



**AFRICAN CENTRE FOR
LEADERSHIP, STRATEGY
& DEVELOPMENT**

...building strategic leadership for
sustainable development in Africa



IMPACT STORIES



**FORD
FOUNDATION**

Centre LSD Book Series No. 21

**Side by Side Gender Based Violence
Prevention Project**

Kano State, Nigeria



IMPACT STORIES

FORD FOUNDATION Side by Side Gender Based Violence (GBV)
Prevention Project, Kano State
Nigeria

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Published by Africa Centre for Leadership, Strategy & Development (Centre LSD), Nigeria. These stories/results were harvested and written by the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Team of the Centre.

With support from: Ford Foundation.



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Acknowledgement

The African Centre for Leadership, Strategy and Development (Centre LSD) expresses its profound appreciation to the Ford Foundation for its generous support of the Side-by-Side (SBS) Project. This publication would not have been possible without the Foundation's commitment to advancing gender justice, community leadership, and survivor-centered approaches to addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

We also acknowledge the dedication and courage of the Side-by-Side Movement members in Kano and Benue States, traditional and religious leaders, civil society actors, security agencies, media professionals, youth leaders, women leaders, and community volunteers, who stood firm in challenging harmful norms and protecting the rights and dignity of women, girls, and children. Our deepest gratitude goes to the survivors and community members who generously shared their stories.

Their voices form the heart of this publication and serve as powerful reminders that change is possible when communities act together.

Finally, we appreciate the African Centre for Leadership, Strategy and Development's (CLSD) project team, facilitators, partners, and field staff whose unalloyed commitment, professionalism, and compassion ensured the successful implementation of the project.



Acronyms



CSO – Civil Society Organization

GBV – Gender-Based Violence

LGA – Local Government Area

NAPTIP – National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons

NSCDC – Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps

SARC – Sexual Assault Referral Centre

SBS – Side-by-Side

ToT – Training of Trainers



1

Executive Summary

The Ford Foundation-supported Side-by-Side (SBS) Project represents a transformative community-led response to gender-based violence (GBV) in Nigeria, with focused implementation in Kano State and Benue State. Implemented by the African Centre for Leadership, Strategy & Development (Centre LSD), the project sought to address the deep-rooted social norms, weak institutional responses, and culture of silence that have long perpetuated violence against women, girls, and children.

Through leadership development, livelihood support, community mobilization, strategic engagement with religious and traditional institutions, and capacity strengthening of security and justice actors, the SBS Project fostered collective ownership of GBV prevention and response. Survivors were supported to speak out, frontline responders were equipped with survivor-centered skills, and communities were empowered to act as the first line of protection.

The success stories captured in this publication highlight tangible outcomes, which are increased reporting of GBV cases, improved coordination among referral actors, successful prosecutions, economic empowerment of women, strengthened confidence among youth and women leaders, and visible shifts in community attitudes. Beyond statistics, the stories demonstrate how dignity, hope, and agency were restored to individuals and communities.

This publication documents what was achieved, how change happened and how the Side-by-side movement has worked with and united communities, institutions, and leaders around shared values of justice, accountability, and human dignity.



2

Background

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a critical human rights and development challenge in Nigeria. Across many communities, harmful social norms, economic dependency, weak law enforcement, and limited access to survivor support services have contributed to widespread underreporting and impunity. Women and girls, particularly in low-income and marginalized settings, often experience violence in silence due to fear of stigma, retaliation, or lack of trust in institutions.

Recognizing that GBV is both a legal issue and a social and structural problem, Centre LSD adopted a community-driven approach that places collective responsibility at the center of prevention and response. The Side-by-Side Movement is a values-based, community-led platform that brings together diverse stakeholders, women and men, faith leaders, traditional rulers, youth, security agencies, civil society, and government actors to work collaboratively against GBV.

Rather than operating as a standalone project, SBS functions as a movement that strengthens local leadership, builds trust, and promotes shared accountability. Launched nationally in 2024, the movement emphasises dialogue, learning, and action rooted in local realities, cultural contexts, and faith-based principles that affirm dignity, justice, and protection for all.

In Kano State, prior efforts to address GBV were often fragmented and cautious, with limited coordination among actors and minimal public dialogue. Following the national inauguration of SBS, stakeholders in Kano returned with renewed commitment to collective action. The Centre LSD facilitated strategic engagement with religious and traditional leaders, leveraging both Quranic and Biblical teachings to open sensitive conversations on GBV prevention, accountability, and justice.

Through advocacy visits, radio programmes, community dialogues, and capacity-building for law enforcement and community vanguards, SBS quickly emerged as



a trusted platform. strengthening leadership platforms, and enhancing services. Reporting of GBV cases increased, referral pathways improved, and collaboration among institutions strengthened. Survivors began to speak out, knowing there were systems and people ready to support them. Centre LSD implemented the Ford Foundation Side-by-Side (SBS) project in Kano and Benue States, focused on three outcomes: shifting harmful norms,

These initiatives resulted in measurable reductions in SGBV and the adoption of adaptive strategies. Key activities included engaging faith and traditional leaders, establishing advocacy platforms for anti-SGBV laws, and expanding survivor services in high-risk areas. Additional interventions involved community dialogues, training Community Vanguard, policy reviews, livelihood sessions, and media campaigns to address economic vulnerability as a driver of GBV.

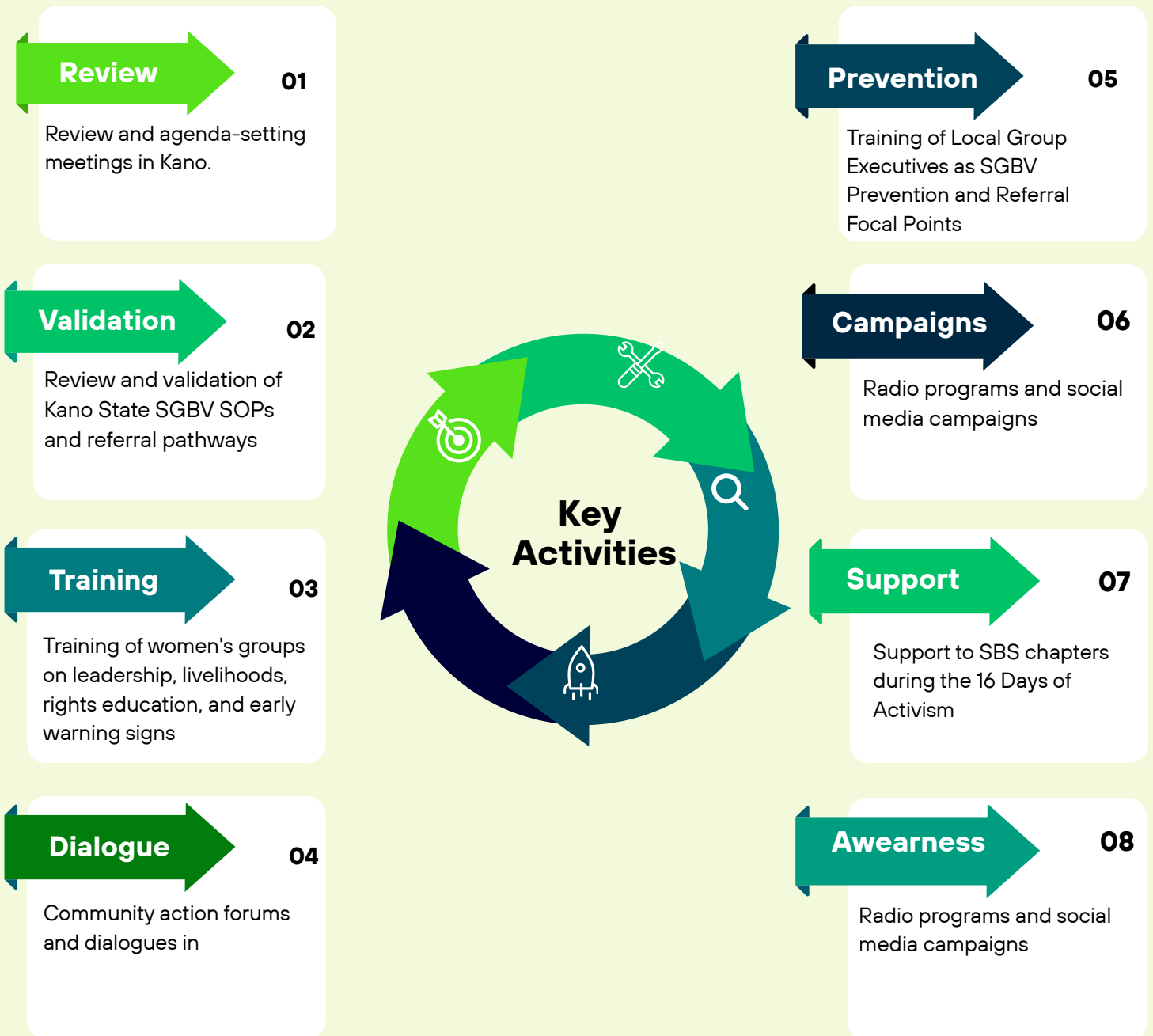




3

Key Activities

key activities implemented within the period of the project



4

Results and Key Outcomes

Outcome 1:

Reduced SGBV Prevalence Fueled by Religion and Culture

Key Results:

Reduction in the culture of silence

With survivors increasingly reporting cases through SBS radio programs and community networks in Kano State

40 SGBV Community Prevention Vanguard

Strengthening community accountability and sustainability in Kano State.



Strengthened women's agency,

Reduced economic vulnerability and positive behavioural changes were reported at the household level in Kano.

Routine integration of anti-SGBV messages

Frequent and effective collaboration builds better stakeholder involvement.

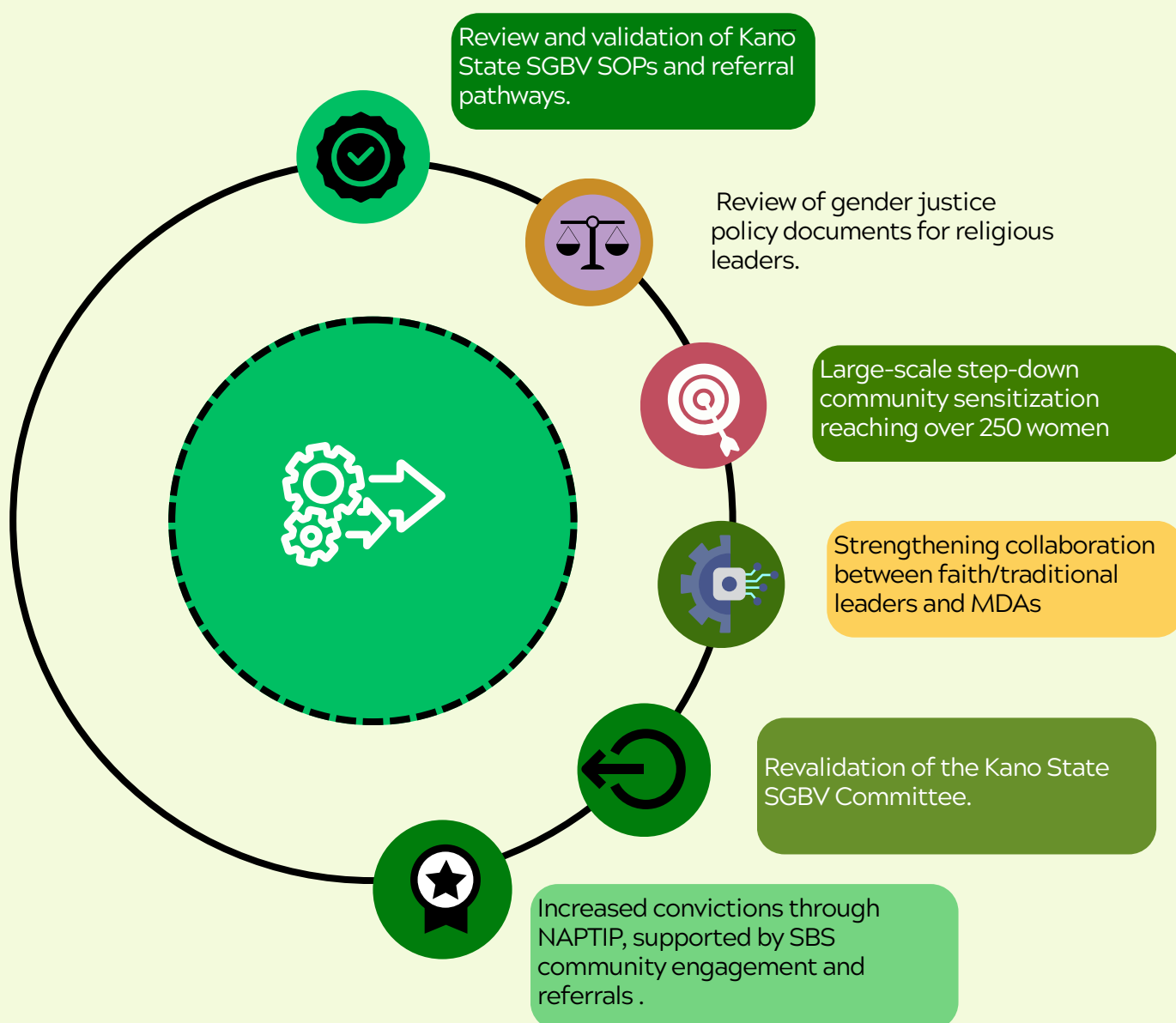


Outcome 2:

Established Platforms of Faith and Traditional Leaders Advocating for Anti-SGBV Laws and Policies



Key Results:



Outcome 3:

Enhanced Resources to Broaden Access to Protection and Response Services for Survivors

Key Results:



Training & deployment

40 trained community-based first responders as SGBV Prevention Vanguard



Survivor Access

Improved survivor access to psychosocial support, and justice services



Increased Reporting

Leading to strengthened community accountability mechanisms and collective action



Enhanced Co-ordination

Among security agencies, justice institutions, and social services



Successful Mediation

And prevention of spousal and economic abuse cases



Improved Awareness

Of available services and referral pathways, with women leaders serving as trusted first points of contact.



Safe Reporting Mechanisms

Increased access to safe reporting mechanisms through SGB radio phone-in programs



Improved Womanity Index

Measurable improvement in gender equality results, with Kano State moving up three places on the Womanity Index 2025



SAY NO TO GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

KANO COMMUNITY AWARENESS CAMP

STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

END
GENDER
BASED
VIOLENCE

BREAK THE SILENCE

Impact and
Success Stories
from Kano State



STORY ONE

A New Era for GBV Response in Kano

I can still recall when silence hung over Kano's communities, hiding the pain of gender-based violence. Survivors faded into the background, their stories unheard, and a sense of helplessness lingered everywhere. Then the Side-by-Side Movement, led by Centre LSD, stepped in, and a wave of change swept through. Initially, vigilante groups, Hisbah, and grassroots leaders hesitated, as if every effort met a closed door.

Yet, with focused training and awareness sessions, those doors slowly opened. Voices that once stayed quiet began to rise, reporting cases and driving real change. Within just three months, training participants referred more than 30 GBV cases. Some have already resulted in convictions, showing the power of knowledge and teamwork. Most inspiring of all, communities now recognize their role in the solution.



Calls, messages, and referrals pour in from everyday people who feel empowered to make a difference. Language became a bridge. Communicating in Hausa broke down walls and led to swift referrals. Selecting frontline actors who connect daily with communities magnified the impact. Now, with coordination across all 44 LGAs and a focus on key areas, early detection and justice are becoming standard practice. The Side-by-Side Movement has transformed despair into hope, silence into bold action, and victims into survivors who speak out. In Kano, GBV is no longer hidden; it is being faced, challenged, and changed.

**Abdullahi Babale, Zonal Commander,
NAPTIP, Kano State**

STORY TWO

My Journey with Side-by-Side from Fear to Fearless

That first day at the State Headquarters in Kano is etched in my memory.

The office seemed to swallow me whole, its chill and towering stacks of files amplifying my anxiety. Freshly posted from Tafar Local Government as the Gender Desk Officer, I felt like an imposter. Gender policies, GBV protocols, and survivor support were all foreign territory. Each new case sent my heart pounding, leaving me paralyzed by doubt and the fear of making a wrong call. I did not know what to do. I have no clue how to handle GBV issues. No training was given; I was assigned to a new office with no prior training nor experience.

Fear clung to me, whispering relentlessly, 'What ifs. 'What if I failed? What if justice slipped away? Sleep eluded me as my mind raced through worst-case scenarios. I longed to protect those who needed me, but I was adrift, searching for direction. Then, Side-by-Side reached out, offering me a lifeline.



At first, I expected just another routine workshop. I tried to blend in, worried my questions would betray my uncertainty. But as the training, seminars, and community sessions unfolded, a transformation began. I uncovered the real meaning of gender, learned to respond to GBV cases, and discovered how to support survivors with genuine empathy. With each session, fear gave way to clarity. Every conversation, every role play, every answer added a brick to the foundation of courage I was quietly building.

After training, I stepped into a new version of myself. The path forward was no longer shrouded in doubt. I immediately put my learning into action:



carefully documenting cases, ensuring survivors received the support they deserved, investigating every detail, visiting the scenes, and ensuring that perpetrators were brought to justice. Each time a survivor found safety, each time justice was served, it felt like a victory not just for them, but for me as well. With every success, my confidence grew stronger.

Over the past year, I have handled and prosecuted nearly 8 cases, often working with NAPTIP and other partners. I realized that every single case, no matter its size, is a cornerstone of justice, built with patience and unwavering commitment. Now, I guide survivors with compassion, offer them strength, and ensure perpetrators answer for their actions. The helplessness that once shadowed me has disappeared.

Today, I stand tall, confident and empowered, fiercely dedicated to advocating for survivors. The unknown no longer intimidates me. Each case is an opportunity to ignite real change. Beyond my official duties, I pour my experience into community advocacy,

helping others become protectors and champions for survivors at the grassroots. Today, I stand tall, confident and empowered, fiercely dedicated to advocating for survivors. The unknown no longer intimidates me. Each case is an opportunity to ignite real change.

Beyond my official duties, I pour my experience into community advocacy, helping others become protectors and champions for survivors at the grassroots.

Without Side-by-Side, I might never have discovered the reservoir of strength within me. They transformed my fear into purpose, my doubts into confidence, and my uncertainty into hope. Now, I can say with conviction: I am empowered, I am capable, and I am ready to change lives.

**SC. Habiba Haruna Abdul,
NSCDC Gender Desk Officer, Kano State
Headquarters**



STORY THREE

Side-by-Side: Lighting the Path to Justice in Kano

I still remember my first encounter with the Side-by-Side Movement in Kano.

At the time, it seemed like just another meeting, easily forgotten among countless others. I doubted it would lead anywhere. The energy was slipping away, momentum felt fragile, and hope seemed a distant dream.

Everything changed with a single turning point. Dr Margaret and her team returned, infusing the group with clarity, structure, and unwavering determination. What started as a faint idea blossomed into a movement with the power to transform lives. At our first major gathering in Grand Central, traditional rulers, religious leaders, civil society, the media, and government actors all came together.

Many attended, but only the true believers remained. That dedicated core became the heartbeat of Side-by-Side in Kano. Through focused



capacity-building, our leadership began to take shape. I felt honoured to stand shoulder to shoulder with colleagues from FIDA, the media, and civil society.

This new structure grew from years of collaboration, from harmonising violence-related laws to strengthening child protection committees. It filled us with the conviction that real, lasting change was finally within reach. From the outset, we knew our work demanded a gentle approach. Gender equality is a delicate topic here. That is why we reached out early to religious and traditional leaders, easing concerns that our mission might threaten culture or faith. Influential voices like



Sheikh Khalil, a highly esteemed university scholar, stepped up as champions. Slowly, trust began to grow where doubt once held sway.

The media became our megaphone, carrying our message to every corner of Kano. Recorded dramas, catchy radio jingles, and awareness campaigns found their way into countless homes.

Soon, people began to call in, reporting cases of sexual violence, child abuse, and exploitation. The silence that once cloaked these issues began to lift, and hope started to blossom. Security and law enforcement received training unlike anything they had experienced before. Police gender desk officers, DSS, and community vigilantes learnt to put survivors first, preserve evidence, and navigate referral pathways.

For many, it was their first true education in addressing gender-based violence. The results came quickly and could not be ignored. Survivors began reporting cases directly to NAPTIP. Between 2024 and 2025, more than thirty convictions were secured, including the sentencing of a seventy-eight-year-old man for exploiting a twelve-year-old child.

Institutions collaborated more smoothly, traditional leaders became more vigilant, and communities responded with renewed urgency. Across Kano, community vanguards were trained to partner with religious leaders, market associations, and neighbourhood groups. They became the first line of defence, educating neighbours, supporting survivors, and guiding cases toward justice.

At the government level, Side-by-Side's reputation soared. We reviewed and streamlined the Sexual Assault Referral Pathway and related frameworks. Our recommendations, including the call for at least one functional referral centre in every emirate, gained recognition and serious attention. Now, with funding on the horizon, implementation feels closer than ever, and momentum continues to surge.

Today, the Side-by-Side Movement is more than a programme. It has become a trusted platform for justice. Survivors know where to turn for help. Communities are engaged, alert, and vigilant. The old culture of impunity is slowly giving way to a new era of accountability. Side-by-Side has shown that real change is possible

**Rev. Samuel Adeyemo,
Co-Chair, Side-by-Side Movement, Kano**



STORY FOUR

From Struggle to Self-Reliance, Fatima's Journey of Transformation

A few days after my second child's birth in August 2022, I felt like a burden to my husband, especially with the increased demands that his salary alone could not sustain. Each day felt heavier than the last, weighed down by worry and uncertainty. With my husband, an engineer, out of work because of the rains, our home was filled with anxiety.

My heart ached as I watched my baby struggle with a painful rash, knowing I couldn't even buy a soothing balm. Helplessness and frustration overwhelmed me until I realised I could no longer stay passive. I had to take action. Though I held a degree, I saw myself depending completely on my husband. That difficult season became my turning point. I began selling sachet water around my neighbourhood. It was a modest start, but it brought me purpose and a little income. Yet, I struggled to make my business visible and to grow. After the training, I put my new



skills to work. With the transport stipend, I grew my kuli kuli and shea butter business. Where I once made just three mudu every two weeks in plain white nylon, I now produce up to twenty mudu, earning as much as ₦50,000 each cycle. My products now shine in customized bags with branded stickers, drawing in more customers. I have also shared what I learnt, encouraging my neighbours to become independent and take charge of their own lives. Everything changed when I joined the Side-by-Side Leadership and Livelihood Training in Kano. Expecting just another workshop, I was surprised by how it reshaped my view of myself and my work. This business grew into more than just a way to earn money. It became my wellspring of confidence, empowerment, and pride.



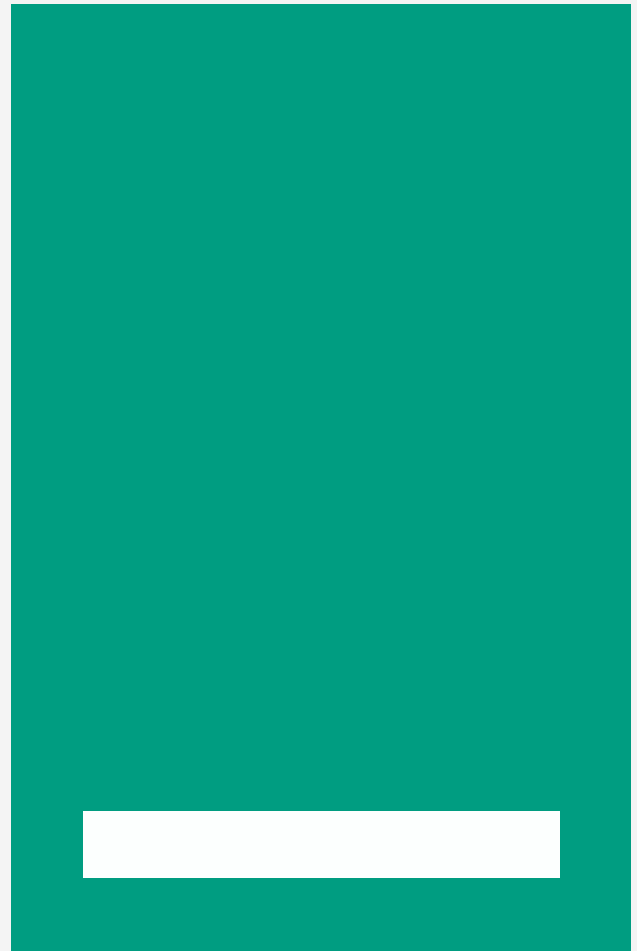


I can now support him financially with the bills. We no longer have issues because I now handle some household expenses and support my husband when he is away or between jobs. What began as a small step has blossomed into a journey of independence and self-reliance, sparked by that workshop.

I am deeply grateful to the African Centre for Leadership, Strategy and Development (CLSD) for this life-changing opportunity.

To every woman who finds herself at a crossroads: listen, learn, and trust in your own strength. You have the power to rise, create, and transform your life.

Fatima Ladan, Kano State



STORY FIVE

A Single Training, a Lifetime of Confidence

I can still feel the uncertainty that clouded that day. As a student, every naira was precious.

My little business selling body wash, shampoo, and hair cream had come to a standstill because I sold mostly on credit and struggled to collect payments. Each time I asked customers to pay, discomfort crept in, and little by little, hope slipped away. Everything shifted when Rev. Samuel invited me to the Side-by-Side Leadership and Livelihood Training. I expected an ordinary workshop, but it turned out to be a turning point.

Fuelled by new inspiration, I relaunched my business with a clear vision. That session pushed me to see leadership, responsibility, and independence in a new light. I discovered that true leadership is not about titles but about courage, resilience, and choosing what is right. plan. Beyond my classmates, I supplied retail shops and set firm credit rules: one item per customer, payment due in a week. Gradually my hard work bore fruit. I sold nearly all thirty bottles of body wash



My income grew, my confidence blossomed, and I found freedom from depending on my parents. But the transformation did not end with me. A friend, moved by my story, launched her own thriving awara business. I came to see that empowerment is more than financial gain; It is about knowledge, courage, and the powerful ripple that comes from sharing your journey. Now, where I once saw only obstacles, I spot opportunities. Side-by-Side gave me more than business skills; it gave me independence, confidence, and a renewed sense of hope. To young women and students, I say this: trust in your abilities. Begin with small steps, stay disciplined, and do not wait for someone else to pave your way.

Deborah Ogundele



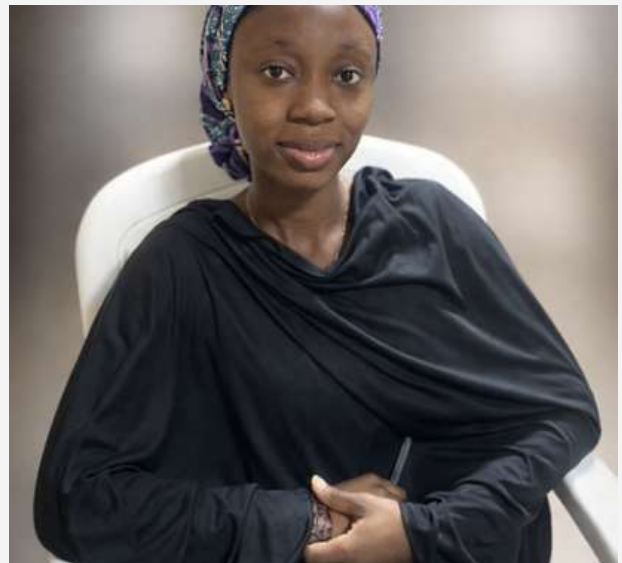
STORY SIX

From Tech Dreams to Fashion Independence: Jenniffer's Journey

Kelechi Jenniffer Okorie, a recent graduate of software engineering from Bayero university Kano. I still remember that day with the Side-by-side movement, the air buzzing with heat, energy, and a sense of mission. As a young woman fuelled by a love of technology, I was eager to give back and build skills that would help me stand on my own.

My fascination with computers pushed me into software engineering and creative hustles to earn while studying. When a long strike hit, I launched a tiny data reselling venture. My very first customer found me on Facebook, intrigued by my post about cheap data. That one sale lit a spark in me, proving that even in uncertain times, opportunity can find you.

When profits dipped, I turned inward and listened to a quieter calling, fashion. I started small, stitching my first piece alone in my room.



By 2026, NKC Fashion will be live online. Doubts and schoolwork tried to hold me back, but with every stitch and lesson, my confidence grew. Doubts and schoolwork tried to hold me back, but with every stitch and lesson, my confidence grew.

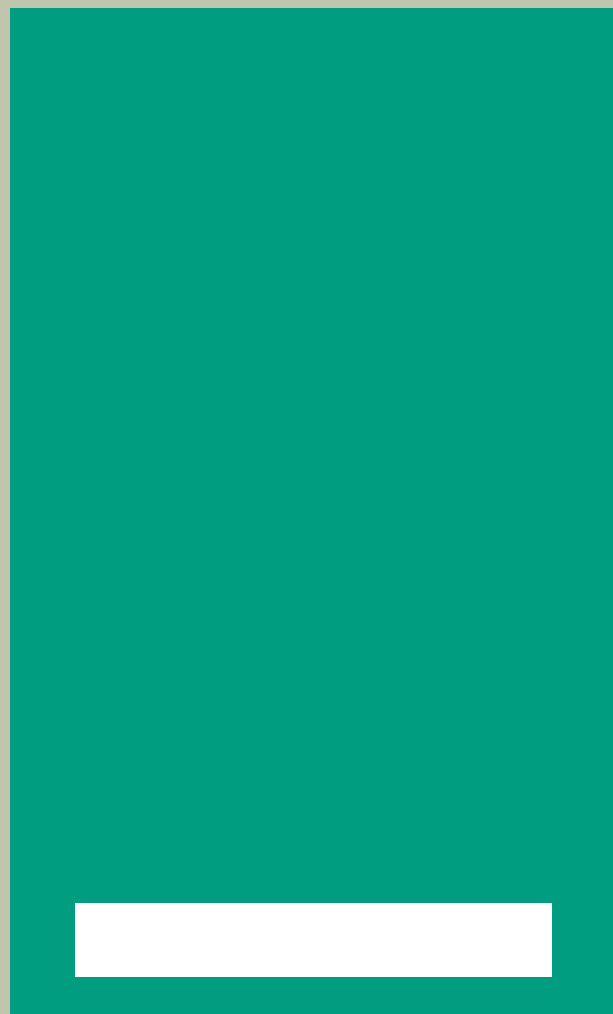
Soon, wearing my own creations became my best advertisement, drawing curious eyes and new customers. To steady my income, I branched out into making tote and school bags, each selling for ₦4,000 and earning me ₦800 profit. Just four bags a week now bring in ₦12,800 a month, more than I ever made before. But this journey is about more than money. Now, I teach teenagers hands-on digital skills, helping them discover their own independence and self-belief.





From tech to fashion, from doubt to steady income, SBS taught me that knowledge, courage, and persistence can truly change lives. Now, I am not just earning; I am showing others that they can chase opportunities and trust in their own potential.

**Jennifer, NKC Fashion,
Kano State**



STORY SEVEN

From Nothing to Something: Sarah Alabi's Journey of Transformation

After graduating from Bayero University in March, I did not know what to do.

I felt completely stuck. I had no job, no savings, and not even a phone to my name. My days were spent helping my mother sell food, my mind always wandering to the dream of starting my own hair business. Yet with nothing in my pockets, my ambitions seemed like stars in the night sky: shining brightly but always just out of reach.

Everything changed when I joined the Side-by-Side Leadership and Livelihood Training. A single message kept ringing in my ears: real success comes from hard work, patience, and persistence. For the first time, I realized I could start right where I was, take small steps today, and watch my dreams grow little by little began with the simplest of steps: selling eggs, a few crates at a time, determined not to let a single one spoil. At first, I sold just twelve eggs a day, but soon, demand grew. Every naira I made, I tucked away, gradually saving enough to buy hair materials like attachments, kinky hair, wool, and crochet.



For the first time, I could greet clients with pride, knowing I never had to turn anyone away.

Today, I make an average profit of ₦50 on every egg, selling three crates a week and earning at least ₦18,000. I supply eggs to local shops, and my hair business brings in even more. From having nothing, I now stand tall—financially secure, self-assured, and eager for the future. This journey has taught me that small, steady steps can transform everyday struggles into real opportunities.

I am deeply grateful to Side-by-Side and the African Centre for Leadership Strategy and Development for giving me the knowledge, skills, and courage to shape my own future.

Sarah Alabi,
Bayero University Graduate, Kano State



STORY EIGHT

Turning Awareness into Action: Protecting Children in Kano

I can never forget when child abuse in Kano loomed like a relentless shadow.

Boys and girls endured their suffering in silence, and my heart ached with helplessness. Hope felt impossibly distant. Then came the Side-by-Side Movement. Their training, engagement, and follow-up opened our eyes. Awareness became action. People began to understand the harm of abuse, and slowly, behaviors started to change. In my community of Yankaba, months can now pass without a single case being reported. Fathers and mothers openly acknowledge the difference; it is real, visible, and transformative.

As Oba of the Yoruba Community in Kano, safeguarding children has always been my calling. With Side-by-Side's partnership, we united leaders, councils, and security agencies to make our stance unmistakable: child abuse has no place here. Together, we rescued more than 100 trafficked girls in 2025, reuniting them with their families and lighting a path away from danger.



This work has reshaped Kano. Once a place feared for its dangers to children, it now stands safer, more vigilant, and fiercely protective. Yet our mission continues—rural communities still call for our care. I have pledged myself to this cause. With ongoing awareness, unity, and courage, we can give every child the chance to grow up safe, cherished, and free.

**Alhaji (Dr.) Murtala Alimi Otisese
(Adetimirin I)**

**Oba of the Yoruba Community,
Kano State**



STORY NINE

From Darkness to Hope was My Journey Back to Life

I remember that time like a shadow I couldn't shake. Divorce had left me broken, battling and withdrawing from life, my children, and even myself. I had almost given up. Sleep came only with heavy medication, and weeks would pass without self-care or hope.

Everything changed when Barrister Aisha Tijani led me to the Side-by-Side Movement. I hesitantly joined a three-day training by the African Centre for Leadership, Strategy and Development (CLSD), feeling like an outsider. On day one, I was silent, my pain a heavy secret. But as the sessions progressed, a spark flickered within me. The conversations pushed back against my darkest fears. On the second day, I found my voice again—gentle, free from anger or bitterness. That was the moment I began to heal.

By the final day, I felt myself opening up, reaching out to others and, most importantly, rediscovering myself. I went back to therapy, relied less on medication, and began nurturing my children once more.



I learned that true empowerment is not measured in money, but in dignity, self-worth, and the courage to begin again.

I decided to act. I launched a small groundnut oil business, earning a humble ₦2,000 each week. I helped my aunt in Zaria do the same, giving her family a new start. It might look like a small step, but for me, it means independence, purpose, and hope. Now, A simple three-day training became the turning point that restored my life. I am healing, hopeful, and learning to embrace life once more. Centre LSD and the Side-by-Side Movement gave me more than skills; they helped me find myself again.

— **Aisha Abubakar Abdullahi**
Kano State

STORY TEN

Awareness to Action, My Journey Against Gender-Based Violence

I can still recall my first Youth Forum meeting in 2024. As I listened to survivors share their stories, a wave of shock, guilt, and responsibility washed over me. Although I had always cared for my community in Kano Municipal, Fagge, and Dala, I realized I had only scratched the surface of understanding gender-based violence and my part in ending it. That day marked the beginning of a new chapter.

As Community Youth Chairman, I juggled many roles: guiding young people, connecting with parents, and striving to keep our neighborhoods safe. Yet before joining the Side-by-Side Movement and Centre LSD, I felt lost confronting abuse. Too often, cases vanish into silence, dismissed or hidden away. Families bribed the police, and offenders walked free. Each time, my hope faded and helplessness grew. Everything shifted during the training sessions.



We learned not just the definitions of gender-based violence, but also the laws, real-life consequences, and the strength found in speaking up. For the first time, I saw that men could be protectors, advocates, and challengers of harmful traditions. Each session fueled my resolve to make a difference. I began with small steps: reaching out to young men, sparking conversations at gatherings, and guiding parents about the risks their children face. I set up a WhatsApp group for Muslim brothers to exchange ideas about responsibility, respect, and the courage to speak up. Gradually, awareness took root. Young men began challenging harmful behaviors and stepping in when it mattered.



The impact became real when a young man attempted to exploit a girl, pretending it was for marriage. Drawing on the knowledge and courage from my training, I reported the case to NAPTIP. This time, the authorities responded, and the families acted responsibly. That moment was a turning point, showing me that awareness and action save lives. Now, each day brings a renewed sense of purpose. I connect with my community, mentor youth, and ensure no case of abuse goes unnoticed. My message to parents is simple: protect your children, stay vigilant, and stand together. Through the Side-by-Side Movement,

I have discovered my voice and my mission. I witness our community growing safer, one conversation, one report, and one brave action at a time.

Thank you, African Centre for Leadership, Strategy and Development (CLSD), for helping me turn knowledge into action and fear into courage.

– **Muhammad Garzali Inuwa,**
Kano Municipal, Kano State



STORY ELEVEN

How SBS Livelihood Training Transformed My Life

Before joining the Side-by-Side (SBS) movement, I was not very confident, and many women around me did not know their rights or how to exercise them. The culture of silence was so deep that women endured abuse quietly, largely out of fear of stigma. At the time, I was serving as President of WOWICAN and working as a peace advocate with IMC and Mercy Corps, but SBS introduced a new approach—one that challenged silence and empowered women to speak out.

Through SBS, I learned how to encourage women to report abuse and seek support. Gradually, women in our communities began to find their voices. They no longer remain silent in the face of gender-based violence. I also benefited personally from SBS livelihood training, where I learned spice-making to diversify my income. I witnessed this change firsthand in the life of a woman who had long suffered bullying and oppression from her husband.



When she finally opened up, I supported her to speak out and involved respected community elders and family members. With support, she found the courage to confront the situation. Today, her family is living peacefully because the truth was brought to light.

In another case, a woman married for over fourteen years reached out in desperation. She was afraid to speak, but with encouragement and community intervention, she was able to share her experience openly. Her husband was held accountable and asked to take responsibility. Silence could have led to a far worse outcome. . I now encourage women to speak up and seek help, reminding them that support systems and organizations exist.

Ruth Ajaratu Okorie, Kano State



STORY TWELVE

How SBS Livelihood Training Transformed My Life

I first heard about the Side-by-Side Movement in 2025, during a difficult period in my life.

As a primary school teacher, my salary barely covered my family's needs, and I often relied on credit to put food on the table. The stress of providing for my two daughters weighed heavily on me, and I constantly worried about our future.

When Pastor Peter introduced me to the Side-by-Side Livelihood Training, I expected an ordinary workshop. Instead, it opened my eyes to self-empowerment and financial independence. What had once been a small household hobby—raising animals and birds—became a viable business opportunity.

I started with a few goats and chickens and gradually expanded. By Christmas, I had chickens ready for sale, with plans to scale up further in the coming year, including building a fish pond. For the first time, I felt financially empowered and hopeful about the future. Beyond income, the training changed my mindset.



I shared what I learned with other women, encouraging them to explore new livelihoods and take control of their finances. It also transformed how I raise my daughters—I became more intentional, supportive, and connected, creating a safe space where they can grow with confidence.

Today, my animal-rearing business represents independence, security, and dignity. I am no longer dependent on my salary alone, and I have learned that economic empowerment is a powerful protection against vulnerability. The Side-by-Side Livelihood Training did more than teach me skills—it reshaped my life and strengthened my family.

— **Gloria Inikpi Idakwo**



STORY THIRTEEN

How Side-by-Side Is Changing Lives in Kano State

Before Side-by-Side (SBS), efforts to address gender-based violence in Kano State were quiet and fragmented. Survivors suffered in silence, and those working to help them often worked alone. That changed in 2024. After the national SBS inauguration in Abuja, we returned to Kano determined to act collectively. We engaged government actors, religious and traditional leaders, using both Quranic and Biblical teachings to open honest conversations on GBV prevention, accountability, and justice. Alongside this, SBS strengthened practical skills in evidence preservation and survivor-centered support.

As advocacy visits and community engagements expanded, SBS quickly became a trusted voice on GBV across Kano state. Awareness grew, partnerships deepened, and survivors began to come forward.

One powerful breakthrough came through SBS radio programs, especially the live phone-in sessions. Women who had never spoken about their GBV experiences found the courage to speak.



One caller received counseling that helped resolve ongoing domestic conflict caused by financial neglect. Another woman who disclosed a sexually transmitted infection was immediately counseled and linked to health services; both she and her husband received treatment, restoring health and hope. Today, women in Kano are speaking out more boldly, and SBS has become a lifeline, offering listening ears, practical support, and pathways to healing. However, much of the work still takes place in urban areas, while many survivors live in rural communities. With adequate support, SBS can expand to all 44 local government areas of Kano State, ensuring that every woman, everywhere, has access to information, protection, and justice.

Barr. Aisha

6 Key Learnings

1 Community-led and faith-informed approaches break the culture of silence

The Side-by-Side Movement demonstrated that when religious and traditional leaders are intentionally engaged, conversations on GBV shift from silence and resistance to openness, legitimacy, and action. Faith-based framing helped communities confront harmful norms without perceiving GBV prevention as a threat to culture or religion.

2 Survivor-centred systems strengthen trust and reporting:

The establishment of community vanguards, radio call-in programmes, and strengthened referral pathways significantly increased reporting and early intervention. Survivors were more willing to come forward when they saw coordinated, respectful, and confidential responses.

3 Women's economic empowerment is a protective factor against GBV

Livelihood and leadership trainings did more than improve income—they increased confidence, decision-making power, and resilience. Economic independence reduced vulnerability to abuse and enabled women to negotiate safer family and social environments.

4 Institutional collaboration improves justice and accountability outcomes:

Coordinated engagement among faith leaders, traditional institutions, security agencies, and MDAs improved case handling, referrals, and prosecutions. This collective approach transformed GBV response from isolated actions into a functioning prevention and accountability ecosystem.



7

Conclusion

The Ford Foundation-supported Side-by-Side Project has demonstrated that gender-based violence prevention is most effective when communities, institutions, and leaders work together rather than in isolation.

By integrating norm change, survivor support, leadership engagement, and livelihood empowerment, the project addressed both the root causes and the lived consequences of GBV in Kano State.

The success stories documented throughout this report affirm that sustainable change is achievable when interventions are culturally grounded, survivor-centred, and firmly anchored within trusted institutions.

Building on these gains, there is a clear opportunity to expand the Side-by-Side approach to rural and underserved communities, strengthen institutionalisation, and deepen learning-driven expansion across all local government areas to ensure that no survivor is left behind.

