixed - only about 40.5% had their cases resolved in their favor, while 21.6% remained ongoing, revealing systemic delays and weak resolution capacity.
- Respondents also identified a range of institutional constraints within the formal justice system, including slow court processes, limited legal representation, and high service costs. The preference for traditional dispute resolution mechanisms among many community members further underscores the perceived inaccessibility and inefficiency of formal institutions.

3. BARRIERS TO ACCESSING JUSTICE

- Across both states, barriers to accessing justice are multidimensional, combining economic, institutional, and sociocultural factors. The data show that citizens face a complex web of deterrents that limit their ability and confidence to pursue justice through formal channels.
- Baseline findings revealed that the most cited barriers to accessing justice across both states were lack of awareness of existing services, financial cost, corruption and systemic delay, lack of trust in the system, and fear of stigma or reprisal. Sokoto consistently recorded higher mean scores across all barriers, suggesting relatively greater access challenges compared to Kano.

4. PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF JUSTICE AMONG DETAINEES

- Overall, the experiences of detainees reflect persistent procedural violations, poor conditions of detention, and limited accountability for the treatment of individuals in custody. Many respondents expressed a lack of trust in authorities to handle detention processes fairly, citing corruption, delay, and abuse as recurring challenges.
- The findings reveal that while awareness of legal processes is growing, detainee experiences continue to be characterized by rights violations, procedural lapses, and limited access to justice mechanisms. Addressing these systemic weaknesses is crucial to advancing Nigeria's commitments to human rights protection, accountability, and equitable access to justice.
- These findings highlight the urgent need for reforms aimed at strengthening oversight, training law enforcement personnel, and ensuring detainees' rights to due process, medical care, and humane treatment.

5. PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF JUSTICE AMONG SURVIVORS OF GBV

- The findings from the baseline survey reveal that experiences of gender-based violence (GBV) remain a significant concern in the target communities, with a notable proportion of respondents - predominantly women - reporting incidents of physical, sexual, or psychological abuse within the past two years.
- Despite the prevalence of such experiences, reporting rates remain low, primarily due to fear of stigma, reprisal, and lack of trust in formal justice systems. Among those who did report, the majority turned first to informal networks such as family members, traditional or religious leaders, rather than formal institutions like the police or health facilities. This situation reflects both cultural norms and limited confidence in the responsiveness and confidentiality of official mechanisms.
- A smaller proportion of survivors accessed medical, psychosocial, or legal services following an incident. Satisfaction levels with institutional responses were mixed. While some appreciated the compassion and support received, others cited delays, poor treatment, or lack of follow-up as major shortcomings. Awareness of confidential GBV support services such as legal aid centers, shelters, or referral systems was generally low, indicating a communication and accessibility gap that limits survivors' ability to seek timely help.
- Overall, survivors' perceptions highlight systemic barriers to justice - including costs, corruption, and weak protection mechanisms - which continue to discourage reporting and reinforce silence around GBV.

6. PERCEPTION OF INCLUSIVITY OF WOMEN, YOUTH & MARGINALIZED GROUPS

- Overall, the baseline findings reveal mixed perceptions of inclusivity and fairness in access to justice among women, youth, and marginalized populations in Kano and Sokoto States. While some respondents acknowledged progress in community attitudes and justice accessibility, a majority still perceive significant social and institutional barriers that limit equitable participation in justice processes.
- About 90% of respondents agreed that women in their communities can freely seek justice when needed, with stronger agreement recorded in Kano (96.7%) than Sokoto (78%). This suggests that gender norms, fear of stigma, and limited availability of gender-sensitive justice services continue to restrict women's confidence and freedom to pursue legal redress.
- Similarly, 81.9% of respondents agreed that youth have equal opportunities to resolve disputes, with perceptions again more positive in Kano than in Sokoto. Youth respondents, however, noted that both formal and traditional justice systems are often dominated by elders, leaving younger people with little voice or representation in dispute resolution.
- The perceptions of marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities and minority groups, were also modest. About 81.8% of respondents believed these groups were treated fairly in justice

processes, while nearly 18% disagreed. Respondents cited bias, lack of accessibility, and discrimination as major obstacles preventing these populations from receiving equal treatment.

- These findings collectively indicate that inclusivity gaps remain significant, particularly in Sokoto State, and that existing justice mechanisms may not yet be perceived as fully equitable or responsive. Addressing these disparities will require a multifaceted approach, including community sensitization, institutional training on inclusion and gender equity, legal awareness programs targeting youth and marginalized groups, and investments in accessible and gender-responsive justice services.

7. CAPACITY AND RESPONSIVENESS OF JUSTICE SECTOR ACTORS IN KANO AND SOKOTO STATES

- Overall, findings from the baseline study suggest that the justice sector in Kano and Sokoto States is functionally present but institutionally weak in its ability to deliver equitable, timely, and survivor-centered justice.
- While there is growing institutional awareness of inclusivity and rights-based justice, significant capacity gaps, inadequate funding, and socio-cultural barriers continue to limit responsiveness.
- Strengthening coordination across agencies, institutionalizing gender-sensitive and disability-inclusive procedures, expanding access to legal aid, and formalizing referral linkages between community and formal systems will be critical to improving access to justice for marginalized groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings from the baseline study suggest that efforts to expand access to justice in Kano and Sokoto States must focus on strengthening institutional capacity, coordination, and inclusivity across both formal and informal justice systems. The identified gaps highlight several key implications for future programming. The following strategic recommendations are proposed to strengthen access to justice delivery across both states:

- **Capacity Building for Justice Actors:** There is a clear need to enhance the technical and operational capacity of police officers, welfare officers, and judicial staff – particularly in gender sensitivity, survivor-centered procedures, and rights-based case handling. Training should be complemented with standard operating procedures (SOPs) and accountability mechanisms to ensure consistent application.
- **Improved Coordination and Referral Pathways:** The lack of structured coordination among police, courts, welfare departments, and legal aid providers undermines case management efficiency. Programming should support the establishment of multi-sectoral referral frameworks and strengthen collaboration between formal and community-based justice mechanisms to ensure seamless service delivery.

- **Expansion of Legal Aid and Awareness Services:** Since many citizens – especially women, detainees, persons with disabilities, and rural dwellers – are unaware of or unable to access legal aid, interventions should increase outreach and awareness, establish mobile legal aid clinics, and leverage faith-based and community structures for rights education and referrals.
- **Engagement with Informal Justice Systems:** Traditional and religious leaders remain central to dispute resolution at the grassroots. Programs should therefore build their capacity on human rights, gender equality, and conflict-sensitive mediation, while formally linking them to state justice institutions through referral protocols.
- **Institutionalization of Survivor-Centered and Inclusive Approaches:** Social welfare departments and police divisions require dedicated GBV and child protection desks, trained personnel, and clear protocols to manage sensitive cases confidentially. Integrating disability inclusion measures into service delivery will ensure equitable justice access for all groups.
- **Data and Accountability Systems:** The absence of reliable data across justice sector institutions hampers evidence-based decision-making. Interventions should promote data collection, case tracking, and performance monitoring systems, enabling periodic review of justice delivery outcomes and responsiveness.

I. Introduction and Background

I.1. Introduction

Global Rights, with support from the FCDO Nigeria Stability Programme, implemented a two-phase project that strengthened civic participation and peacebuilding in Northwest Nigeria, including Sokoto and Kano States. These initiatives created platforms for women's engagement in peace dialogues, leveraging existing structures and strategic relationships. In this context, assessing the landscape of access to justice, particularly for women and girls in Sokoto and Kano, will help identify key entry points, institutional gaps, and community perceptions that must be addressed to strengthen the justice response to insecurity and GBV. Against this background, Global Rights commissioned Nextier SPD to conduct a baseline assessment to determine the level and identify challenges to access to justice in Sokoto and Kano states.

Despite existing legal frameworks, including constitutional guarantees, many citizens – especially women, detainees, survivors, and other marginalized populations – face systemic barriers that limit their ability to seek justice. Significant gaps remain in both the protection of survivors and the prosecution of perpetrators. Survivors often face stigma, silence, and secondary victimization when they seek redress. Many individuals lacked awareness of their rights, while others were deterred by the cost, distance, slow pace, or perceived bias of formal justice systems. Traditional and religious mechanisms, though more accessible, often fall short in addressing GBV in a rights-based and survivor-centered manner. This baseline study was therefore designed to establish the status of access to justice and identify key obstacles that must be addressed to strengthen inclusive justice delivery in both Kano and Sokoto.

The remainder of this report is organized into eight sections.

Section 1 presents the project background and context, offering a comparative overview of the social, economic, and governance environment in Kano and Sokoto States, along with a detailed justice sector profile. It also outlines the purpose, scope, and coverage of the baseline study.

Section 2 provides an overview of the Global Rights Phase 3 Project titled “Strengthening Pathways to Inclusive Peacebuilding Processes and Expanding Access to Justice for Marginalized Groups in North-West Nigeria.”

Section 3 describes the baseline research methodology, including the sampling strategy, data collection methods, and study limitations.

Section 4 presents an analysis of the key findings from the baseline assessment.

Section 5 explores the capacity and responsiveness of relevant justice sector actors including police, courts, legal aid services, social welfare departments, and community-based structures.

Section 6 summarizes the main conclusions and sets out actionable recommendations.

Finally, **Sections 7 and 8** contain the references and annexes, respectively.

1.2. Background on Kano and Sokoto States

Kano and Sokoto States are two major states in Northwestern Nigeria that share historical, religious, and socio-cultural ties rooted in the legacy of the Sokoto Caliphate. Both states operate plural legal systems – comprising formal, customary, and religious (Sharia) laws – reflecting Nigeria’s multi-layered justice architecture. Understanding the contextual realities of these states is essential to designing effective interventions that promote access to justice, rule of law, and human rights.

1.2.1. Kano and Sokoto Context

Kano State: Kano State, located in northwestern Nigeria, is one of the country’s most populous states, with an estimated population of over 15 million people (National Population Commission, 2024 projection). The state serves as a major commercial and industrial hub in northern Nigeria, historically known as a center of Islamic scholarship, trade, and culture. Kano is bordered by Jigawa State to the northeast, Bauchi and Kaduna States to the south, and Katsina State to the west. The capital city, Kano, is one of the most populous urban centers in West Africa. Administratively, Kano has 44 Local Government Areas (LGAs) and a vibrant mix of urban and rural communities. The population is predominantly Hausa-Fulani and largely Muslim, with strong influence from traditional and religious institutions that play critical roles in community governance and dispute resolution



Figure 1: Map of Nigeria showing Kano and Sokoto

Formal justice institutions in Kano, such as the state judiciary, police, and Ministry of Justice, operate under resource constraints, case backlogs, and public mistrust. Civil society organizations have, however, become increasingly active in promoting legal awareness, alternative dispute resolution (ADR), and access to justice for marginalized populations.

Indicator	Kano State	Sokoto State
Estimated Population (NPC, 2024)	~15 million	~6.5 million
Number of LGAs	44	23
Dominant Ethnic Groups	Hausa-Fulani	Hausa-Fulani
Predominant Religion	Islam	Islam

Main Economic Activities	Commerce, manufacturing, agriculture	Agriculture, trade, livestock
Literacy Rate (approx.)	53%	39%
Poverty Rate (NBS 2023)	47%	58%

Table 1: Socio-Demographic and Economic Profile of Kano and Sokoto States

Sokoto State: Sokoto State, often referred to as the “Seat of the Caliphate,”

is also located in northwestern Nigeria and has a population of about 6.5 million (NPC, 2024 projection). The state holds deep historical and religious significance, being the spiritual center of the Sokoto Caliphate founded by Sheikh Usman dan Fodio in the 19th century.

Its governance and social systems remain strongly influenced by Islamic principles and traditional authority structures. The state shares an international boundary with the Republic of Niger to the north. It is bordered by Kebbi and Zamfara States. The state capital, Sokoto, serves as both an administrative and spiritual center. Sokoto has 23 LGAs, with an economy driven mainly by agriculture, trade, and small-scale industries. Like Kano, the population is predominantly Muslim and Hausa-Fulani, with strong community reliance on religious and traditional leaders for dispute resolution and moral guidance.

Access to justice in Sokoto is shaped by the coexistence of formal, customary, and religious legal systems. While the Sharia and customary courts are closer to the people, their procedures may lack consistency with constitutional and human rights standards, especially concerning gender equality and fair hearing. The formal courts, though recognized as the final arbiters of justice, are often viewed as distant, slow, and costly.

Women, youth, and persons with disabilities face multiple layers of exclusion, including limited awareness of legal rights, economic barriers, and social norms that discourage public litigation. However, the state government, alongside development partners and CSOs, has initiated reforms to promote legal aid, strengthen court infrastructure, and expand rights education.

Both states exhibit high poverty and low literacy levels, which correlate strongly with limited legal awareness and low access to justice, especially among rural and female populations.

1.2.2. Governance and Legal Context

Nigeria’s justice architecture is decentralized, with each state operating its own judiciary under the supervision of the National Judicial Council. Kano and Sokoto States maintain multi-tier justice systems, including:

1. FORMAL (STATUTORY) COURTS:

- High Courts (state level)
- Magistrate and Area Courts
- Customary Courts of Appeal (for traditional and customary matters)

2. RELIGIOUS (SHARIA) COURTS:

- Established under state laws to handle personal and family matters (e.g., marriage, inheritance) for Muslims.
- Governed by the Sharia Courts Law, which outlines jurisdiction and appeals processes.

3. INFORMAL AND TRADITIONAL MECHANISMS:

- Village heads, district heads, and emirs handle civil disputes, land conflicts, and family issues through mediation and reconciliation.
- Traditional dispute resolution systems are faster and more trusted but may not align with formal human rights standards, especially concerning women and minorities.

1.2.3. Justice Sector Profile in Kano and Sokoto

The justice sector in both Kano and Sokoto States operates within Nigeria's plural legal framework, consisting of formal, religious (Sharia), and customary justice systems. Each system plays an integral role in dispute resolution, social order, and the protection of rights, with differing levels of accessibility and compliance with constitutional guarantees. Both states share strong Islamic traditions and cultural norms that shape citizens' perceptions of justice and influence how they seek remedies for grievances. However, disparities in institutional capacity, awareness, and gender responsiveness remain major obstacles to equitable access to justice. The sector has two major institutional frameworks: formal and informal/religious justice institutions. A comparative summary snapshot is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Justice Sector Snapshot

Component	Kano State	Sokoto State
Judiciary	High Court, Magistrate, Sharia, Customary Courts of Appeal	High Court, Magistrate, Sharia, Customary Courts of Appeal
Legal Aid	Active but limited coverage	Active but underfunded
Civil Society Engagement	Strong network (FIDA, WARD, Global Rights)	Moderate, faith-based focus (JDPC, Global Rights, Women in Da'awah)
Informal Systems	Emirate Council, traditional rulers	Sultanate Council, district and village heads
Major Constraints	Case backlog, low trust, gender bias	Weak infrastructure, limited outreach
Reform Efforts	Justice Reform Committee, ADR promotion	Domestication of ACJL, community mediation
Gender Sensitivity	Growing awareness but low representation	Early-stage integration, strong faith influence

A. Formal Justice Institutions

Under the formal justice institutions, we have the following:

I. Judiciary

- **Kano State:** The judiciary comprises the High Court of Justice, Magistrate Courts, Customary Courts of Appeal, and Sharia Courts of Appeal. Kano operates over 40 Sharia courts at the local level, providing proximity to citizens. The judiciary is supported by the State Judicial Service Commission, which handles appointments and discipline of judicial officers.
- **Sokoto State:** The judicial structure mirrors Kano's, including High Courts, Magistrate Courts, and Sharia Courts of Appeal. Most lower courts, especially in rural areas, face infrastructure deficits, poor recordkeeping, and limited legal personnel.

2. Ministry of Justice

- The State Ministry of Justice in both Kano and Sokoto serves as the central coordinating body for legal administration, prosecution of criminal cases, legislative drafting, and legal advisory services. However, inadequate budget allocations and slow case processing limit efficiency.

3. Nigeria Police Force (State Commands)

- The Kano and Sokoto Police Commands are responsible for investigation, enforcement, and protection of lives and property. Both commands face persistent challenges including limited manpower, poor logistics, inadequate gender-sensitive training, and weak community trust. Reports of extortion and human rights abuses also affect credibility.

4. Correctional Services

- Correctional facilities in both states are overstretched, with a high proportion of inmates awaiting trial. Rehabilitation and reintegration services are underdeveloped, reinforcing cycles of recidivism and social exclusion.

5. Legal Aid Council of Nigeria (LACON)

- Both states host zonal offices of the Legal Aid Council providing free legal representation to indigent citizens. However, outreach remains limited – especially in rural LGAs – due to low staffing and insufficient funding.

B. Informal and Religious Justice Institutions

1. Sharia Courts

- Both states have a network of Sharia Courts handling personal and family matters, inheritance, and minor criminal cases among Muslims. They are generally accessible and trusted, but their procedures sometimes lack alignment with constitutional human rights standards – particularly regarding women's rights and due process.

2. Traditional Institutions

- The Emirate Councils (in Kano under the Emir of Kano; in Sokoto under the Sultan of Sokoto) play significant roles in dispute mediation, reconciliation, and social order. At community level,

district and village heads mediate land, marital, and communal disputes. These institutions are culturally legitimate and widely used, though decisions are often not legally binding.

3. Community and Faith-Based Mechanisms

- Faith-based organizations, community elders, and paralegal committees frequently intervene in local disputes. In Sokoto, the Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) and Women in Da'awah Initiative are notable actors promoting legal awareness and gender-sensitive mediation.
- In Kano, organizations like Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC), International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), and Kano Civil Society Forum are active in public sensitization and survivor-centered support for women and girls.

In terms of coordination and interlinkages, both states have limited institutional coordination across justice actors. Referral systems between police, courts, legal aid, and civil society organizations are weak and largely ad hoc. The absence of standardized data-sharing mechanisms contributes to inefficiency and case duplication. However, donor-supported programs such as those by UNDP, FIDA, and Global Rights have recently initiated justice coordination platforms and community paralegal networks to improve collaboration.

In summary, the justice sectors in Kano and Sokoto are rich in institutional diversity but constrained by weak coordination, limited resources, and low public confidence. While informal and religious systems provide accessible first-line dispute resolution, they need to be integrated into broader justice reform efforts that uphold rights, fairness, and gender equality. Strengthening institutional capacity, improving legal literacy, and fostering collaboration among justice actors remain central to enhancing access to justice for all citizens.

I.3. Purpose and Objectives of the Baseline

The baseline study aims to assess, prior to implementation of the Global Rights programme, the prevailing situation in intervention areas, with respect to the programmes' objectives and anticipated outcomes. It is intended to establish benchmark and contextual evidence on the programme indicators, against which Global Rights and partners can determine progress.¹

The overall objective of the baseline assessment was to understand current level of access to justice in Sokoto and Kano and identify the key barriers that hinder timely and effective justice for survivors of gender-based violence and other vulnerable groups.

The assessment has five specific objectives:

- Map existing justice mechanisms; their processes, roles, and accessibility for vulnerable groups, especially women and girls.

¹ See Annex for the Terms of Reference

- Identify legal, institutional, socio-cultural, and security-related barriers to accessing justice, with particular attention to GBV cases.
- Assess the capacity and responsiveness of relevant justice sector actors including police, courts, legal aid services, social welfare departments, and community-based structures.
- Examine perceptions and experiences of justice among survivors of GBV and other marginalized populations, including trust in institutions and willingness to report.
- Provide actionable recommendations for strengthening access to justice and survivor-centered responses in both states.

I.4. Key Research Questions

The baseline sought to collect evidence on five core guiding research questions as outlined below:

1. **[Current Level of Access to Justice]** What formal and informal justice mechanisms are currently available to survivors of GBV and vulnerable groups in Kano and Sokoto States?
 - To what extent are these mechanisms known, trusted, and utilized by survivors and other vulnerable groups in the communities?
 - What is the average time, cost, and process required to pursue justice through different mechanisms (e.g., police, courts, traditional systems)?
 - What proportion of reported GBV cases (or cases by vulnerable groups) progress through investigation, prosecution, and conviction?
 - How do survivors perceive the fairness, safety, and effectiveness of justice outcomes?
2. **[Barriers to Accessing Justice]** What barriers (legal, institutional, socio-cultural, security-related, economic) hinder survivors from accessing justice?
 - What social, cultural, and religious norms affect survivors' willingness or ability to seek justice?
 - What economic or logistical barriers (e.g., cost of legal services, transportation, language) hinder access to justice?
 - What institutional or systemic gaps (e.g., delays, corruption, inadequate training of duty bearers) limit effective justice delivery?
 - How do stigma, discrimination, or fear of retaliation influence survivors' decisions not to pursue justice?
 - What specific barriers do marginalized sub-groups (e.g., women with disabilities, children, IDPs, minority groups) face compared to others?
3. **[Stakeholder Roles and Responsiveness]** How responsive are justice institutions in handling GBV cases?
 - How do law enforcement agencies, judiciary, traditional/religious leaders, and social service providers respond to GBV cases?
 - What referral pathways currently exist, and how effective are they in ensuring timely and coordinated support for survivors?

- How adequately are service providers (police, judiciary, health workers, CSOs) trained and resourced to handle GBV cases?
 - What mechanisms for accountability and oversight exist to address negligence, bias, or misconduct in justice delivery?
4. **[Survivor-Centered Perspectives]** How do survivors perceive the responsiveness of justice institutions in handling GBV cases?
- What are survivors' experiences and perceptions of dignity, confidentiality, and safety in justice processes?
 - What coping strategies do survivors adopt when justice is inaccessible or delayed?
 - How do survivors define "justice" beyond formal judicial outcomes (e.g., reconciliation, restitution, community recognition)?
5. **[Opportunities for Strengthening Access]** What opportunities exist to strengthen access to justice for survivors, including promising practices and reforms?
- What promising practices, innovations, or informal mechanisms support survivors in accessing justice?
 - What reforms, capacity gaps, or partnerships could improve responsiveness of justice institutions to GBV and vulnerable groups?
 - How can survivor voices and community participation be better integrated into justice sector reforms?

I.5. Geographic Coverage and Scope of the Study

The study will cover Kano and Sokoto States, including the following LGAs/communities:

Kano State

1. Kawo community (Nassarawa LGA)
2. Kofar Gabas community (Tofa LGA)
3. Sabon Gari community (Wudil LGA)

Sokoto State

1. Shuni District, Dange Shuni LGA (Sokoto South Senatorial District)
2. Chimola District, Gwadabawa LGA (Sokoto East Senatorial District)
3. Gagi (Sokoto North Senatorial District)
4. Kware (Sokoto North Senatorial District)

2. Global Right's Project Overview

2.1. Project Objective and Theory of Change

The project, “*Strengthening Pathways to Inclusive Peacebuilding Processes and Expanding Access to Justice for Marginalized Groups in North-West Nigeria*,” aims to promote sustainable, inclusive peacebuilding processes and strengthen community resilience against insecurity and violent extremism, while expanding access to justice for marginalized groups in target communities. Building on previous interventions in Kaduna, Sokoto, Kano, and Katsina in phases 1 & 2, Global Rights seeks to instrumentalize Phase 3 to expand its impact to address a critical gap identified in previous efforts - limited legal aid for vulnerable populations, particularly women, in conflict-prone communities.

To achieve these aims, the project adopts a community-led approach that empowers existing community structures and institutions to lead and sustain interventions. Through strategic capacity building and resource support, Community Dialogue Committees (CDCs), Gender-Based Violence Response Teams (GBVRTs), and PDSS Lawyers will be equipped to implement core activities, maintain project outcomes, and replicate effective models independently. This expansion in implementation strategy is designed to deepen local ownership, foster sustainability, and ensure long-term impact beyond the life of the project.

The project's objectives will be achieved through:

Dialogue and advocacy platforms: Global Rights will replicate dialogue and advocacy platforms (Community Dialogue Committees), which were highly successful in the 1st & 2nd phases, for community and security sector stakeholders to discuss sectional needs and interests. Building trust and working together, these stakeholders would achieve improved security outcomes. A critical strategy for this phase, as part of their approach to foster rooted capacity, is the peer-to-peer learning exchange sessions, in which older CDCs share context-relevant knowledge with newer CDCs where they co-develop conflict prevention and mitigation processes while driving the critical role of women in peacebuilding.

Expand the GBVRT: Global Rights will establish community Gender-based Violence Response Teams (GBVRT) in the new project communities and expand existing GBVRT to include critical stakeholders such as organizations and individuals, including the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Legal Aid Council, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), NAPTIP, law enforcement officers, Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC), shelter providers, Police Gender Desk Officers, MHPSS providers, and the state Ministry of Justice, willing to provide pro bono legal services to survivors and other indigent groups. These stakeholders will be critical in carrying out activities, including capacity building of other Women's Rights Organizations and SGBV responders and engaging in continuous mentorship during and after the intervention on strategic engagement, negotiation towards peacebuilding and best practices for SGBV response and prevention.

Improve access to justice for marginalized groups: Global Rights will leverage strategic relationships with security agencies in each project state to assign PDSS lawyers to at least one police

station in each community. Access to justice for marginalized groups, especially women who suffer SGBV is a critical component of this project, to expand beyond the domiciled PDSS lawyers in the police stations and the training of WROs and SGBV responders, Global Rights, through the CDCs and GBVRT, will facilitate direct access of victims to pro bono lawyers within the community.

To further strengthen these structures towards attaining sustainability, Global Rights will build the capacities of the CDCs and GBVRTs on resource mobilization, fundraising, and sustainability strategies to maintain and upscale project gains post-intervention.

Finally, to strengthen women's roles in decision-making both in private and public spaces, and in peacebuilding processes, Global Rights will employ the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) to create a community-wide understanding and acceptance of the importance of women's involvement in decision-making and, ultimately, peacebuilding.

2.2. Theory of Change

Grounded in the context and conflict analyses, the project's Theory of Change (TOC) assumes that: **IF** Global Rights' interventions strengthen the capacity of community-led structures, embed legal support mechanisms within communities, and empower women through inclusive peacebuilding platforms, **THEN** communities in Northwest Nigeria will be better equipped to prevent conflict, respond to sexual and gender-based violence, and sustain locally driven peace and justice outcomes. This will result in the meaningful inclusion of women in decision-making, improved access to justice for marginalized groups, and the long-term transformation of communities into resilient, gender-inclusive, and peaceful societies.

2.3. Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes are:

Outcome 1: Women are represented and participate meaningfully in peacebuilding, mediation, and advocacy, and SGBV is reduced in target communities in NW Nigeria.

Outcome 2: Reduced violence and increased access to justice in target communities in NW Nigeria, through mediation and national advocacy with civil society organisations

Outcome 3: Increased defense, police and security capacities to support peaceful elections and wider stability in Nigeria

2.4. Output/Activities

The following outputs/activities are planned to be implemented:

- Host women-led town halls on civic participation and inclusion in peacebuilding processes.
- Work with traditional, religious, and community leaders and CSOs to build trust and strengthen the relationship between communities and law enforcement/security agencies.

- Establish and strengthen established community structures (CDCs and GBVRTs) in Sokoto and Kano states to sustain engagements and build on project gains.
- Expand GBVRT to include critical stakeholders, build capacity, and develop an operational framework.
- Designate PDSS lawyers to police stations in each community to facilitate access to justice.
- Structure peer-to-peer learning exchange meetings between new and existing CDCs
- Support CDC and GBVRT-led activities, including sensitization and town halls
- Conduct GALS training for households in implementing communities.
- Collaborate with PWAN to co-convene a high-level northwest regional conference on Women, Peace and Security.

3. Methodology and Approach

This section outlines the approach and methodology used to carry out the baseline research. More specifically, it describes in detail the study design framework, data collection approaches used, sampling and stakeholder engagement, and data analysis framework. In addition, methodological limitations that affected the evaluation process as well as mitigation strategies used are also highlighted.

3.1. Study design

The baseline study adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative research techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of access to justice in Kano and Sokoto States. This approach enabled the identification of key barriers that hinder timely and effective justice for detainees, survivors of gender-based violence, and other vulnerable groups. The mixed-method design also facilitated triangulation of data, thereby enhancing both the statistical reliability and the contextual richness of the analysis of the access to justice landscape across the two states.

3.2. Study Area

The baseline study was conducted in two states in the Northwestern region of Nigeria – Kano and Sokoto. In Kano State, the assessment focused on three communities: Kawo in Nassarawa LGA, Kofar Gabas in Tofa LGA, and Sabon Gari in Wudil LGA. While in Sokoto State, the assessment covered four locations: Shuni District in Dange Shuni LGA (Sokoto South Senatorial District), Chimola District in Gwadabawa LGA (Sokoto East Senatorial District), and Gagi and Kware in Sokoto North Senatorial District.

These LGAs and communities were purposively selected to capture the diversity of justice sector dynamics across both states. The selection reflected variations in urban–rural context, socio-cultural composition, exposure to justice interventions, and the presence of both formal and informal justice actors. This approach ensured that the study generated contextually relevant insights and a balanced understanding of how access to justice operates across different socio-economic and governance settings within Kano and Sokoto States.

3.3. Target Study Population

The study population comprised of residents within the project’s target communities, including women, girls, men, youth, and other community members. Within this group, particular emphasis was placed on detainees, survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), and other marginalized populations, who are most likely to encounter barriers in accessing justice.

The study specifically included the following target respondents:

- Marginalized community members (e.g., women, PwDs, IDPs, poor rural households)
- Detainees
- GBV survivors (women, girls, men/boys where relevant)

- Justice sector actors (police, judiciary, legal aid providers)
- Religious and traditional leaders
- Civil Society (CSOs, paralegals, health workers, social welfare officers)
- Government officials

3.4. Sampling Strategy

The baseline study employed a multi-stage sampling strategy to ensure representation across diverse geographic and demographic contexts in both Kano and Sokoto States. For the quantitative component, Local Government Areas (LGAs) were purposively selected to reflect a mix of urban, peri-urban, and rural communities, as well as areas with varying levels of exposure to justice sector interventions.

Within each selected LGA, households were systematically sampled, and adult respondents (15 years and above) were randomly selected to participate in the survey. For the qualitative component, participants for key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) were selected through purposive and snowball sampling techniques, targeting individuals and institutions with direct experience or influence within the justice system. This combination of sampling approaches ensured that the study captured both statistical representativeness and experiential depth relevant to the access to justice landscape in the two states.

3.4.1. Sample Size Determination

The sample size for the baseline study was determined based on the objectives of the assessment, the target population, and available resources. The quantitative component aimed to capture a representative cross-section of adult community members (aged 18 years and above) across selected Local Government Areas in Kano and Sokoto States. Using a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, the study applied a simplified version of Yamane's (1967) formula for sample size determination:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + (e)^2}$$

Where:

n = represents the required sample size

N = is the estimated population size

e = is the margin of error (0.05 for $\pm 5\%$)

Based on population projections for the selected LGAs, the formula yielded a minimum required sample of approximately 250 respondents per state. To ensure adequate coverage and account for potential non-responses, the sample was increased to 270 respondents per state, resulting in a total of 540 survey respondents across both states.

For the qualitative component, a total of 28 KIs (12 in Kano; 16 in Sokoto) and 33 FGDs (19 in Sokoto; 15 in Kano) were conducted across the two states. KIs included representatives from the CDC Chairpersons, detainees, police, judiciary, legal aid providers, social welfare departments, civil society organizations, and traditional and religious institutions. FGDs were organized separately for men, women, youth, and persons with disabilities, with participants drawn from the study communities to ensure diversity of perspectives and experiences.

This sample size and distribution provided a balance between statistical representativeness and qualitative depth, allowing for meaningful triangulation of findings and reliable insights into the access to justice landscape across Kano and Sokoto States.

Table 3: Summary of Sample Distribution by State and Respondent Type

Component	Respondent Category	Kano State	Sokoto State	Total
Quantitative Survey	Adult community members (15 years and above)	124	139	263
Subtotal (Survey)		124	139	263
Qualitative (KIs)	Police officers and justice sector actors	3	3	6
	Judiciary and legal aid officials	1	4	5
	Social welfare and GBV response officers	2	4	6
	Civil society and human rights advocates	2	2	4
	Traditional and religious leaders	4	3	7
Subtotal (KIs)		12	16	28
Qualitative (FGDs)	Adult Men's groups	3	4	7
	Adult Women's groups	3	4	7
	Youth Male groups	3	4	7
	Youth Female groups	3	4	7
	Mixed group	2	-	2
	Persons with disabilities (PWDs)	1	2	3
Subtotal (FGDs)		15 FGDs (50 Ps)	19 FGDs (141 Ps)	33 FGDs (191 Ps)
Total Respondents (All Methods)		186	296	482

This distribution ensured that both states were equally represented in data collection and that the voices of key justice sector stakeholders and marginalized groups were adequately captured. The balanced combination of quantitative and qualitative data sources strengthened the validity and reliability of the findings through cross-verification and triangulation.

3.5. Data Collection Methods

Data collection was conducted between 07/10/2025 through 24/10/2025 across selected communities in Kano and Sokoto States, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative tools designed to capture diverse perspectives on access to justice, legal awareness, and justice sector performance.

Quantitative Data Collection

The quantitative component involved administering a structured household survey to adult respondents (15 years and above) in the selected Local Government Areas. The survey captured data on respondents' experiences with formal and informal justice institutions, perceptions of fairness and accessibility, knowledge of legal rights, and barriers to seeking justice. Trained enumerators administered the questionnaires using digital data collection devices (KoboCollect) to ensure efficiency, data accuracy, and real-time monitoring. Sampling was stratified to achieve adequate representation across gender, age, and socio-economic groups.

Qualitative Data Collection

The qualitative component employed document review of laws, policies, and secondary reports on existing justice reports and GBV cases across the two states, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to provide deeper insights into justice sector operations, challenges, and community perceptions.

KIIs were conducted with representatives of key justice sector institutions, including the police, judiciary, legal aid providers, social welfare departments, traditional and religious leaders, and civil society organizations. These interviews explored institutional capacity, responsiveness, coordination, and existing referral mechanisms.

FGDs were held separately for men, women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) in each state to ensure inclusivity and capture diverse community experiences and perceptions. Each FGD comprised 8–10 participants, facilitated by a moderator and note-taker using a semi-structured discussion guide.

3.6. Data Collection Mode

Data collection was conducted primarily through face-to-face interviews and facilitated group discussions using both structured and semi-structured tools. A team of seventeen (17) trained enumerators/supervisors (8 in Kano and 9 in Sokoto) carried out the household surveys using digital tablets equipped with KoboCollect, allowing for real-time data capture, validation, and quality monitoring. Surveys were administered in respondents' preferred language – Hausa or English – to ensure clarity and inclusivity.

The KIIs and FGDs were facilitated by experienced qualitative researchers, with each session conducted in person. Gender sensitivity was maintained throughout: separate FGDs were held for men and women to create safe spaces for open discussion, particularly on sensitive SGBV and justice-related issues.

All sessions were conducted in line with ethical standards. Participants provided informed consent, and confidentiality was strictly observed. Where consent was granted, audio recordings were used alongside detailed note-taking to ensure accurate transcription. The research team also adhered to safety and conflict-sensitive protocols, maintaining neutrality and cultural sensitivity across all study sites.

3.7. Tools used

For the qualitative data collection, discussion and interview guides were developed to guide the discussions for the qualitative component of the evaluation. (See Annex for the guides). A checklist was also been developed for observation.

For the quantitative data collection, a structured questionnaire was also been designed for the perception survey (see Annex).

3.8. Training, Fieldwork Coordination and Supervision

A one-day training was conducted for the enumerators and research assistants that participated in the study. Prior to field deployment, enumerators and qualitative researchers received training on research ethics, study objectives, methodology, sampling process, respondents' selection, interview termination, do no harm principles, and cultural sensitivities, gender sensitivity, GBV survivor-centered interviewing, and digital data collection protocols.

The fieldwork was coordinated by a team of experienced researchers under the supervision of Nextier SPD. Daily debriefing sessions were held during data collection to address emerging challenges, verify data completeness, and ensure consistency across field teams.

3.9. Data analysis plan

Data analysis was carried out using both quantitative and qualitative techniques to ensure a holistic understanding of the access to justice landscape across Kano and Sokoto States.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Data from the household surveys were entered and cleaned using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 26.0. Descriptive statistics – including frequencies, percentages, means, and cross-tabulations – were generated to summarize respondents' perceptions and experiences of justice institutions and services. Comparative analysis between states and respondent categories was conducted to identify variations in access to justice, awareness of legal rights, and trust in justice actors. The results were presented through graphs, charts, and tables to enhance clarity and interpretation.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data obtained from KIs and FGDs were transcribed verbatim and coded using NVivo software. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns, perceptions, and experiences relating to justice sector capacity, responsiveness, and barriers to justice for vulnerable populations. Emerging themes

were triangulated with quantitative findings to provide context and deepen understanding of the underlying social and institutional dynamics influencing access to justice.

3.10. Data Quality Assurance

A series of quality assurance measures were implemented throughout the research process to enhance data accuracy and credibility. Enumerators and research assistants were trained on ethical standards, gender sensitivity, and proper administration of data collection tools. Daily field supervision and spot-checks were conducted to ensure adherence to protocols and verify data consistency. All completed questionnaires and transcripts underwent rigorous data cleaning and validation before analysis. Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data further enhanced the reliability and validity of the findings, ensuring that conclusions drawn accurately reflected realities across the study communities.

3.11. Ethical considerations

The baseline study adhered to strict ethical standards to ensure the safety, dignity, and rights of all participants. The research design and field implementation followed the principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and do-no-harm, particularly when engaging with survivors of gender-based violence and other vulnerable groups.

Informed Consent: All participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, the nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Enumerators and facilitators provided explanations in the local languages (Hausa and English) to ensure comprehension. Verbal or written consent was obtained before each interview or discussion session commenced. For respondents under special circumstances – such as survivors of GBV – consent was reaffirmed at multiple points during engagement to ensure comfort and willingness to continue.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: Strict confidentiality protocols were maintained throughout the research process. No identifying information (such as names, addresses, or contact details) was recorded in the final dataset. Data were stored in password-protected digital files accessible only to the research team. Qualitative transcripts were anonymized by replacing participants' names and locations with coded identifiers to protect their identities. When reporting findings, care was taken to avoid attributing sensitive quotes or information to specific individuals or communities.

Protection of Vulnerable Respondents: Given the sensitivity of justice and GBV-related issues, enumerators were trained on ethical interviewing techniques, trauma-informed communication, and referral pathways for participants who disclosed experiences of violence or distress. The study established linkages with local social welfare departments, legal aid providers, and psychosocial support organizations to enable safe referrals when needed. Interviews were conducted in private and secure settings to ensure participants' comfort and safety.

Research Approval: The study protocol and data collection tools were reviewed and approved by Global Rights in line with its ethical research standards. In addition, verbal authorization was obtained

from traditional and community leaders in each study site prior to fieldwork. All field teams complied with local cultural norms and government guidelines throughout the data collection period.

3.12. Study Limitations

While every effort was made to ensure the reliability and validity of the baseline findings, the study encountered several limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting the results.

1. *Limited Geographic Scope:* The study covered selected Local Government Areas and communities in Kano and Sokoto States. Although these locations were purposively chosen to reflect diverse justice contexts, the findings may not be fully generalizable to all LGAs within the two states or to other parts of Nigeria.
2. *Time, Budget, and Resource Constraints:* The short data collection timeframe and limited project budget affected the extent of fieldwork operations, including the number of enumerators deployed and the duration of engagement with respondents. Logistical challenges such as poor road networks, limited transport availability, and occasional security concerns further constrained access to some remote communities. Some key informants postponed or rescheduled interviews at short notice, which affected time management and coordination.
3. *Sensitivity of Justice and GBV Issues:* Discussions related to access to justice, gender-based violence, and institutional performance are often sensitive. Some respondents, particularly survivors and justice actors, were cautious in sharing personal experiences or institutional weaknesses, which may have affected the depth of qualitative insights.
4. *Social Desirability and Recall Bias:* As with most self-reported data, some respondents may have provided answers they considered socially acceptable or had difficulty recalling past experiences accurately. This was mitigated through cross-checking and triangulation of data from multiple sources.
5. *Limited Disaggregated Data:* In some instances, the availability of disaggregated quantitative data (e.g., by gender, disability status, or socio-economic class) was limited due to incomplete responses. However, the triangulation of survey and qualitative data helped to strengthen the robustness of overall findings.

Despite these limitations, the study provides a credible, evidence-based, and contextually grounded baseline for understanding the state of access to justice in Kano and Sokoto States. The mixed-method approach, combined with the inclusion of diverse respondent categories, ensured that the findings remain robust and reflective of the realities across both states.

4. Key Findings and Analysis

This section presents the key findings of the baseline assessment, organized into thematic subsections. The first subsection provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of respondents, including their location, gender, age, marital status, literacy level, occupation, and religious affiliation. The subsequent sub-sections explore findings across the study's core thematic areas, focusing on community awareness and perceptions of justice systems; experiences in seeking justice; institutional capacity and responsiveness; and barriers to accessing justice, particularly for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and other vulnerable groups. The analysis highlights how socio-economic, cultural, and institutional dynamics intersect to shape access to justice in Kano and Sokoto States.

4.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

The household survey conducted in the chosen Local Government Areas in Kano and Sokoto States had a total of 263 respondents. The demographic distribution of respondents provides useful context for interpreting subsequent findings, particularly in understanding how gender, age, education, and socio-economic background influence access to justice and interaction with justice institutions.

As shown in Table 4, overall, 55.4% were female and 44.6% male, indicating sufficient female inclusion for gender-based analysis as well as modest male participation.

Table 4: Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Variable	Category	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall (%)
Gender	Male	38.5%	50.0%	44.6%
	Female	61.5%	50.0%	55.4%
Age Group	9 – 17 years	8.3%	5.3%	6.8%
	18 – 24 years	36.7%	22.1%	29.1%
	25 – 34 years	17.5%	22.9%	20.3%
	35 – 44 years	18.3%	15.3%	16.7%
	45 – 54 years	7.5%	15.3%	11.6%
	55+	11.7%	19.1%	15.5%
Marital Status	Single	46.0%	24.6%	34.7%
	Married	44.4%	61.6%	53.4%
	Widowed	8.9%	5.1%	6.9%
	Divorced/Separated	0.8%	8.7%	5.0%
Education	No formal education	2.4%	14.5%	8.8%
	No qualification	10.5%	2.9%	6.5%
	Qur'anic	13.7%	15.2%	14.5%
	Primary	9.7%	12.3%	11.1%
	Secondary	34.7%	23.2%	28.6%

	OND/ND/NCE	23.4%	21.0%	22.1%
	Undergraduate/BSc/HND	4.8%	10.1%	7.6%
	Postgraduate (MSc, PhD)	0.8%	0.7%	0.8%
Religion	Christianity	4.1%	13.8%	9.2%
	Islam	95.9%	86.2%	90.8%
Occupation	Employed	5.1%	18.2%	12.2%
	Self-employed	40.2%	31.4%	35.4%
	Unemployed	24.8%	43.8%	35.0%
	Student	29.9%	6.6%	17.3%

The age distribution was youthful, with almost half (49.4%) aged between 18 and 34 years, reflecting the active youth population most likely to engage in justice and community issues.

Regarding marital status, 53.4% of respondents were married, 34.7% single, 6.9% widowed, and 5.0% divorced or separated. Literacy levels varied across states: Kano recorded higher literacy (63.7% with secondary or tertiary education) compared to Sokoto (55%), where a (32%) of respondents had no formal education or qualifications and only Qur’anic education. This variation is expected to influence awareness and utilization of justice mechanisms. Religious affiliation was predominantly Islam (90%), consistent with the cultural composition of both states, while a small proportion (9.2%) identified with Christianity or other faiths. These demographic characteristics reflect the diversity of the sampled population and provide a representative foundation for analyzing justice-related attitudes and experiences.

In terms of occupational status, overall, 12.2% of respondents were employed, 35.4% self-employed, 35.0 unemployed, and 17.3% students. Employment rates were slightly higher in Kano, while Sokoto recorded more unemployed respondents. This occupational spread suggests varying economic capacities and time availability, both of which affect access to justice and affordability of legal services.

In summary, the demographic profile shows a youthful, predominantly Muslim, and moderately educated population with diverse livelihoods. These factors – particularly gender, education, and employment status – are key determinants of awareness, trust, and engagement with both formal and informal justice systems.

4.2. Awareness and Perceptions of Justice Systems

The baseline study sought to assess citizens’ awareness, perceptions, and experiences regarding access to justice in Kano and Sokoto States. Awareness and knowledge of justice mechanisms refer to the extent to which individuals and communities understand the available systems, institutions, and processes for seeking justice and resolving disputes – both formal (courts, police, legal aid, human rights commissions) and informal (religious leaders, traditional rulers, community mediation structures). In the context of this baseline assessment, awareness and knowledge are measured by respondents’ ability to recognize available justice institutions, their perceived accessibility, and familiarity with complaint or redress procedures within both state and community-based justice systems.

4.2.1. Awareness of the Term “Access to Justice”

The baseline results show that 68.6% of respondents across both states have heard of the term “access to justice,” while 31.4% had not. Awareness levels were slightly higher in Sokoto (73.8%) than in Kano (62.6%). This pattern suggests that although the concept is moderately familiar to many, there are still knowledge gaps, particularly among rural and less-educated groups. These findings underscore the importance of sustained community sensitization and legal literacy initiatives to strengthen understanding and utilization of justice mechanisms. As a KII respondent stated “*Because of all that, I take it as ignorance, because up to date our people are not all that literate to understand how to follow a case or to weigh out of it. Because there are people that don't even know how to go and even take a report, even way to go and report. So, I think ignorance is one of the most effective sides that used to affect our people.*” [001-KII-CDC CHAIR-SO-October-2025].

Table 5: Proportion of respondents who have heard of the term “Access to Justice,” by state

State	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Kano	62.6%	37.4%	100%
Sokoto	73.8%	26.2%	100%
Overall	68.6%	31.4%	100%

Men were slightly more aware than women (70.8% vs. 66.7 respectively). Overall, the data show that while a majority have at least heard of “access to justice,” a significant proportion remain unaware or uncertain – especially in Kano. This highlights the need for intensified public enlightenment on justice rights, access pathways, and available support institutions at both state and community levels.

4.2.2. Knowledge of Justice-seeking Options

The baseline findings reveal a pluralistic justice landscape. Across both states, community leaders (84.3%) emerged as the most frequently mentioned informal institutions for resolving legal problems, reflecting strong reliance on community-based and informal dispute resolution systems. This was followed by the police (76.6%), courts (67.0%), and religious leaders (58.2%). Awareness of specialized or support structures such as Legal Aid (11.5%), NGOs/CSOs (17.6%), and Referral Centres (14.2%) remains relatively low, suggesting limited visibility of non-state and survivor-focused services like SARCs.

Table 6: Percentage distribution of respondents aware of various justice-seeking options by state

Knowledge of Justice seeking option	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Police	76.2%	77.0%	76.6%
Court	73.0%	61.9%	67.0%
Community leader	79.5%	88.5%	84.3%
Religious leaders	54.9%	61.2%	58.2%

NGOs/CSOs	8.2%	25.9%	17.6%
Referral Centres (SARCs)	0.0%	26.6%	14.2%
Legal aid	13.9%	9.4%	11.5%
None of the above	7.4%	0.0%	3.4%
Other	0.0%	2.9%	1.5%

Respondents in Kano relatively showed higher recognition of formal justice institutions (police, courts, legal aid), while Sokoto participants were more likely to mention informal options such as community and religious leaders. This reflects differing levels of exposure to civic education and justice programs between the two states. The findings indicate that justice-seeking behavior in both states is shaped by trust and proximity rather than just legal literacy. Many residents still approach community and religious leaders before formal actors, suggesting that improving collaboration between formal and informal systems could enhance overall access to justice. Furthermore, the findings suggest that justice awareness is concentrated in formal institutions, but practical reliance remains on informal and community-based mechanisms – highlighting the need for improved coordination, referral systems, and legal literacy programs across both states.

Qualitative insights revealed that most participants were aware of informal and community-based justice mechanisms, such as the village head, ward head, or traditional leaders, as their first points of contact for resolving disputes. Knowledge of formal options like courts, police, or human rights institutions existed but was limited to those who had prior exposure or serious cases. Persons with disabilities (PWDs) in both Kano and Sokoto felt more comfortable with traditional systems due to their proximity and accessibility. A few participants, especially in Sokoto, mentioned being aware of agencies like NAPTIP, Civil Defense, and the Human Rights Commission, though they felt these institutions were not easily accessible. These were reflected in KIIs' and FDGs' responses for Sokoto and Kaduna

“If we have any problem, we go to the village head first; he knows how to settle it.” [005-FGD-PLWDs-KA-October-2025]

A respondent in Kano explained that while formal justice systems, such as the police and courts were available, many community members lacked adequate knowledge on how to report cases or navigate these institutions. As a result, most people preferred to approach traditional leaders or community-based paralegals for assistance in resolving disputes or facilitating access to justice. These informal systems are often the first point of contact and play a crucial role in bridging the gap between the community and formal justice institutions [002-KII-CDCGBV MEM-KA-October-2025].

“The police are there, but we prefer to first go to our traditional leaders.” [002-FGD-AMG-SO-October-2025]

“Traditional and religious rulers are trusted, they act fast and we can easily access them. Police can delay and ask for money, so less trusted” [008-FGD-YFG-KA-October-2025]

“The traditional leaders, I think, are the most easiest means of justice in that community. And also, the reason is that, you know, in rural areas, even in older days, that people believe and respect their traditional leaders so much. And I believe traditional rulers have been doing well and they are living with their people” [002-KII-CDC GBV MEM-SO-October-2025].

4.2.3. Awareness of Legal aid Service Providers

The baseline findings indicate that only about one-third of respondents (37.1%) were aware of any organisation offering free legal assistance. Awareness was notably higher in Kano (43.4%) than in Sokoto (31.4%, reflecting uneven visibility of justice sector interventions. The majority (50.6%) of respondents lacked knowledge of available legal aid providers, which limited their capacity to seek justice, especially in cases involving vulnerable populations. These results highlight the need to strengthen public information campaigns, legal literacy programs, and community outreach by legal aid institutions and Global Rights.

Table 7: Percentage distribution of awareness of legal aid service providers by state

State	Yes (%)	No (%)	Not Sure (%)	Total (%)
Kano	43.4%	42.6%	13.9%	100%
Sokoto	31.4%	57.7%	10.9%	100%
Overall	37.1%	50.6%	12.4%	100%

Qualitative data revealed that awareness of legal aid service providers was generally low across the two states. While some participants in Sokoto mentioned organizations like Human Rights Commission and NAPTIP as sources of free legal help, those in Kano expressed complete unfamiliarity with any formal legal aid service. The reliance on traditional systems meant that few saw the need to seek external legal aid.

4.2.4. Service Proximity

This question measured service proximity, an important indicator of accessibility to justice, health, and psychosocial support services. The baseline findings show that 79.8% of respondents identified a health centre as the service nearest to them, while much smaller proportions cited psychosocial (0.8%) and legal aid (1.2%) services. Only 7.4% mentioned NGOs or CSOs, and 9.7% reported that none of these services were close to their community.

The results suggest that although health facilities are relatively well distributed, access to justice and psychosocial services remains limited – particularly in Sokoto State, where 13.4% reported no service nearby. These findings underscore the need to strengthen decentralization and community outreach for legal and psychosocial support mechanisms.

Table 8: Percentage distribution of nearest service type by state

Service Type	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Health centre	81.5%	78.4%	79.8%

Psychosocial support	0.8%	0.7%	0.8%
Legal aid	1.7%	0.7%	1.2%
NGO/CSO	1.7%	12.2%	7.4%
None of the above	13.4%	6.5%	9.7%
Others	0.8%	1.4%	1.2%

Participants during FGDs emphasized that the nearest justice service providers are usually traditional leaders within their community. Formal institutions like courts, police stations, or human rights offices are located far away, especially in Sokoto. Transport costs and mobility challenges for PLWDs further reduced access. Distance was not just physical but also social, as participants felt alienated by the attitude of officials in formal settings.

“Even if someone wants to report, there is no vehicle to take you to the city.” [002-FGD-AMG-SO-October-2025]

“The palace of the village head is near us, that’s where we go.” [002-FGD-AMG-SO-October-2025]

“The police and NAPTIP are in town, and we cannot easily reach them because of transport.” [009-FGD-PLWDs-SO-October-2025]

“The court is far, so people use the local leaders.” [008-FGD-YFG-KA-October-2025]

“Distance and transportation costs also make it difficult for victims to reach formal institutions” [002-KII-CDCGBV MEM-KA-October-2025].

4.2.5. How confident are you that you understand your legal rights?

Respondents were asked to rate their level of confidence in understanding their legal rights. Table 9 illustrates the distribution of confidence levels across Kano and Sokoto States. Overall, most respondents (93.8%) expressed at least some confidence (“very,” “confident,” or “fairly confident”) in understanding their legal rights, indicating moderate to high legal self-awareness across both states. However, about 6.2% reported low confidence (“slightly” or “not at all confident”), showing that a small portion of the population still feels legally disempowered.

Table 9: Percent distribution of respondents’ perception of confidence in understanding their legal rights by state

Level of Confidence	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Very confident	22.1%	14.4%	18.0%
Confident	63.1%	54.0%	58.2%
Fairly confident	7.4%	26.6%	17.6%
Slightly confident	1.6%	4.3%	3.1%
Not at all confident	5.7%	0.7%	3.1%

The perception of confidence in understanding legal rights varies moderately between Kano and Sokoto States. In Kano, a higher proportion of respondents (85.2%) reported being either very confident or confident, compared to 68.4% in Sokoto. Related, more respondents in Kano (7.3%) described themselves as slightly confident or not at all confident, indicating lower levels of legal self-assurance in that state.

Across both states, the majority of respondents from Sokoto (26.6%) identified as fairly confident, suggesting a general awareness of legal rights but possible gaps in deeper understanding of procedures and enforcement mechanisms. These results imply that while awareness of legal rights exists, there is uneven depth of understanding, particularly in Sokoto. Strengthening legal literacy programs, community-level rights education, and access to legal aid services could enhance confidence among citizens, especially women and rural populations.

Contrary to the quantitative analysis, participants in qualitative interviews demonstrated little to no understanding of their legal rights. While some had a general sense of fairness and wrongdoing, only a few could identify specific rights under the law. PWDs admitted they often relied on others to interpret issues of rights and justice. While some respondents indicated that people lacked awareness of their rights making it difficult to seek justice. The few who had interacted with NGOs displayed higher awareness, emphasizing the importance of community sensitization.

“We only know what is right or wrong by our religion, not by law.” [005-FGD-PLWDs-KA-October-2025]

“Those people from Human Rights came and told us we have rights too.” [009-FGD-PLWDs-SO-October-2025]

“We are not educated in law; we only follow what elders tell us.” [001-FGD-AMG-KA-October-2025]

“The first challenge is ignorance—many people lack awareness of their rights and how to seek justice” [002-KII-CDC GBV MEM-SO-October-2025].

4.3. Experience and Use of Formal Justice Systems

Experience and use of formal justice systems refer to the extent to which individuals have interacted with, sought assistance from, or utilized official justice institutions in resolving disputes or addressing rights violations. These formal systems include courts, police, legal aid services, human rights commissions, and other state-recognized legal institutions. The concept measures both exposure (having encountered or engaged with these systems) and utilization (actively seeking redress or justice through them).

4.3.1. Experienced a Legal or Justice-Related Problem in the Past 12 Months

The baseline findings reveal that almost one in four respondents (23.2%) across both states reported having experienced a problem in the past year that required legal or justice intervention. Kano State

recorded a slightly higher proportion (25.6%) of respondents who had such experiences compared to Sokoto State (21.2%). The majority (76.8%) indicated they had not encountered any legal or justice-related issues, suggesting either limited exposure to conflicts or, in some cases, low recognition of situations that warrant legal action.

Table 10: Percent distribution of respondents who experienced a Legal or Justice-Related Problem in Past 12 Months, by State

Response	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Total (%)
Yes	25.6%	21.2%	23.2%
No	74.4%	78.8%	76.8%
Total (n)	100%	100%	100%

The relatively higher incidence in Kano may be linked to increased awareness of legal channels or higher urban exposure, which often results in more reported justice-related grievances. Overall, this pattern underscores the need for continued efforts to strengthen access to justice mechanisms and ensure citizens, especially in Sokoto, can identify and seek redress when their rights are violated.

Several participants recounted cases (SGBV, forced marriage, maltreatment, theft) that they had encountered. Some cases were taken to formal institutions (the police, Human Rights Commission, NAPTIP) and others to traditional leaders. There are examples of long delays and interrupted cases, and at least one example where a survivor abandoned justice and relocated. There were also cases of perceived mistreatment by the police

“There was a forced marriage case that was nullified the marriage” [009-FGD-PLWDs-SO-October-2025]

“The girl had to relocate and delivered the baby elsewhere... Almost 3years later, the case was opened and justice was served at the end” [009-FGD-PLWDs-SO-October-2025]

“I once went to report a theft, but they asked me to bring money before they write it down.” [005-FGD-PLWDs-KA-October-2025]

A respondent explained that she had not initially confided in anyone, as the incident was sudden and violent. Her neighbors were the first to discover her after she was attacked. They immediately rushed her to the hospital and later informed nearby police officers about the incident. She described their response as very supportive, noting that their quick action helped save her life and ensured the case was promptly reported [009-KII-GBV SUV-KA-October-2025].

“Police. And the way they treated us is bad because we didn’t commit the offence and the person reported the case is elite and he want them to punish us, they show us we don’t have any right to save ourselves” [014-KII-DET-SO-October-2025]

4.3.2. Types of Legal or Justice-Related Problems Experienced

The baseline sought to find out the type of problem experienced by those who reported experiencing a legal or justice-related issue in the past year. Across both Kano and Sokoto States, the most common justice-related problems experienced by respondents were gender-based violence (25.9%), criminal offenses (22.2%), and detention/arrest issue (17.3%). While Kano reported significant cases of assault and family law, Sokoto had more gender-based violence and detention-related disputes. These findings indicate persistent justice gaps in both criminal and civil matters, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to strengthen citizens' access to legal remedies and justice services.

Table 11: Type of Legal or Justice Problems Experienced in the Past 12 Months by State

Type of Problem	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Criminal (assault, theft, etc.)	31.1%	11.1%	22.2%
GBV (rape, domestic violence)	11.1%	44.4%	25.9%
Detention/arrest issue	13.3%	22.2%	17.3%
Property/land dispute	13.3%	11.1%	12.3%
Family law (divorce, custody)	33.3%	0.0%	18.5%
Employment/labour	8.9%	11.1%	9.9%
Farmer/Herder dispute	2.2%	8.3%	4.9%
Total (Multiple responses)	100%	100%	100%

This pattern of results suggests that the primary justice needs in both states revolve around gender-based violence, criminal offenses, and detention-related disputes. Addressing these requires strengthening both formal justice institutions (police, courts, and legal aid) and community-level mediation structures, particularly to handle GBV and land-related cases in a survivor-centered, equitable manner.

Commonly reported problems include sexual violence (rape, forced marriage, sexual exploitation), domestic abuse, abuse of minors (boys and girls), maltreatment of vulnerable persons (e.g., hearing-impaired wife), theft, fights, and immorality among youth. PLWDs noted community exclusion and discrimination as recurrent grievances.

“a husband that maltreats his hearing-impaired wife, was punished” [009-FGD-PLWDs-SO-October-2025]

“a girl ... was drugged, raped and impregnated by the husband of the wife she works for” [009-FGD-PLWDs-SO-October-2025]

“... concerning GBV, firstly we are faced with cases like abuse of minors, both males and females...” [001-KII-GBV CHAIR-KA-October-2025].

4.3.3. Help-Seeking Behavior for Justice-Related Problems

Among respondents who reported experiencing a justice-related problem in the past 12 months, 67.4% sought help from formal or informal sources. A higher proportion in Sokoto (79.5%) than in Kano (58.0%) did so. However, 32.6% of respondents did not seek any assistance, reflecting persistent obstacles to justice access, such as financial constraints, a lack of awareness, or the perceived ineffectiveness of formal justice institutions. Strengthening community-level legal awareness, affordable legal aid, and trust-building initiatives with justice actors could help close this access gap.

Table 12: Percent distribution of respondents who sought help for Justice-Related Problems in the Past 12 Months, by State

Response	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Yes	58.0%	79.5%	67.4%
No	42.0%	20.5%	32.6%
Total (n)	100%	100%	100%

4.3.4. First Source of Help for Legal or Justice Problems

This question explores initial points of contact when respondents experience legal or justice-related problems, helping to distinguish reliance on formal vs informal justice systems. Among respondents who sought help for a justice-related issue, the majority approached community or religious leaders (30.9%), the police (25.0%) and family/friends (22.1%) as their first point of contact. Only a small fraction (10.3%) turned to the courts or legal aid providers (4.4%), underscoring limited engagement with formal legal structures.

Table 13: First Source of Help for Legal or Justice Problems, by State

Source of Help	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Police	20.6%	29.4%	25.0%
Court/Judge	11.8%	8.8%	10.3%
Legal Aid Lawyer/Paralegal/NGO	5.9%	2.9%	4.4%
Community/Religious Leader	35.3%	26.5%	30.9%
Family/Friends	26.5%	17.6%	22.1%
Health Facility	0.0%	8.8%	4.4%
Other (specify)	0.0%	5.9%	2.9%
Total (n)	100%	100%	100%

Respondents in Sokoto showed slightly higher reliance on police, while those in Kano preferred traditional and religious dispute-resolution channels. These patterns highlight the continued dominance of informal

justice mechanisms in both states and the need to strengthen linkages between community-based and formal justice systems to ensure fairness, accountability, and survivor-centered outcomes.

Qualitative insights revealed that traditional leaders are the most cited first source of help. Where NGOs or human rights groups are active in the community, they are cited as first responders for SGBV cases. Police are often considered a second-line recourse or are called only when matters escalate.

“The most often one is the traditional leaders... if the matter escalate them then we refer to police or civil defence” [002-FGD-AMG-SO-October-2025]

“Traditional leader is the first alternative because he is the closest to the people, accessible, free and even sponsor financial part of a case.” [009-FGD-PLWDs-SO-October-2025]

“There’s NGO like us (Global Right) that sometimes visits and helps victims.” [008-FGD-YFG-KA-October-2025]

“They will say they don’t want the case to get to police station or court we should solve it for them. Most especially the aspect of GBV we take it step by step till the end of it, be it police station report, hospital check to court etc. until we get justice for the victim” [001-KII-GBV CHAIR-KA-October-2025].

4.3.5. Satisfaction Levels with the Justice Response

Satisfaction levels with the justice response were moderate across both states. About 56.2% of respondents who sought help expressed satisfaction, while 35.9% reported dissatisfaction. Respondents in Sokoto were slightly more positive, with 61.8% indicating satisfied or very satisfied, compared to 50% in Kano. The small proportion of neutral responses (7.8%) suggests cautious optimism but also limited expectations of fairness and effectiveness. Overall, the findings highlight the need for continuous improvement in case handling, feedback mechanisms, and accountability to build confidence and trust in justice institutions.

Table 14: Percentage Distribution of Respondents’ Satisfaction with the Justice Response, by State

Level of Satisfaction	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Very dissatisfied	13.3%	8.8%	10.9%
Dissatisfied	26.7%	23.5%	25.0%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	10.0%	5.9%	7.8%
Satisfied	30.0%	50.0%	40.6%
Very satisfied	20.0%	11.8%	15.6%
Total (n)	100%	100%	100%

Satisfaction is higher for cases handled by traditional leaders and NGOs and lower for those handled by the police or courts because of perceived corruption, delays, and lack of sensitivity. Respondents noted

satisfaction arises when outcomes are fair and timely and when survivors are treated respectfully. Community members had more faith in informal justice institutions than formal ones.

“If the person is rich, he wins.” [008-FGD-YFG-KA-October-2025]

“When there is involvement of NGOs, a case is well treated and survivors are treated fairly.” [009-FGD-PLWDs-SO-October-2025]

Overall, the respondent observed that many survivors trust the informal systems more for emotional support and immediate intervention, but they still hope for improvement in the formal justice system to ensure fair and lasting justice [007-KII-GBV SUV-KA-October-2025].

“I feel more comfortable seeking justice from my elders and traditional and religious leaders because in many communities in Nigeria, especially here in rural areas, traditional and religious leaders often hold significant influence and trust. These leaders often have strong connections within the community, which can foster a sense of trust and familiarity. They might also be more approachable and accessible than formal law enforcement or the judicial system” [013-KII-SGBV SUV-SO-October-2025].

4.3.6. Timeliness and Responsiveness of Justice Mechanisms

The assessment revealed mixed experiences regarding the timeliness of justice responses. About 64.2% of respondents received feedback or action within the same day and/or seven days, suggesting moderate efficiency in some cases. However, almost one-fifth (19.4%) reported receiving no response at all, pointing to systemic weaknesses in follow-up and communication.

Table 15: Time Taken to Receive a Formal Response After Seeking Help, by State

Response Time	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Same day	42.4%	17.6%	29.9%
1–7 days	24.2%	44.1%	34.3%
8–30 days	3.0%	17.6%	10.4%
More than 30 days	6.1%	5.9%	6.0%
Did not receive response	24.2%	14.7%	19.4%
Total (n)	100%	100%	100%

Response times were faster in Kano than in Sokoto, where delayed or absent feedback was more common. These findings emphasize the need to strengthen case-tracking systems, citizen feedback channels, and accountability mechanisms to ensure that justice processes are both timely and transparent.

As observed during the FGDs and KIIs, timeliness is a frequent complaint for formal systems—courts and police are seen as slow. Traditional mechanisms are praised for speed in responding to complaints brought by community members. Respondents repeatedly called for “speedy dispensation of justice” and follow-up by justice actors.

“The traditional people don’t delay; they call both families and resolve it.” — 009-FGD-PLWDs-SO-October-2025

“Police sometimes delay, but elders solve quickly.” — 008-FGD-YFG-KA-October-2025

A respondent explained that survivors tend to feel more comfortable seeking help from informal systems such as community elders or religious leaders because they are easily accessible, more understanding, and provide quicker responses [007-KII-GBV SUV-KA-October-2025].

On the other hand, formal systems like the police and courts have the legal power to prosecute offenders and deliver justice, but survivors often find them intimidating, slow, and expensive to access [007-KII-GBV SUV-KA-October-2025].

4.3.7. Access to Legal Advice and Representation

Access to legal advice and representation remains limited in both Kano and Sokoto States. Only one in three respondents (35.3%) who sought help received any legal support, while the majority (44.1%) did not receive legal advice or representation. Free legal aid was more common than paid services, reflecting the role of civil society and donor-supported programs in expanding access. Respondents in Kano reported slightly higher access to legal support than those in Sokoto, suggesting uneven service coverage. These findings underscore the need to expand legal aid outreach, raise awareness of available services, and institutionalize pro bono mechanisms to ensure equitable access to justice for all citizens.

Table 16: Percentage Distribution of Respondents Who Received Legal Advice or Representation, by State

Response	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Yes (free)	47.1%	23.5%	35.3%
Yes (paid)	17.6%	23.5%	20.6%
No	35.3%	52.9%	44.1%
Total (n)	100%	100%	100%

Access to legal advice and representation remains significantly limited, particularly for individuals and families with low income. Financial constraints are one of the primary barriers preventing many people from securing competent legal assistance, ultimately undermining their ability to seek justice and defend their rights. In this context, pro bono legal services play an essential role in strengthening justice systems and promoting fairness. By providing free legal support to those who cannot afford it, pro bono initiatives help bridge the gap between disadvantaged communities and the justice system.

“But I believe with what the project is doing, deploying pro bono lawyers into the community, and mostly in the police stations, we still have that as part of structures that can render this access to justice” [006-KII-CSO-SO-October-2025].

“There is also limited information on available legal mechanisms and how to access them, as well as a shortage of justice service delivery actors at the community level” [006-KII-CSO-KA-October-2025].

“From my own perspective, the situation in the formal justice system in Nigeria, there is no justice if you don’t have money or you don’t have some one that will stand for you. Because they can even send you to prison when they tried of keeping you. A lot of people are now in prison just because of minor cases like five thousand or ten thousand but because they don’t have money, they are kept there” [008-KII-DET-SO-October-2025].

4.3.8. Outcomes of Justice-Related Cases

The analysis of case outcomes reveals that about one in two respondents (40.5%) had their cases resolved in their favor, while over one-fourth (21.6%) reported ongoing cases. A further 6.8% said their cases were referred to other authorities, and 31.1% were dismissed. Sokoto recorded a slightly higher proportion of favorable outcomes than Kano, which had more ongoing cases. These results reflect persistent delays and inefficiencies in case processing, highlighting the need to strengthen case management systems, coordination between justice actors, and legal aid support to ensure timely and fair resolutions.

Table 17: Outcomes of Justice-Related Cases, by State

Outcome Category	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Case resolved in my favor	35.7%	46.9%	40.5%
Referred elsewhere	9.5%	3.1%	6.8%
Dismissed	28.6%	34.4%	31.1%
Ongoing	26.2%	15.6%	21.6%
Total	100%	100%	100%

4.3.9. Barriers to Justice-Seeking Behavior

Among respondents who did not seek help after experiencing a justice-related problem, the main barriers identified were lack of awareness about where to go (45.5%), lack of trust in authorities (31.8%), and fear of reprisal or stigma (31.8%). Other notable factors included cultural/family pressure (18.2%) and the cost of services (13.6%). These challenges were slightly more pronounced in Sokoto than in Kano, reflecting contextual differences in institutional presence and public confidence. The findings underscore the need for community-level sensitization, confidence-building in justice institutions, and expanded free legal aid services, particularly targeting marginalized groups such as women and persons with disabilities.

Table 18: Reported Reasons for Not Seeking Help, by State (Multiple Response)

Reason for Not Seeking Help	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Fear of reprisal/stigma	29.4%	40.0%	31.8%
Lack of awareness where to go	47.1%	40.0%	45.5%
Cost of services	5.9%	40.0%	13.6%
Distance/transport problems	5.9%	20.0%	9.1%
Lack of trust in authorities	29.4%	40.0%	31.8%

Cultural/family pressure	5.9%	60.0%	18.2%
Total (Multiple responses)	100%	100%	100%

Key barriers identified through qualitative analysis include financial constraints, long distances to justice institutions, stigma, fear of retaliation, corruption, political intimidation, and discriminatory attitudes among officials. Many participants also highlighted pressure from family and community members to remain silent, along with the absence of trusted advocates to “stand for you.” These challenges are particularly acute for persons living with disabilities, women, and low-income households, who often face compounded vulnerabilities and greater difficulty accessing justice.

“If you don’t have money, in most cases it will be hard for you to get justice.” — 005-FGD-PLWDs-KA-October-2025

“Some families will tell you to forget the matter so that people don’t talk.” — 009-FGD-PLWDs-SO-October-2025

“They look down on us and don’t take our complaints seriously.” — 005-FGD-PLWDs-KA-October-2025

“Because some did not know, some financial issues too has been a factor too. And some people have, I believe that maybe probably they don't have money. So they must hire lawyers, they must do that” [002-KII-CDC GBV MEM-SO-October-2025].

4.4. Experience and use of informal/traditional mechanisms

Experience and use of informal or traditional justice mechanisms refer to individuals’ engagement with non-formal, community-based systems for resolving disputes or seeking redress outside the formal judicial framework. These mechanisms may include traditional rulers, religious leaders, elders, community mediators, or customary courts, which operate according to local norms, customs, and religious principles.

This section measures the extent to which community members rely on such mechanisms, their reasons for preference, and their perceived effectiveness or fairness compared to formal justice institutions. Understanding people’s experiences with informal justice systems helps to assess trust in community-based structures, the accessibility of justice at the grassroots, and potential linkages between formal and informal mechanisms to strengthen equitable and rights-based justice delivery.

4.4.1. Use of Traditional/Community Justice Mechanisms

The baseline findings reveal that 27.6% of respondents across both states have used traditional or community justice mechanisms at some point, compared to 72.4% who have not. The use of such mechanisms was higher in Kano (49.1%) than in Sokoto (16.2%), reflecting the strong presence and influence of customary and religious authorities in conflict resolution.

Table 19: Use of Traditional/Community Justice Mechanisms by State

Response	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Yes	49.1%	16.2%	27.6%
No	50.9%	83.8%	72.4%
Total (n)	100%	100%	100%

Respondents emphasized that traditional justice systems are easier to access, less costly, and more familiar than formal courts. Nonetheless, concerns were raised regarding fairness, consistency, and gender sensitivity within these informal systems. These findings underscore the importance of linking traditional and formal justice systems to improve accessibility while safeguarding equity and rights protections.

In line with quantitative analysis Traditional/community mechanisms are widely used for most disputes and valued for accessibility, low cost, and speed. For many participants, these mechanisms are the preferred default for SGBV, family, and minor civil disputes.

“The village head settles our problems quickly, without collecting money.” — 005-FGD-PLWDs-KA-October-2025

“If someone offends you, you go to Hakimi; he will call both sides and settle.” — 002-FGD-AMG-SO-October-2025

“Most of them prefer traditional reconciliation because they know that's the only place they can get justice” — 005-FGD-PLWDs-KA-October-2025

“The respondent stated that the community relies on several justice mechanisms, both formal and informal. Informal mechanisms include religious leaders, ward heads, and the district head, who are usually the first point of contact since they are closer to the people and easily accessible.” [003-KII-RL-KA-October-2025]

“Then I say also social, cultural, and gender stereotypes. It's also part of it. Because men, you know, like masculinity, I can tell you. You see people sometimes; they “think men have to survive beyond the women” [013-KII-SGBV SUV-SO-October-2025].

4.4.2. Trust in Community/Traditional Leaders to Handle Disputes Fairly

The baseline data show that a majority of respondents (78.8%) trust community and traditional leaders to handle disputes fairly, while 13.5% said their trust depends on the nature of the case or the personality of the leader. Only 7.7% expressed no trust at all. Trust levels were notably higher in Sokoto (79.7%) compared to Kano (77.9%), highlighting the strong social legitimacy of customary and religious leadership structures in dispute management.

While the high level of trust underscores the continued relevance of informal justice mechanisms, the presence of conditional trust suggests concerns over bias, favoritism, or unequal treatment, particularly in

cases involving women or marginalized groups. Strengthening training, oversight, and collaboration between traditional and formal justice systems can help build fairness and accountability in community-level dispute resolution.

Table 20: Trust in Community/Traditional Leaders to Handle Disputes Fairly, by State

Response	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Yes	77.9%	79.7%	78.8%
No	15.6%	0.7%	7.7%
Depends	6.6%	19.6%	13.5%
Total (n)	100%	100%	100%

4.4.3. Use of Legal aid or Paralegal Services

The baseline findings reveal limited utilization of legal aid and paralegal services among respondents. Only one in three (39.2%) had ever accessed such support, with 23.8% benefiting from free legal aid and 15.4% paying for services. Most respondents (60.8%) had never used any form of legal assistance.

Access and usage were marginally higher in Kano than in Sokoto, reflecting the stronger presence of legal aid institutions and civil society organizations in Kano's urban centers. The low overall uptake suggests limited awareness, geographical inaccessibility, and possible distrust in formal legal actors. Expanding community-based legal aid awareness, mobile legal clinics, and collaboration with paralegal networks could help improve access to justice for marginalized and rural populations.

Table 21: Use of Legal Aid or Paralegal Services by State

Response	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Yes (free)	41.0%	8.7%	23.8%
Yes (paid)	30.3%	2.2%	15.4%
No	28.7%	89.1%	60.8%
Total (n)	100%	100%	100%

4.4.4. Perceived Solutions to Improve Access to Justice

When asked what would most improve access to justice in their communities, the three most frequently cited solutions given by respondents are legal awareness campaigns (66.7%), followed by free legal aid (50.2%) and transport support (48.6%). Respondents also emphasized the importance of accessibility/legality. services for PWDs (45.5%), protection measures for survivors (41.2%), faster court procedures (33.7%), training for police (22.0%) to improve fairness and responsiveness, and mobile legal clinics (14.9%), especially in remote communities.

These findings indicate that citizens recognize both institutional reforms (e.g., speedier court processes, trained law enforcement) and community-based interventions (e.g., outreach and awareness) as key to improving justice delivery. Tailored investments in public legal education, mobile legal aid outreach, and capacity-building for justice actors will be essential to make justice more accessible, especially for women, survivors of violence, and persons with disabilities.

Table 22: Suggested Measures to Improve Access to Justice, by State (Multiple Response)

Suggested Intervention	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Free legal aid	57.8%	43.9%	50.2%
Mobile legal clinic	10.3%	18.7%	14.9%
Legal awareness campaigns	40.5%	88.5%	66.7%
Transport support	40.5%	55.4%	48.6%
Faster court procedures	15.5%	48.9%	33.7%
Protection measures for survivors	45.7%	37.4%	41.2%
Training for police	8.6%	33.1%	22.0%
Accessible/legal services for PWDs	62.9%	30.9%	45.5%
Total (Multiple responses)	100%	100%	100%

Participants recommended community awareness, involving PLWDs in community activities, teamwork between traditional leaders and government/NGOs, and establishing local complaint centres. Emphasis was often on empathy, inclusion, and easier reporting mechanisms.

“Show them love and bring them close to people in the community and involve them in any activity in the community.” — Salma (Kano PLWDs)

“Create awareness to enlighten the people through sensitization on possible ways to seek justice” — (Sokoto PLWDs)

“To improve access to justice for vulnerable groups, priority should be given to strengthening community-based justice systems, expanding legal aid, and promoting legal awareness—especially for women, girls, and marginalized populations. Efforts should focus on bridging formal and informal justice mechanisms, ensuring survivor-centered responses” [006-KII-CSO-KA-October-2025].

“There are things that government is not supposed to intervene, politics is not supposed to intervene in. This thing consists of justice. Justice is supposed to be fair. Let the lawyers and the judges do their work. If a judge is to be what do you call it, if somebody is to be appointed as a judge, it should be on merit, not on politics. Not on politics” [003-KII-CDC CHAIR-SO-October-2025]

Overall Summary

The baseline assessment reveals limited interaction between community members and formal justice institutions such as the police, courts, and legal aid services in both Kano and Sokoto States. While some respondents had encountered legal issues requiring formal intervention, the majority demonstrated low levels of engagement with these systems, citing barriers such as lack of awareness, cost, distance, distrust, and fear of reprisal.

Overall, only a small proportion of respondents reported having ever used legal aid or paralegal services – about 39.2% across both states – with significant and higher utilization in Kano than Sokoto. This limited usage reflects both geographic and informational inequities, with urban populations having greater exposure to justice actors and NGO-led legal aid programs than rural communities.

Among those who experienced justice-related problems, roughly 67% sought help, while 33% did not. Those who refrained from seeking help most often cited lack of awareness about where to go (45.5%), lack of trust in authorities (31.8%), and fear of reprisal or stigma (31.8%). Other notable factors included cultural/family pressure (18.2%) and the cost of services (13.6%) as key deterrents. Even among those who pursued justice, outcomes were mixed – only about 40.5% had their cases resolved in their favor, while 21.6% remained ongoing, revealing systemic delays and weak resolution capacity.

Respondents also pointed out a number of problems with the formal justice system, such as slow court processes, insufficient legal representation, and high service costs. The preference for traditional dispute resolution mechanisms among many community members further underscores the perceived inaccessibility and inefficiency of formal institutions.

For improved justice delivery, Global Rights and its partners' interventions should prioritize:

- Expanding community-level legal awareness and education;
- Scaling up free legal aid and paralegal outreach, especially through mobile clinics;
- Enhancing responsiveness and fairness within police and court systems;
- Integrating survivor-centered protection mechanisms;
- Building trust and coordination between formal and informal systems.

4.5. Barriers to Accessing Justice

Barriers to accessing justice in this context refer to the structural, social, economic, cultural, and institutional factors that limit individuals' ability to seek, obtain, and enforce their legal rights through either formal or informal mechanisms. These barriers affect people's awareness of their rights, trust in justice institutions, and their capacity to navigate justice processes effectively.

4.5.1. Financial Constraints (Cost/Fees)

The data indicate that financial constraints are one of the most significant barriers to accessing justice across both Kano and Sokoto States. About 85.7% of respondents (Moderate + Extreme) reported that the cost of legal services, court fees, and transport represent major obstacles to seeking justice.

Sokoto State recorded a slightly higher mean score (3.74) than Kano (3.15), suggesting that financial hardship and limited availability of free legal aid are more acute in Sokoto. This barrier disproportionately affects women, low-income earners, and rural residents, who are less likely to afford private legal representation or lengthy court processes.

Table 23: Percentage distribution of respondents who perceive cost/fees as a barrier by State

Perception Level	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Not a barrier (1)	12.3%	0.7%	5.7%
Somewhat a barrier (2)	18.9%	0.7%	8.6%
Moderate barrier (3)	10.4%	22.3%	17.1%
Extreme barrier (4)	58.5%	76.3%	68.6%
Total	100	100	100
Mean Score	3.15	3.74	3.49

Respondents frequently mentioned lawyer fees, court filing costs, and transportation to urban courts as major financial burdens. A key programme implication of these findings is that addressing financial barriers requires expanding free legal aid services, introducing mobile legal clinics, and simplifying court procedures to reduce both monetary and procedural costs for justice seekers.

Consistent with the quantitative results showing cost as the leading barrier, qualitative discussions further revealed that transport, legal fees, and other indirect expenses often discourage people from seeking formal justice, forcing many to resort to traditional mechanisms or remain silent.

“Transport to police station costs money.” — 008-FGD-YFG-KA-October-2025

“If you don’t have money, in most cases it will be hard for you to get justice.” — 005-FGD-PLWDs-KA-October-2025

“We can’t afford lawyers; only rich people can go to court.” — 005-FGD-PLWDs-KA-October-2025

“So that financial constraints always stands as an impediment, coupled with the knowledge that should have been easily accessible to them. I think this forms some of the barriers to that” [004-KII-RL-SO-October-2025].

“The respondent explained that the main challenges preventing vulnerable groups from accessing justice are lack of awareness and financial constraints” [004-KII-CDC CHAIR_DH-KA-October-2025].

4.5.2. Difficulty in Accessing Services (Distance/Transport Issues)

The data indicate that difficulty in accessing justice services due to distance or transport issues is a significant concern across both states. A combined 73.2% of respondents rated distance and transport challenges as either a moderate or extreme barrier. The issue is more pronounced in Sokoto State (99.2%) compared to Kano (39.4%), reflecting greater rural dispersion and fewer justice service centers in Sokoto.

The mean barrier score (2.99 overall) suggests that distance is perceived as a strong and persistent structural obstacle to justice access.

Table 24: Percentage distribution of respondents who perceive distance issues as a barrier to accessing Justice, by State

Perception Level	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Not a barrier (1)	11.5%	0.0%	5.0%
Somewhat a barrier (2)	49.0%	0.7%	21.8%
Moderate barrier (3)	24.0%	57.0%	42.7%
Extreme barrier (4)	15.4%	42.2%	30.5%
Total	100	100	100
Mean Score	2.43	3.41	2.99

Field observations and qualitative insights further reveal that long distances to courts, police stations, or legal aid offices, coupled with poor road conditions and high transport costs, discourage many citizens – particularly women, rural dwellers, and low-income households – from pursuing legal redress. Key programming implications include, among other things: i) expanding community-based legal aid and mobile justice services to rural and semi-urban areas; ii) strengthening transport support mechanisms, especially for vulnerable groups such as women, PwDs, and survivors of GBV; iii) decentralizing justice services through local dispute resolution centers or periodic mobile court sittings; and iv) integrating justice delivery with existing community and religious structures to bring services closer to citizens.

The quantitative findings indicate that distance to justice institutions remains a major barrier to access. This is supported by qualitative evidence, where participants repeatedly cited distance to courts and police stations and lack of transport as key challenges, with persons living with disabilities (PLWDs) particularly emphasizing mobility difficulties.

“The court is far, so people use the local leaders.” —008-FGD-YFG-KA-October-2025

“Even to reach the police, we spend what we don’t have.” —005-FGD-PLWDs-KA-October-2025

“From my perspective, in Kano State and across the Northwest, the main justice needs of vulnerable groups—especially women, survivors of violence, children, and youth—center on access, awareness, and accountability. Many face barriers such as cost, distance.” [006-KII-CSO-KA-October-2025]

“So definitely now it is the lower class citizens that the vulnerable ones has no mouth to speak I can see because might is right is what is being used now. If you are might, that is you are financially okay in the society or you have a significant value in the government, whatever you do, nobody will take you to justice” [003-KII-CDC CHAIR-SO-October-2025]

4.5.3. Lack of Awareness of Existing Services

The results show that lack of awareness of available justice services is a major barrier to accessing justice across both Kano and Sokoto States. Overall, 89.4% of respondents (combining moderate and extreme) reported that limited knowledge or information about where to seek help hinders access to justice. The challenge appears slightly higher in Sokoto (mean = 3.66) than in Kano (mean = 3.29), suggesting that outreach and legal education efforts are more limited in Sokoto communities.

Table 25: Percentage Distribution of Respondents Who Perceive Lack of Awareness of Existing Services as a Barrier, by State

Perception Level	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Not a barrier (1)	10.4%	0.7%	4.9%
Somewhat a barrier (2)	12.3%	0.7%	5.7%
Moderate barrier (3)	15.1%	30.2%	23.7%
Extreme barrier (4)	62.3%	68.3%	65.7%
Total	100	100	100
Mean Score	3.29	3.66	3.50

Qualitative feedback revealed that many citizens, especially in rural and low-literacy areas, are unaware of free legal aid services, referral centers (e.g., SARCs), or civil society support structures that provide justice assistance. This lack of awareness often leads people to resolve disputes informally or avoid seeking justice altogether, particularly in cases involving gender-based violence (GBV) or land/property disputes.

Limited awareness and poor dissemination of information about available justice services significantly reduce citizens’ ability to exercise their legal rights. The findings underscore the need for:

- Legal awareness campaigns tailored to rural communities and marginalized groups.
- Use of local languages, radio, and religious/community platforms for public sensitization.
- Stronger visibility and outreach by legal aid organizations and justice institutions.
- Integration of justice education into community and faith-based engagement programs.

4.5.4. Lack of Trust in the System

The findings reveal that lack of trust in the justice system is a substantial barrier to accessing justice in both Kano and Sokoto States. Overall, 79.4% of respondents identified moderate or extreme distrust as a major obstacle. The issue is slightly more pronounced in Sokoto (Mean = 3.24) than in Kano (Mean = 3.03), reflecting citizens' perceptions of bias, inefficiency, corruption, or lack of transparency within justice institutions.

Table 26: Percentage Distribution of Respondents Who Perceive Lack of Trust in the Justice System as a Barrier, by State

Perception Level	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Not a barrier (1)	12.4%	2.2%	6.6%
Somewhat a barrier (2)	21.0%	8.7%	14.0%
Moderate barrier (3)	18.1%	47.8%	35.0%
Extreme barrier (4)	46.6%	41.3%	44.4%
Total	100	100	100
Mean Score	3.03	3.28	3.17

Respondents expressed low confidence in fair treatment, particularly from police and court officials, citing delays, perceived favoritism, and political or religious influence as key concerns. Qualitative insights further highlight that women and low-income respondents are less likely to trust the system due to past negative experiences or lack of visible accountability mechanisms.

In summary, trust is a foundational element of justice access. The results underscore that citizens' skepticism toward formal justice institutions remains a key deterrent to seeking legal redress. Many prefer community or traditional leaders - perceived as more approachable and impartial - for dispute resolution.

As stated by a respondent, formal justice institutions are not trusted by community members. As stated earlier, many opt for a non-conventional justice system.

“More accessible, more trusted. If the conventional system can work effectively without delay, it's the best. But in the event where your right has been denied, it takes you prolonged justice over a year. So, the non-conventional is the best. But our own you know it can go beyond two days. We have delivered the judgment to everyone” [007-KII-TL-SO-October-2025].

“The respondent explained that the most common justice mechanism in the community is the District Head's Palace, which also serves as the office of the CDC Chairman. Most cases are first reported there before being referred to the police or other security agencies when necessary. She noted that community members have strong trust in local leaders” [008-KII-CDC GBV MEM-KA-October-2025].

To rebuild public confidence, it is essential for Global Rights to consider the following in their interventions:

- Strengthen transparency, accountability, and ethics within justice institutions.
- Improve case handling efficiency and ensure timely resolutions.
- Promote citizen engagement and feedback mechanisms to increase institutional responsiveness.
- Build stronger collaboration between formal and community-based justice systems to enhance

4.5.5. Negative/Unfriendly Attitude/Distrust of Service Providers

The results indicate that negative or unfriendly attitudes from service providers such as police officers, court staff, or legal aid personnel posed a notable barrier to justice access across both states. Overall, 72.8% of respondents rated this factor as either a moderate or extreme barrier, pointing to widespread concerns about rudeness, insensitivity, or bias in the treatment of justice seekers.

The challenge appears more significant in Sokoto (Mean = 3.27) than in Kano (Mean = 2.52), suggesting deeper trust and interpersonal issues between justice institutions and community members in Sokoto.

Table 27: Percentage Distribution of Respondents Who Perceive Negative or Unfriendly Attitude of Service Providers as a Barrier, by State

Perception Level	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Not a barrier (1)	12.6%	1.5%	6.2%
Somewhat a barrier (2)	28.8%	15.4%	20.9%
Moderate barrier (3)	53.7%	37.7%	44.4%
Extreme barrier (4)	5.3%	45.4%	28.4%
Total	100	100	100
Mean Score	2.52	3.27	2.95

Respondents, particularly women and survivors of GBV, cited intimidation, lack of empathy, and dismissive behavior from service providers as key deterrents to reporting cases or pursuing justice. Such experiences not only discourage the use of formal justice systems but also reinforce reliance on informal and traditional mechanisms perceived as more approachable.

Negative attitudes and unprofessional conduct among justice actors erode public confidence and discourage case reporting, especially in sensitive matters like gender-based violence or family disputes. Building a more respectful, survivor-centered, and citizen-responsive justice culture is therefore crucial. To address this barrier, Global Rights and its partners should consider the following programming implications and suggestions:

- Institutionalize customer service and human rights training for police, court staff, and legal aid officers.

- Promote accountability and feedback mechanisms, such as complaint desks or community scorecards.
- Encourage gender-sensitive and survivor-centered approaches to service delivery.
- Recognize and reward ethical behavior among justice actors to strengthen morale and public trust.

Some detainees expressed dissatisfaction with the way they were treated within the cell. This made them lose trust in the police and formal justice system.

“Another challenge is the way they treated us in the cell. They will not even allow you to ease yourself without wasting our time. They don’t respect us as human beings. For over 2 days, we did not observe our five daily prayers because they will not allow us and if you ask, they will humiliate you” [010-KII-DET-SO-October-2025].

4.5.6. Cultural/Religious Restrictions

The findings show that cultural and religious restrictions present a moderate but significant barrier to justice access in both Kano and Sokoto States, particularly among women and vulnerable groups. Overall, 53.7% of respondents identified this as either a moderate or extreme barrier. The challenge appears more pronounced in Sokoto (Mean = 3.26) than in Kano (Mean = 1.66), reflecting stronger traditional and religious norms that can limit women’s mobility, decision-making autonomy, and willingness to engage with formal justice institutions.

Qualitative insights revealed that in many communities, social expectations discourage women from reporting family disputes or gender-based violence, often prioritizing reconciliation or silence over formal complaint processes. Similarly, religious interpretations and cultural pressure sometimes influence perceptions of fairness or appropriateness of seeking external justice intervention.

Table 28: Percentage Distribution of Respondents Who Perceive Cultural or Religious Restrictions as a Barrier, by State

Perception Level	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Not a barrier (1)	58.8%	2.2%	26.3%
Somewhat a barrier (2)	22.5%	18.1%	20.0%
Moderate barrier (3)	12.7%	31.2%	23.3%
Extreme barrier (4)	5.9%	48.6%	30.4%
Total	100	100	100
Mean Score	1.66	3.26	2.58

Cultural and religious norms significantly shape justice-seeking behavior in both states. While these norms provide valuable moral frameworks, they can also reinforce patriarchal systems and restrict equitable access to justice – especially for women, youth, and marginalized populations. Efforts to enhance justice

access must therefore respect cultural and religious sensitivities while promoting rights-based, gender-sensitive engagement that empowers all citizens to seek redress when rights are violated.

Cultural, traditional, and religious norms hampered access to justice, especially for marginalized populations.

“Social and cultural norms—such as gender bias, stigma against survivors of violence, and pressure to settle cases privately—further discourage women and girls from seeking formal redress” [006-KII-CSO-KA-October-2025].

“Yeah, partly they could, because there are some cultures that also put up barriers within them and other cultures and other climes. They feel we and these particular people are not really in good terms. We don't see things the same, so there's no need going there” [004-KII-RL-SO-October-2025].

Programming Implications and Recommendations

- Engage religious and traditional leaders as champions for equitable access to justice and gender sensitivity.
- Integrate cultural and faith-based approaches into legal awareness campaigns to increase acceptance.
- Support community dialogues that balance cultural values with constitutional and human rights principles.
- Strengthen women's and youth participation in community justice and decision-making processes.

4.5.7. Corruption/Delay in the System

The data reveal that corruption and delays within the justice system are among the most serious barriers faced by respondents in both Kano and Sokoto States. Overall, 76% of respondents rated corruption and systemic delay as a moderate or extreme barrier, highlighting widespread public concern about fairness, transparency, and efficiency in formal justice processes.

Respondents in Sokoto (Mean = 3.46) expressed notably higher dissatisfaction compared to Kano (Mean = 2.82), suggesting that experiences of delayed case resolution, perceived bribery, and procedural complexity are particularly acute in that state.

Qualitative data further underscore perceptions that justice often favors those with resources or influence, discouraging ordinary citizens – especially women, youth, and rural dwellers – from pursuing formal legal redress. Respondents also cited lengthy court procedures and bureaucratic bottlenecks as factors undermining trust in formal justice institutions.

“Firstly, I never find myself in that situation before, because I thought there is justice in our security agency but unfortunately when I found myself in the situation, I realized that the justice system in Nigeria is corrupted and there are challenges not only for the citizen but including the

security personal. Because they don't consider what happen coincident and what happen intentionally but they are not taking care of you. I heard them how they are discussing with their boss on the issue of women. When they realized I heard them, the boss instructed them to take me back to the cell. I said what about my feeding money, he said they will not give me. And food was brought to me since 2:00pm but they didn't give it to me till around asar prayer" [008-KII-DET-SO-October-2025]

Table 29: Percentage Distribution of Respondents Who Perceive Corruption/Delay in the System as a Barrier to Accessing Justice, by State

Perception Level	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Not a barrier (1)	21.7%	1.5%	10.4%
Somewhat a barrier (2)	17.9%	10.4%	13.7%
Moderate barrier (3)	17.0%	28.9%	23.7%
Extreme barrier (4)	43.4%	59.3%	52.3%
Total	100	100	100
Mean Score	2.82	3.46	3.18

4.5.8. Fear of Reporting the Offender

The data show that fear of reporting offenders was a significant barrier to justice access in both Kano and Sokoto States, with 74.4% of respondents rating it as a moderate or extreme barrier. In Sokoto, significantly more respondents (55.5%) considered it an extreme barrier compared to Kano (7.6%), suggesting stronger cultural and social pressures that discourage public complaints or formal reporting. This fear was often tied to threats of reprisal, social stigma, and mistrust in confidentiality when dealing with authorities such as the police or courts. Women and survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), in particular, were identified as more vulnerable to intimidation and community backlash when they attempt to report cases.

Table 30: Percentage Distribution of Respondents Who Perceive Fear of Reporting the Offender as a Barrier to Accessing Justice, by State

Perception Level	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Not a barrier (1)	19.0%	0.7%	8.7%
Somewhat a barrier (2)	27.6%	8.8%	16.9%
Moderate barrier (3)	45.7%	35.0%	39.7%
Extreme barrier (4)	7.6%	55.5%	34.7%
Total	100	100	100
Mean Score	2.42	3.45	3.00

Qualitative responses also indicate that perceived collusion between offenders and local authorities further discourages victims from pursuing justice. Fear of reporting offenders reflects both safety concerns and social dynamics that limit victims' ability to seek justice. This barrier has a psychological and cultural dimension, often intertwined with weak protection systems and limited awareness of survivors' rights. Global Rights should aim to strengthen survivor protection mechanisms (e.g., witness protection, confidential reporting channels) and engage community and religious leaders to address stigma and normalize justice-seeking behaviors.

4.5.9. Fear of Stigma/Reprisal

The baseline data indicate that fear of stigma or reprisal was a major psychosocial and cultural barrier limiting access to justice in both Kano and Sokoto States. Overall, 73.7% of respondents identified it as a moderate or extreme barrier, showing that concerns about social labeling, victim-blaming, or retaliation are widespread. The problem appears notably more pronounced in Sokoto (Mean = 3.51), reflecting deeper community conservatism and social cohesion norms that discourage public disclosure of disputes or offenses – especially those related to GBV or family conflicts.

Table 31: Percentage Distribution of Respondents Who Perceive Fear of Stigma/Reprisal as a Barrier to Accessing Justice, by State

Perception Level	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Not a barrier (1)	26.2%	0.7%	11.9%
Somewhat a barrier (2)	23.4%	7.4%	14.4%
Moderate barrier (3)	3.7%	32.4%	19.8%
Extreme barrier (4)	46.7%	59.6%	53.9%
Total	100	100	100
Mean Score	2.71	3.51	3.16

Qualitative interviews further revealed that survivors of violence, particularly women and youth, often fear community backlash or being ostracized if they pursue formal justice. The absence of effective witness protection systems and confidential reporting procedures intensifies this fear, resulting in underreporting and impunity for offenders.

Stigma and fear of retaliation were also identified as significant barriers preventing individuals, particularly women, from accessing justice and obtaining the judgments they believe they deserve.

“The one stigma. Stigma will deprive a lady from demanding her right through the justice system. And also, ignorance again. And all of that is also denied. And as well also, the poverty is another trigger. And sometimes there is also political intimidation” [007-KII-TL-SO-October-2025].

“From some other people, the big wing, they will tell you, if you do this, because fear of threat or other jungle justice, you also have to compromise. So, this is what I think” [007-KII-TL-SO-October-2025].

Summary of Barriers to Accessing Justice by Mean Severity Score and Rank

Across both states, barriers to accessing justice are multidimensional, combining economic, institutional, and sociocultural factors. The data show that citizens face a complex web of deterrents that limit their ability and confidence to pursue justice through formal channels. Table 32 below shows a composite summary and ranking table of all major barriers to accessing justice as captured in the baseline findings. The ranking highlights that lack of awareness of existing services, financial cost, corruption and systemic delay, lack of trust in the system, and fear of stigma or reprisal are perceived as the top 5 most critical barriers to justice in both Kano and Sokoto States.

- **Lack of awareness of existing services (Mean = 3.50)** emerged as the top barrier, reflecting the findings that many citizens are unaware of existing justice mechanisms, such as legal aid services or referral centers (SARCs), which limits their ability to seek redress.
- **Financial cost (Mean = 3.49):** High cost of legal services and court fees, transport costs, and inability to afford legal representation remain the most critical hindrances, particularly among low-income groups and rural dwellers.
- **Corruption and procedural delays (Mean = 3.18)** were widely cited as discouraging factors that reduce public trust in the formal justice system.
- **Lack of trust in system (Mean = 3.17):** Distrust in justice institutions continues to discourage engagement with formal systems due to perceptions of bias, corruption, and inefficiency.
- **Fear of stigma or reprisal (Mean = 3.0)** underscores the social and psychological pressures that prevent victims – especially of GBV – from seeking redress.

Sokoto consistently recorded higher mean scores across all barriers, suggesting relatively greater access challenges compared to Kano.

Table 32: Summary of Barriers to Accessing Justice by Mean Severity Score and Rank

Barrier to Accessing Justice	Kano (Mean Score)	Sokoto (Mean Score)	Overall Mean	Severity Ranking (Overall)
Lack of awareness of existing services	3.29	3.66	3.50	1
Financial barrier (Cost/fees)	3.15	3.74	3.49	2
Corruption/delay in the system	2.82	3.46	3.18	3
Lack of trust in the system	3.03	3.28	3.17	4
Fear of stigma/reprisal	2.71	3.51	3.16	5
Fear of reporting the offender	2.42	3.45	3.00	6
Difficulty in accessing services	2.43	3.41	2.99	7
Negative/ unfriendly attitude/ distrust of service providers	2.52	3.27	2.95	8
Cultural/religious restrictions	1.66	3.26	2.58	9

Source: Baseline Assessment on Access to Justice in Kano and Sokoto States, 2025

4.6. Perceptions and Experiences of Justice Among Detainees

This section presents findings from respondents who reported having been arrested or detained at any point. The analysis explores their experiences and perceptions of justice within detention facilities in Kano and Sokoto States, focusing on due process, access to legal and medical support, and treatment by authorities.

4.6.1. Incidence of Arrest or Detention

Across both states, a small but notable proportion of respondents (about 15.1%) indicated that they had been arrested or detained. The rate was marginally higher in Sokoto than in Kano, suggesting slightly more frequent interaction with law enforcement in Sokoto State. This figure points to a meaningful subset of citizens with direct experience of the justice system and its procedures.

Table 33: Percentage Distribution of Respondents Who Have Ever Been Arrested or Detained, by State

Arrested/Detained Response	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Yes	14.2%	16.2%	15.2%
No	85.8%	83.8%	84.8%
Total	100	100	100

Source: Baseline Assessment on Access to Justice in Kano and Sokoto States, 2025

4.6.2. Awareness of Reason for Arrest or Detention Among Detainees

Among those detained, findings revealed significant gaps in adherence to due process. The results show that less than half (37.7%) of detainees across both states reported being promptly informed of the reason for their arrest or detention, while 49% said they were not informed. A small proportion of respondents (13.2%) indicated that they were not sure. A significantly higher proportion of detainees in Sokoto (62.5%) reported being informed compared to Kano (17.2%), indicating modest variation in law enforcement communication practices between the two states. The finding suggests inconsistent adherence to due process and human rights standards, particularly the constitutional right to be informed of the reason for arrest. The 13.2% of respondents who were unsure may reflect poor understanding of legal rights or communication barriers during arrest (e.g., language, intimidation, or confusion).

Table 34: Awareness of Reason for Arrest or Detention Among Detainees by State

Response	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Yes	17.2%	62.5%	37.7%
No	58.6%	37.5%	49.1%
Not sure	24.1%	0.0%	13.2%
Total	100	100	100

Source: Baseline Assessment on Access to Justice in Kano and Sokoto States, 2025

Failure to promptly inform detainees of the reason for their arrest is a significant due process concern, undermining transparency, accountability, and fair hearing principles within the justice system. This gap may contribute to mistrust of law enforcement, prolonged detentions without charge, and heightened perceptions of injustice, especially among vulnerable populations.

One participant during FGDs has this to say about due process:

“Yes. I can. I am keke napep rider. One day I was in a hurry and rushed to take something; on my way I met one accident. An okada man hit one elderly person. I waited to check what happen, in that process the Okada man run away and leave me and all the people assume that I am the one hit the old man. I explained to them that I am not the one but they said I am the one. I take the responsibility of taking him to the chemist for his treatment but still they take me to security agency, and our security agents are not honest now. After all the treatment he received, but still they said that I will be retained for two days in the cell. They will not grant me bail. I don’t know the reason but maybe is because his children has something” [008-KII-DET-SO-October-2025]

Programming implications for Global Rights:

- Consider enhancing police training on rights-based arrest and detention procedures, emphasizing legal obligations to inform detainees immediately of the reason for arrest.
- Consider developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) and monitoring frameworks for police stations in both states to ensure compliance.
- Raise public awareness about legal rights at the point of arrest, using community outreach and legal literacy campaigns.
- Integrate oversight mechanisms, including community policing and human rights desk officers, to promote accountability in detention practices.

4.6.3. Access to Family or Legal Representation During Detention

The baseline results indicate that 57.4% of detainees across both Kano and Sokoto States were allowed to contact a family member or lawyer during detention. In Sokoto, 62.5% reported having such access, compared to 53.3% in Kano, suggesting slightly better observance of detainees’ rights in Sokoto. However, almost half of respondents (42.6%) said they were not allowed to contact anyone, showing widespread violations of due process and detainee rights.

Table 35: Percentage Distribution of Detainees Allowed to Contact a Family Member or Lawyer, by State

Response	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Yes	53.3%	62.5%	57.4%
No	46.7%	37.5%	42.6%
Total	100	100	100

Source: Baseline Assessment on Access to Justice in Kano and Sokoto States, 2025

This finding highlights systemic weaknesses in upholding constitutional guarantees, particularly the right of arrested persons to notify a family member, lawyer, or other relevant person about their detention – a crucial safeguard against abuse and arbitrary detention. Restricted communication during detention heightens vulnerability to human rights violations, such as incommunicado detention, coercion, or unlawful extortion. It also contributes to mistrust between communities and law enforcement, especially when family members are unaware of a detainee’s whereabouts or legal situation. Global Rights should therefore aim to ensure full compliance with the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) provisions mandating detainees’ right to legal counsel and family contact. Programming interventions should also aim to build the capacity of police officers and custodial staff on detainee rights and humane procedures.

4.6.4. Timeliness of Arraignment Before a Judge or Magistrate

Findings reveal that only 24.1% of detainees reported being brought before a judge or magistrate within the legally required time frame. Sokoto (29.2%) performed slightly better than Kano (20.0%), but both states show low compliance with legal safeguards on timely arraignment. A significant 57.4% of respondents indicated they were not taken to court promptly, suggesting potential violations of the constitutional 48-hour rule under Section 35(4) of the Nigerian Constitution and the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA). The 18.5% who were unsure reflect poor awareness of detainee rights or lack of clarity in legal procedures during detention.

Table 36: Percentage Distribution of Detainees Taken Before a Judge/Magistrate Within the Legally Required Time, by State

Response	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Yes	20.0%	29.2%	24.1%
No	46.7%	70.8%	57.4%
Not Sure	33.3%	0.0%	18.5%
Total	100	100	100

Source: Baseline Assessment on Access to Justice in Kano and Sokoto States, 2025

These results indicate that many detainees may be held beyond the lawful period, exposing them to prolonged pretrial detention, abuse, or coercive interrogation without judicial oversight. The low rate of timely arraignment highlights systemic delays in criminal justice administration and the weak enforcement of detainees’ rights. Prolonged detention without judicial review undermines due process, fair hearing, and public trust in justice institutions. Global Rights and partners should therefore ensure that capacity building for police officers and prosecutors on case management and detainee rights is integrated into programming interventions. Also important is the need for public legal awareness campaigns to educate citizens on their right to prompt arraignment.

4.6.5. Duration of Detention Before Arraignment in Court

Findings show that only about one-fifth (20.8%) of respondents were detained for less than 48 hours before being taken to court – the timeframe stipulated by Nigerian law (Section 35(4) of the 1999

Constitution and the Administration of Criminal Justice Act). About 16.9% indicated that they were detained for periods exceeding 48 hours, including 7.5% held between 2–7 days and 9.4% for over a week, indicating systemic delays in arraignment. A concerning 62.3% reported never being taken to court, suggesting potential cases of unlawful detention or rights violations. Sokoto recorded significantly higher compliance (37.5% within 48 hours) compared to Kano (6.9%), but both states show significant deviations from the legal standard.

Table 37: Percentage Distribution of Duration of Detention Before Arraignment, by State

Duration of Detention	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Less than 48 hours	6.9%	37.5%	20.8%
2–7 days	10.3%	4.2%	7.5%
More than a week	0.0%	20.8%	9.4%
Never taken to court	82.8%	37.5%	62.3%
Total	100	100	100

Source: Baseline Assessment on Access to Justice in Kano and Sokoto States, 2025

These results suggest persistent procedural delays and possible infringements on detainees’ rights to timely judicial review and fair trial. The prolonged detention of suspects without arraignment reflects weak enforcement of criminal justice safeguards and poor oversight of detention facilities. It also signals limited awareness of detainee rights among both citizens and law enforcement personnel.

4.6.6. Access to Welfare and Medical Care During Detention

Only 2 out of 9 detained respondents (17.9%) reported having access to medical care during their detention, according to the analysis. A significant 82.1% indicated they did not have access. Access to medical care was slightly higher in Kano (28.1%) than in Sokoto (4.2%).

Table 38: Percentage Distribution of Detainees with Access to Medical Care, by State

Access to Medical Care	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Yes	28.1%	4.2%	17.9%
No	71.9%	95.8%	82.1%
Total	100	100	100

Source: Baseline Assessment on Access to Justice in Kano and Sokoto States, 2025

This finding suggests gaps in detainee welfare and health management within detention facilities in both states. The limited access to health services contravenes international human rights standards and Nigeria’s Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) provisions requiring humane treatment of detainees.

4.6.7. Experience or Witnessing of Mistreatment by Authorities During Detention

Overall, 10.7% of respondents who had been detained reported that they experienced or witnessed mistreatment – including verbal abuse, physical assault, intimidation, or denial of basic rights – while in custody. Reports of mistreatment were slightly higher in Sokoto (20.8%) than in Kano (3.1%), suggesting a marginally higher level of concern in Sokoto’s detention facilities. About 89.3% said they did not experience or witness any form of abuse.

Table 39: Experience or Witnessing of Mistreatment by Authorities During Detention

Mistreatment by Authorities	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Yes	3.1%	20.8%	10.7%
No	96.9%	79.2%	89.3%
Total	100	100	100

Source: Baseline Assessment on Access to Justice in Kano and Sokoto States, 2025

These findings indicate that a small proportion of detainees’ face or observe violations of humane treatment standards, pointing to systemic weaknesses in custodial oversight, accountability, and human rights compliance.

Summary of Overall Perceptions and Experiences of Justice Among Detainees

Overall, the experiences of detainees reflect persistent procedural violations, poor conditions of detention, and limited accountability for the treatment of individuals in custody. Many respondents expressed a lack of trust in authorities to handle detention processes fairly, citing corruption, delay, and abuse as recurring challenges.

The findings reveal that while awareness of legal processes is growing, detainee experiences continue to be characterized by rights violations, procedural lapses, and limited access to justice mechanisms. Addressing these systemic weaknesses is crucial to advancing Nigeria’s commitments to human rights protection, accountability, and equitable access to justice.

These findings highlight the urgent need for reforms aimed at strengthening oversight, training law enforcement personnel, and ensuring detainees’ rights to due process, medical care, and humane treatment.

Implications of Findings on Global Rights Programming

- Strengthen enforcement of the 48-hour arraignment rule through routine monitoring by judicial and human rights institutions.
- Institutionalize detainee welfare standards, ensuring access to food, medical care, and family contact.
- Train law enforcement officers on human rights, ethics, and non-coercive interrogation methods.
- Establish independent oversight bodies to monitor detention facilities and investigate reports of abuse.

- Expand legal aid and paralegal services to provide representation and guidance for detainees at early stages of detention.

4.7. Perceptions and Experiences of Justice Among Survivors of GBV

This component of the baseline assessment explores how survivors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) perceive and experience the justice system – including their awareness of rights, access to legal and support services, and satisfaction with responses from formal and informal justice mechanisms. It examines survivors’ interactions with key institutions such as the police, courts, Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs), legal aid providers, community and religious leaders, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs/CSOs). The focus is on identifying barriers survivors face in seeking justice (e.g., stigma, cost, fear of reprisal, or weak institutional response), as well as factors that enable reporting, protection, and redress.

4.7.1. Prevalence of Reported Physical or Sexual Violence Among Respondents (Past 2 Years)

The analysis shows that approximately one in seven respondents (14.0%) reported experiencing physical or sexual violence in the two years preceding the baseline survey. The prevalence is slightly higher in Sokoto (16.9%) compared to Kano (11.7%), suggesting marginally more exposure to GBV in Sokoto State. The majority (86.0%) did not report any such experience, though this may not necessarily indicate absence of violence – given possible underreporting due to stigma, fear of reprisal, or normalization of violence within communities. These findings underscore that GBV remains a significant concern in both states, reflecting broader gender inequalities and limited protection mechanisms for survivors.

Table 40: Percentage Distribution of Respondents Who Experienced Physical or Sexual Violence, by State

Experience of Violence	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Total (%)
Yes	11.7%	16.9%	14.0%
No	88.3%	83.1%	86.0%
Total	100	100	100

Source: Baseline Assessment on Access to Justice in Kano and Sokoto States, 2025

4.7.2. Reporting of Gender-Based Violence Incidents Among Survivors

Findings reveal that about half (50%) of respondents who experienced physical or sexual violence in the past two years reported the incident to anyone. Reporting rates were slightly higher in Sokoto (100%) compared to Kano (27.4%), but in both states, the majority of survivors (around 50%) did not disclose or report their experience. This pattern suggests low confidence in existing justice and support systems, coupled with cultural stigma, fear of reprisal, or lack of awareness about available reporting and referral mechanisms.

Table 41: Percentage Distribution of GBV Survivors Who Reported the Incident, by State

Experience of Violence	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Total (%)
Yes	27.6%	100%	50.0%
No	72.4%	0.0%	50.0%
Total	100	100	100

Source: Baseline Assessment on Access to Justice in Kano and Sokoto States, 2025

Underreporting of GBV incidents remains a critical barrier to justice and protection for survivors.

Most survivors confide in a trusted person (sister, mother, religious leader) before considering formal avenues. Fear of stigma, family pressure and concerns for children frequently prevent formal reporting. CSOs and SARC provide avenues but survivors may avoid highly visible services due to fear of identification.

“the person that I spoke to was my sister... I feel sharing your pain will lessen what you are feeling.” — 009-KII-SGBV SUV-SO-October-2025

“I spoke with my mother, after she noticed unusual changes in me and began questioning me” - 007-KII-GBV SUV-KA-October-2025

4.7.3. Institutions or Individuals to Whom GBV Incidents Were Reported

Among those who reported GBV incidents, the most common reporting channel was family (48.8%), followed by the police (36.6%), while only 19.5% sought help from health facilities. This pattern shows that informal and family-based reporting is the predominant response in both Kano and Sokoto, reflecting survivors' preference for privacy, safety, and social acceptance over engagement with formal institutions. Reporting to traditional (24.4%) and religious leaders (7.3%) remains limited but notable, especially where survivors seek mediation or moral support rather than legal redress. Formal channels such as police and NGOs remain underutilized, likely due to low trust, fear of secondary victimization, stigma, and limited awareness of survivor services.

Table 42: Percentage Distribution of Reporting Channels Used by Survivors of GBV, by State

Reporting Channel	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Police	39.3%	30.8%	36.6%
Health facility	17.9%	23.1%	19.5%
Family	57.1%	30.8%	48.8%
Traditional leader	21.4%	30.8%	24.4%
Religious leader	10.7%	0.0%	7.3%

Overall, the finding reveals that GBV reporting largely occurs within personal or community networks, not through the formal justice system. Survivors tend to approach family or traditional leaders before

seeking institutional support, highlighting a critical gap between community structures and formal justice actors. Improving coordination between these systems – and making formal channels more survivor-centered – is essential to strengthening justice access for GBV survivors.

4.7.4. Level of Satisfaction with Services Received by GBV Survivors (Medical, Legal, or Psychosocial Support)

Overall, 50% of GBV survivors expressed satisfaction (either “satisfied” or “very satisfied”) with the response received from medical, legal, or psychosocial service providers. However, 28.9% reported dissatisfaction, and 21.1% remained neutral. Survivors in Sokoto (61.5%) appeared moderately more satisfied than those in Kano (44%), suggesting possible differences in service availability or quality across the states. High dissatisfaction rates point to gaps in survivor-centered service delivery, such as long response times, limited confidentiality, or lack of follow-up support. The moderate neutrality rate (19%) may indicate limited expectations or incomplete understanding of available services.

Table 43: Percentage Distribution of Satisfaction Levels Among GBV Survivors, by State

Satisfaction Level	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Very dissatisfied	8.0%	15.4%	10.5%
Dissatisfied	20.0%	15.4%	18.4%
Neither	28.0%	7.7%	21.1%
Satisfied	40.0%	61.5%	47.4%
Very satisfied	4.0%	0.0%	2.6%
Total	100	100	100

Although some survivors reported positive experiences, a significant proportion still feel underserved or dissatisfied. This suggests that access alone is not enough – survivors also need quality, empathy, and accountability in service delivery. Satisfaction levels are key indicators of trust in formal systems, and low satisfaction often correlates with reduced willingness to report future incidents.

4.7.5. Access to Legal Protection Mechanisms Among GBV Survivors

Findings from the baseline reveal that 42.9% of GBV survivors reported receiving any form of legal protection, such as a restraining order or prosecution of the offender. Survivors in Sokoto (53.8%) had slightly higher access compared to Kano (37.9%), possibly reflecting stronger institutional collaboration or more active NGO/legal aid involvement in Sokoto. The majority (57.1%) did not receive legal protection, suggesting that justice mechanisms for survivors remain weak, inaccessible, or underutilized.

Table 44: Percentage Distribution of GBV Survivors Who Received Legal Protection, by State

Response	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Yes	37.9%	53.8%	42.9%
No	62.1%	46.2%	57.1%

Total	100	100	100
--------------	------------	------------	------------

The relatively low proportion of survivors receiving legal protection highlights a significant gap in the enforcement of GBV-related laws and survivor safety mechanisms. This gap undermines confidence in formal justice systems and increases the risk of repeat victimization.

4.7.6. Reasons for Non-Reporting of GBV Incidents Among Survivors

Findings from the baseline reveal that a significant number of GBV survivors did not report their experiences due to family pressure (56.3%), lack of trust in authorities (50.0%), fear of stigma or reprisal (21.9%), and limited awareness of available services (15.6%). Other barriers included fear of retaliation (15.6%), and cost of services (15.6%). These results highlight the interplay between social norms, institutional weaknesses, and accessibility constraints that discourage survivors from seeking justice.

Table 45: Percentage Distribution of Reasons for Non-Reporting, by State

Reason for Non-Reporting	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Fear of reprisal/stigma	18.5%	40.0%	21.9%
Family pressure	51.9%	80.0%	56.3%
Fear of retaliation	3.7%	80.05	15.6%
Lack of trust in authorities	59.3%	0.0%	50.0%
Cost of services	18.5%	0.0%	15.6%
Lack of awareness of where to go	14.8%	20.0%	15.6%
Other	0.0%	20.0%	3.1%
Total respondents (n)	100	100	100

The pervasive culture of silence and fear of negative community reactions continues to hinder timely reporting, thereby limiting accountability for perpetrators and reducing survivors' access to justice and protection.

Both quantitative and qualitative findings converge on the conclusion that social pressures and fear-based dynamics remain central barriers to GBV reporting. Qualitative narratives emphasized that survivors often avoid formal justice pathways due to shame, stigma, fear of losing custody of children, family and community pressure to reconcile, and the perception that traditional leaders will advise returning to the marriage.

“it’s not something you just go and tell... because there is this gap between our parents... we can just go and tell them about our sexual life.” — 009-KII-SGBV SUV-SO-October-2025

4.7.7. Types of Support Received by GBV Survivors After the Incident

Overall, 33.3% of survivors of GBV reported receiving some form of medical or psychosocial support following the incident, while 61.5% did not receive any assistance. Survivors in Sokoto (45.5%) were moderately more likely to have accessed support services compared to those in Kano (28.5%), potentially reflecting better coordination between health facilities, NGOs, and referral mechanisms in Sokoto. The low overall access rate suggests insufficient coverage, limited awareness, or logistical barriers that prevent survivors from seeking timely care. Many survivors may face fear of stigma, confidentiality concerns, or a lack of survivor-friendly services at local facilities.

Table 46: Percentage Distribution of GBV Survivors by Type of Support Received, by State

Type of Support Received	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Medical support only	21.4%	45.5%	28.2%
Psychosocial support only	7.1%	0.0%	5.1%
Both medical and psychosocial support	3.6%	9.1%	5.1%
None	67.9%	45.5%	61.5%
Total	100	100	100

While the baseline shows some evidence of some access to post-GBV care, most survivors in both states remain underserved. Survivor-centered services are often urban-based, and referral pathways between police, health, and psychosocial actors are inconsistent or poorly communicated. The findings reinforce the need to strengthen service integration and ensure timely, confidential, and holistic support for GBV survivors.

4.7.8. Awareness of Confidential GBV Support Services Among Respondents

The findings reveal that only slightly above half (56.6%) of respondents are aware of any service providers offering confidential GBV support, while 43.4% lack such awareness. Awareness levels are higher in Kano (59.4%) compared to Sokoto (41.7%), suggesting that outreach and sensitization efforts may be more active or visible in Sokoto. The relatively low overall awareness indicates a significant information and communication gap between GBV service providers and community members. This limited awareness reduces survivors' ability to seek help promptly and may contribute to underreporting and continued exposure to abuse.

Table 47: Percentage Distribution of Respondents Who Know Services Providing Confidential GBV Support, by State

Response	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Yes	59.4%	41.7%	56.6%
No	40.6%	58.3%	43.4%

Total	100	100	100
--------------	------------	------------	------------

When asked to mention the specific support services, the most frequently mentioned specific support service was Human Rights (32%). Other services mentioned included SARC, MSF, Nana Khadija Centre in Specialist, and Nana Khadija GBV Referral Centre.

In line with quantitative findings, some awareness exists of confidential services (SARC, Mabera clinic, local NGOs) but fear of being identified prevents many from using them. Survivors want guaranteed confidentiality and outreach that reduces stigma.

“I just had that there is this place you could go, heard there is one around Mabera clinic... but I’ve never been there, I have not had any contact with them.” — 009-KII-SGBV SUV-SO-October-2025

“We give our contact to the community, so whichever case they have they can call us.” — 012-KII-SARC-SO-October-2025

Summary of Findings: Perceptions and Experiences of GBV Survivors

The findings from the baseline survey revealed that experiences of gender-based violence (GBV) remained a significant concern in the target communities, with a notable proportion of respondents, predominantly women, reporting incidents of physical, sexual, or psychological abuse within the past two years. Despite the prevalence of such experiences, reporting rates remain low, primarily due to fear of stigma, reprisal, and lack of trust in formal justice systems. Among those who did report, the majority turned first to informal networks such as family members or traditional or religious leaders, rather than formal institutions like the police or health facilities. This scenario reflects both cultural norms and limited confidence in the responsiveness and confidentiality of official mechanisms.

A smaller proportion of survivors accessed medical, psychosocial, or legal services following an incident. Satisfaction levels with institutional responses were mixed; while some appreciated the compassion and support received, others cited delays, poor treatment, or lack of follow-up as major shortcomings. Awareness of confidential GBV support services such as legal aid centers, shelters, or referral systems was generally low, indicating a communication and accessibility gap that limits survivors’ ability to seek timely help.

Overall, survivors’ perceptions highlight systemic barriers to justice – including costs, corruption, and weak protection mechanisms—that continue to discourage reporting and reinforce silence around GBV.

4.8. Perception of Inclusivity of Women, Youth & Marginalized Groups

4.8.1. Perception of Women’s Ability to Freely Seek Justice

Overall, the baseline findings indicate that perceptions of women’s freedom to seek justice remain positive across communities in Kano and Sokoto States. About 90% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that

women can freely pursue justice when needed, while a small portion of respondents (10%) expressed varying levels of disagreement.

Table 48: Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Perception that Women Can Freely Seek Justice

Response	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Strongly agree	34.1%	8.0%	20.4%
Agree	62.6%	76.0%	69.6%
Disagree	3.3%	15.0%	9.4%
Strongly disagree	0.0%	1.0%	0.5%
Total	100	100	100

Disaggregation shows that Kano residents (96.7%) were more likely to affirm women's ability to access justice compared to Sokoto (78%), suggesting state-level differences in gender norms, awareness of rights, and the responsiveness of justice institutions. These results underscore the continued influence of patriarchal norms, limited access to gender-responsive legal aid, and fear of stigma or backlash that inhibit women's confidence and actual use of justice systems. Addressing these barriers will require targeted legal awareness efforts, community engagement, and institutional reforms to ensure women can seek justice freely and safely.

4.8.2. Perceptions of Youth Inclusion in Justice Mechanisms

The results show that overall, 81.9% of respondents (agree + strongly agree) believe youth are given equal opportunities to resolve disputes through justice mechanisms, while only 18.1% disagree to varying degrees. A state-level comparison reveals that respondents in Kano (83.1%) slightly expressed higher agreement than those in Sokoto (81%), suggesting that youth in Sokoto may face greater exclusion or limited awareness of available justice options.

Table 49: Perception of Youth Inclusion in Justice Mechanisms by State

Response	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Strongly agree	33.9%	11.5%	22.1%
Agree	49.2%	69.5%	59.8%
Disagree	14.4%	19.1%	16.9%
Strongly disagree	2.5%	0.0%	1.2%
Total	100	100	100

This pattern suggests that youth marginalization remains a challenge, possibly due to limited representation in traditional justice processes, lack of youth-friendly legal services, and perceptions that justice mechanisms are dominated by elders or elites. Promoting youth inclusion in justice delivery – through

awareness programs, youth paralegal training, and community engagement – could improve confidence and participation in formal and informal justice systems.

4.8.3. Perceptions of Fair Treatment of Marginalized Groups in Justice Processes

Findings indicate that 81.8% of respondents (agree + strongly agree) perceive that marginalized groups – such as persons with disabilities and minority groups – are treated fairly in justice processes. In contrast, 18.1% expressed disagreement, suggesting limited perceptions of inequality and bias within the justice system. When disaggregated by state, Kano respondents (87.3%) reported slightly higher perceptions of fairness than those in Sokoto (76.9%), pointing to regional variations in inclusion and justice accessibility.

Table 50: Perception of Fair Treatment of Marginalized Groups in Justice Processes by state

Response	Kano (%)	Sokoto (%)	Overall Total (%)
Strongly agree	44.1%	16.9%	29.8%
Agree	43.2%	60.0%	52.0%
Disagree	10.2%	22.3%	16.5%
Strongly disagree	2.5%	0.8%	1.6%
Total	100	100	100

The data reveal ongoing challenges related to discrimination, lack of disability-friendly justice infrastructure, and limited representation of marginalized groups in community or formal justice settings. These findings emphasize the need for inclusive justice reforms, capacity-building for justice actors on non-discrimination, and awareness programs to promote equitable treatment of all individuals regardless of status or ability.

Summary of Findings: Perception of Inclusivity of Women, Youth, and Marginalized Groups

Overall, the baseline findings reveal mixed perceptions of inclusivity and fairness in access to justice among women, youth, and marginalized populations in Kano and Sokoto States. While some respondents acknowledged progress in community attitudes and justice accessibility, a majority still perceive significant social and institutional barriers that limit equitable participation in justice processes.

About 90% of respondents agreed that women in their communities can freely seek justice when needed, with stronger agreement recorded in Kano (96.7%) than Sokoto (78%). This suggests that gender norms, fear of stigma, and limited availability of gender-sensitive justice services continue to restrict women's confidence and freedom to pursue legal redress.

Similarly, 81.9% of respondents agreed that youth have equal opportunities to resolve disputes, with perceptions again more positive in Kano than in Sokoto. Youth respondents, however noted that justice systems – both formal and traditional – are often dominated by elders, leaving younger people with little voice or representation in dispute resolution.

Perceptions were also modest regarding marginalized groups, such as persons with disabilities and minority groups. About 81.8% of respondents believed these groups are treated fairly in justice processes, while nearly 18% disagreed. Respondents cited bias, lack of accessibility, and discrimination as major obstacles preventing these populations from receiving equal treatment.

These findings collectively indicate that inclusivity gaps remain significant, particularly in Sokoto State, and that existing justice mechanisms may not yet be perceived as fully equitable or responsive. Addressing these disparities will require a multifaceted approach, including community sensitization, institutional training on inclusion and gender equity, legal awareness programs targeting youth and marginalized groups, and investments in accessible and gender-responsive justice services.

5. Capacity and Responsiveness of Justice Sector Actors in Kano and Sokoto States

Findings from the baseline assessment reveal that the justice sector in Kano and Sokoto States comprises a network of formal and informal actors, including the Nigeria Police Force, courts, legal aid providers, social welfare departments, and community-based structures. While these institutions perform essential functions in ensuring justice delivery, their capacity and responsiveness to citizens – particularly women, detainees, survivors, persons with disabilities, and other marginalized groups – remain limited due to institutional, resource, and socio-cultural challenges. Below are some of the findings of the capacity assessment.

5.1. Police

The police remain the most visible entry point for citizens seeking justice. However, across both states, findings indicate that their effectiveness is constrained by limited manpower, poor infrastructure, and inadequate gender-sensitive training. In both Kano and Sokoto, only a few police divisions have functional GBV or human rights desks, mostly located in urban centers. Respondents noted that survivors of violence often face poor case follow-up, lack of confidentiality, delays in investigation, and sometimes requests for unofficial payments. Despite these constraints, there are emerging improvements in responsiveness in divisions where officers have benefited from donor-supported capacity-building initiatives or collaborated with civil society organizations.

Perceptions of the police across all qualitative interview participants were mixed but leaned largely negative. Participants consistently highlighted issues of corruption, delay, intimidation, and insensitivity, particularly in cases involving poor, female, or disabled complainants. Some respondents described being asked for bribes before cases were recorded, while others recounted experiences of arbitrary detention or harassment. However, there were also isolated instances of improved responsiveness, especially when external oversight or NGO intervention occurred. Participants noted that where human rights organizations or traditional leaders were involved, police behavior tended to be more respectful and results more favorable.

Gender and vulnerability played significant roles in shaping experiences: women and PLWDs felt particularly exposed to exploitation or neglect, while some men felt mistrusted or unfairly detained. Despite these challenges, the police remain a primary point of contact for many justice seekers, particularly in urban settings, due to their legal mandate and visibility. Participants repeatedly called for police reform, training on human rights, and stronger monitoring to curb corruption and improve accountability. The underlying sentiment was that the police are necessary but not trusted — a critical bottleneck in the justice delivery chain.

“The police sometimes delay, but elders solve quickly.” — 008-FGD-YFG-KA-October-2025

“I was treated unfairly by police officers — unjustly detained and maltreated for a day and a half until I called a judge.” — 009-FGD-PLWDs-SO-October-2025

“They asked me to bring money before they write it down.” — 005-FGD-PLWDs-KA-October-2025

“If NGOs follow the case, police behave well.” — 002-FGD-AMG-SO-October-2025

“Police don’t treat poor people well; if you have no money, your case will die there.” — 001-FGD-AMG-KA-October-2025

“Some police officers harass women before helping them.” — 003-FGD-YFG-SO-October-2025

5.2. Courts

The formal court system in both states includes Magistrate, Sharia, and High Courts. The baseline findings show that case backlogs, inadequate personnel, and infrastructural gaps continue to undermine access to timely justice. Respondents highlighted that many citizens, particularly in rural communities, have to travel long distances to access formal courts, often incurring high transportation and filing costs. Although judicial officers demonstrate professional commitment, prolonged case processing, weak legal aid representation, and manual case management systems limit efficiency. Sharia courts are relatively more accessible, especially for civil and family matters, but respondents raised concerns about gender bias and inconsistent adherence to procedural fairness.

Overall, the court system is viewed as legitimate but highly inaccessible. Participants concurred that the courts embody the official locus of justice; however, their remoteness, expenses, procedural delays, and intricacy render them impractical for the majority of community members. Respondents described court processes as slow and bureaucratic, often requiring multiple appearances that are costly and time-consuming. For rural residents and PLWDs, transportation and mobility barriers further limit access. As a result, only serious or escalated cases (e.g., murder, rape, property disputes) tend to reach the courts, while everyday conflicts are resolved through traditional means. There was a unanimous call for expedited case handling and clearer communication of court procedures. Some participants also suggested that courts establish local outreach or mobile sittings to improve accessibility, especially for women, youth, and persons with disabilities.

5.3. Legal Aid and Pro Bono Services

The availability of legal aid services is limited in both Kano and Sokoto States. The Legal Aid Council of Nigeria (LACoN) maintains offices in the two states but with insufficient staff, funding, and logistics to extend services beyond urban areas. Respondents also noted that awareness of LACoN’s services is low among the general population. Civil society groups, such as FIDA, the Nigerian Bar Association’s (NBA) pro bono committees, and faith-based organizations, complement these efforts, though their reach remains uneven. The study found a lack of a coordinated referral or case tracking system, which results in fragmentation and duplication among service providers.

All qualitative interviews consistently recognized NGOs and human rights groups as the most accessible and responsive justice actors. These groups offer free legal help, follow-up, advocacy, and psychosocial support, especially for cases of SGBV, domestic violence, and wrongful detention. Participants credited NGOs for improving case outcomes, ensuring fair hearing, and holding authorities accountable. Many participants recommended that the presence of such organizations be scaled up to rural and underserved communities, as most current interventions are concentrated in urban areas.

Notably, several respondents directly linked NGO involvement with better police conduct and faster resolution, emphasizing their role as bridges between citizens and formal institutions. Despite this, awareness of available legal aid services remains uneven, particularly among youth and women in remote areas.

“When NGOs get involved, the case is treated fairly.” — 009-FGD-PLWDs-SO-October-2025

“Human rights groups helped my neighbour get justice.” — 008-FGD-YFG-KA-October-2025

“Without NGO help, many people will just give up.” — 001-FGD-AFG-SO-October-2025

“We want more awareness; some people don’t even know free lawyers exist.” — 001-FGD-AMG-KA-October-2025

5.4. Social Welfare Departments

The social welfare departments under the State Ministries of Women Affairs and Social Development occupy a vital position in providing protection and psychosocial support to vulnerable individuals, including survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), children in conflict with the law, and indigent persons. However, across the states, they are described as understaffed, underfunded, and lacking essential logistics, which hampers their responsiveness. Participants reported that while welfare officers are often the first point of contact for distressed individuals, their interventions are limited by the absence of shelters, vehicles, communication support, and emergency funds. The departments’ ability to coordinate with justice actors such as SARCs, the police, and legal aid providers is inconsistent and largely dependent on personal relationships rather than structured referral frameworks. Respondents called for institutional strengthening, improved budgetary allocation, and stronger collaboration mechanisms to enable social welfare units to deliver holistic, survivor-centred and rights-based services.

“We try our best, but we don’t have the means to follow up on most cases. Sometimes we use our own money to move victims or visit communities.” — Social Welfare Officer, Kano

“There are times we get reports of abuse or GBV, but without logistics or vehicles, we cannot respond immediately.” — Social Welfare Representative, Kano

“We usually link survivors to the SARC for medical examination and counselling, but we still need our own facilities for temporary shelter and welfare support.” — Welfare Officer, Sokoto

5.5. Community-based structures.

Community-based structures such as traditional rulers, religious leaders, women's groups, youth groups, and community associations remain the most trusted and active justice actors at the grassroots. They are approachable, affordable, and culturally aligned, making them the first point of contact in most disputes. Participants highlighted their strength in mediation, awareness creation, and prevention of escalation. Women's groups were particularly valued for providing safe spaces and mobilizing awareness about rights and gender-based violence. However, some participants cautioned that traditional structures can sometimes reinforce gender bias, favoring men in domestic disputes or discouraging women from taking formal action.

Respondents across all FGDs urged stronger coordination between these community actors and formal justice institutions to ensure consistency, fairness, and documentation. They also recommended capacity building and linkage with local government to sustain their efforts and improve case referrals.

“The youth groups should carry out step-down trainings in their community.” — 009-FGD-PLWDs-SO-October-2025

“We report first to the traditional ruler; he knows everyone.” — 001-FGD-AMG-KA-October-2025

“If the matter is big, the community leaders send us to police.” — 003-FGD-YFG-SO-October-2025

Overall Assessment

Overall, findings from the baseline study suggest that the justice sector in Kano and Sokoto States is functionally present but institutionally weak in its ability to deliver equitable, timely, and survivor-centered justice. While there is growing institutional awareness of inclusivity and rights-based justice, significant capacity gaps, inadequate funding, and socio-cultural barriers continue to limit responsiveness. Strengthening coordination across agencies, institutionalizing gender-sensitive and disability-inclusive procedures, expanding access to legal aid, and formalizing referral linkages between community and formal systems will be critical to improving access to justice for marginalized groups.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Across Kano and Sokoto States, participants identified practical measures to improve access to justice and strengthen citizens' confidence in both formal and informal justice systems. While local contexts varied, the recommendations collectively highlight the need for accessibility, awareness, fairness, and institutional collaboration.

Participants consistently emphasized the need to bring justice systems closer to the people, particularly those in rural and underserved communities. They proposed the establishment of more lower courts and the deployment of mobile courts to address minor disputes and cases at the community level. This, they argued, would reduce delays, limit travel costs, and ensure that justice is not restricted to urban populations.

A major cross-cutting recommendation was the intensification of public sensitization and rights awareness. Participants in both states observed that most citizens, especially women, youth, and persons with low literacy levels, are unaware of their rights and available justice-seeking options. They suggested that government agencies, traditional institutions, and civil society organizations should collaborate to organize continuous community outreach, radio programs, and school-based campaigns in local languages to demystify the justice process and encourage reporting of violations.

There was also a strong call to strengthen and regulate informal justice mechanisms—such as traditional rulers and religious leaders who remain the first points of contact for many community members. Participants recommended capacity-building and standardization of informal systems, including training leaders on gender sensitivity, human rights, record-keeping, and fair hearing procedures. This, they argued, would reduce bias and improve coordination with formal justice actors.

Participants also highlighted the need for better collaboration between formal and informal justice systems. They recommended establishing clear referral pathways so that cases beyond the competence of community mediators can be promptly transferred to appropriate authorities, such as the police or the courts, without loss of trust or intimidation of complainants.

Concerns about the conduct and accessibility of the police were widespread. Participants recommend that police personnel should receive training on ethical standards and respectful engagement with vulnerable groups, including women, youths, and persons living with disabilities (PLWDs).

Participants further recommended targeted efforts to improve access to justice for women, youth, and PLWDs. These groups often face social stigma, discrimination, and logistical challenges in pursuing justice. They suggested creating safe reporting spaces, ensuring the presence of female officers at police stations, and promoting inclusive justice delivery mechanisms that accommodate the needs of PLWDs through accessible infrastructure and communication support.

Finally, participants advocated for regular dialogue and collaboration among all justice stakeholders, government agencies, traditional leaders, CSOs, and communities to strengthen trust and accountability in justice delivery. They proposed community-based monitoring and feedback mechanisms to track case outcomes, identify systemic challenges, and sustain citizen engagement in justice reform processes.

6.2. Implications for Programming

Findings from the baseline study suggest that efforts to expand access to justice in Kano and Sokoto States must focus on strengthening institutional capacity, coordination, and inclusivity across both formal and informal justice systems. The identified gaps highlight several key implications for future programming:

- **Capacity Building for Justice Actors:** There is a clear need to enhance the technical and operational capacity of police officers, welfare officers, and judicial staff – particularly in gender sensitivity, survivor-centered procedures, and rights-based case handling. Training should be complemented with standard operating procedures (SOPs) and accountability mechanisms to ensure consistent application.
- **Improved Coordination and Referral Pathways:** The lack of structured coordination among police, courts, welfare departments, and legal aid providers undermines case management efficiency. Programming should support the establishment of multi-sectoral referral frameworks and strengthen collaboration between formal and community-based justice mechanisms to ensure seamless service delivery.
- **Expansion of Legal Aid and Awareness Services:** Since many citizens—especially women, persons with disabilities, and rural dwellers—are unaware of or unable to access legal aid, interventions should increase outreach and awareness, establish mobile legal aid clinics, and leverage faith-based and community structures for rights education and referrals.
- **Engagement with Informal Justice Systems:** Traditional and religious leaders remain central to dispute resolution at the grassroots. Programs should therefore build their capacity on human rights, gender equality, and conflict-sensitive mediation, while linking them formally to state justice institutions through referral protocols.
- **Institutionalization of Survivor-Centered and Inclusive Approaches:** Social welfare departments and police divisions require dedicated GBV and child protection desks, trained personnel, and clear protocols to manage sensitive cases confidentially. Integrating disability inclusion measures into service delivery will ensure equitable justice access for all groups.
- **Data and Accountability Systems:** The absence of reliable data across justice sector institutions hampers evidence-based decision-making. Interventions should promote data collection, case tracking, and performance monitoring systems, enabling periodic review of justice delivery outcomes and responsiveness.

7. References

National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) – *Demographic Statistics Bulletin (latest edition) and Poverty and Inequality Report* (2019/2020).

National Population Commission (NPC) – *Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS 2018) and Population Projections (2022–2026)*.

National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and UNICEF – *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS 2021)*.

Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) – *Statistical Bulletin and Annual Report*.

State Planning Commissions (Kano and Sokoto) – *State Development Plans and Medium-Term Expenditure Frameworks (MTEFs)*.

UNDP Nigeria – *Human Development Report and Subnational Human Development Index* (2023).

World Bank – *Nigeria Poverty Assessment (2022) and Nigeria Public Finance Review* (2023).

UN Women/UNFPA – *Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Profiles for Northern Nigeria* (2021–2023).

UNICEF – *Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Nigeria* (2022).

8. Annexes

Annex 1: Terms of Reference (ToR)

Annex 2: Sample List of Selected Key Informants

Annex 3: Household Survey Questionnaire

Annex 4: Key Informant Interview Guide

Annex 5: Focus Group Discussion Guide

