



## **STRENGTHENING RESPONSE CAPACITY OF WOMEN LEGAL CLINICS IN SIX LGA's OF KANO STATE.**

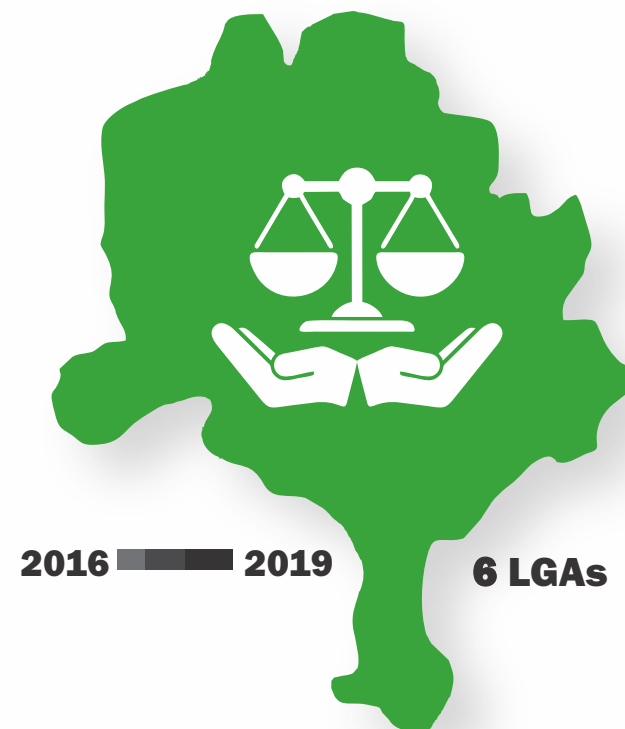
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# Introduction

This report of the project 'Strengthening Response Capacity of Women Legal Clinics in Six LGAs of Kano State' carried out by the Isa Wali Empowerment Initiative (IWEI) with support from the MacArthur Foundation was implemented from June 2016 – May 2018 in six LGAs, with an extension period from October 2018 – August 2019 in four LGAs in Kano State.

Building on the successes and lessons of the initial project in Bichi, Dawakin Tofa, Garun Mallam, Rano, Warawa, and Wudil, the extension project sought to empower paralegals to render legal aid services to persons under detention both at the police station and satellite prison of Bichi, Dawakin Tofa, Rano, and Wudil.



# Project Objectives

The initial project had three objectives as follows:

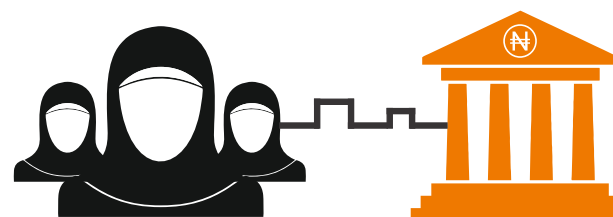
1. Strengthen the response capacity of the women legal clinic centres through capacity building of paralegals and legal education classes for target communities, women, youth and children;



2. Advocate for the establishment of a State-wide framework to guide and support the work of paralegals; and

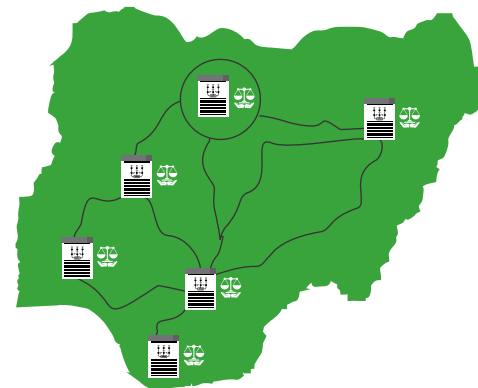


3. Establish links between women and the leadership of government economic empowerment institutions. Meanwhile, the extension project had two objectives, namely:



## Project Objectives

4. Develop a national road map and work plan for the institutionalization of a national framework and operational guidelines for paralegal services.



5. Increase access by 50% to justice for women, young persons and other vulnerable groups in criminal justice within the 4 of the LGAs through the provision of legal aid services.

**50%**

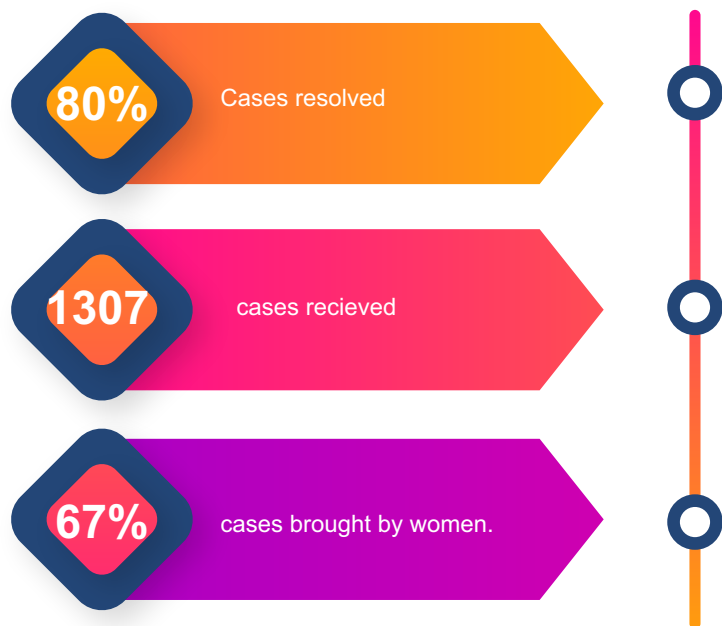


# Project Successes

Over the two years of the initial project, the following successes were recorded

## Project Successes

- As a result of strengthening the response capacity of the women legal clinic centres through capacity building of paralegals, 80% of cases received by the paralegals across the six LGAs were successfully resolved. Also worthy of note, 67% of all the cases were brought by women, which reflects the impact of legal education classes for target communities, women, youth and children.





# Project Successes

- Additionally, through community education and sensitization sessions organized within the communities on human rights, women's rights and gender-based violence, paralegals have engaged with 19,668 persons. This breaks down to 14903 women, married adolescents, and girls, and 4,765 men and boys.

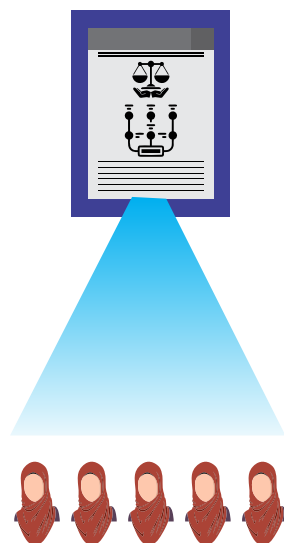


Picture above shows a female paralegal carrying a sensitization in a rural community. For a conservative society where women are still expected to be indoors this is a change from the norm. At first, female paralegals encountered resistance from the male population. This gradually is changing as the women are now respected for the services they provide in their communities.



## Project Successes

- Through advocacy for the establishment of a State-wide framework to guide and support the work of paralegals, the project was able to establish collaborative relationships with some strategic stakeholders, which include the Legal Aid Council, the Nigeria Bar Association, CSOs involved with paralegal services and Alternative Dispute Resolution programs.

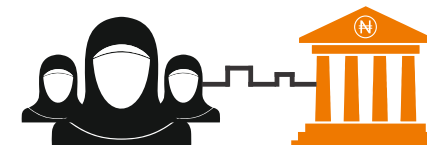


- Furthermore, activities and collaborations conducted both at National and State levels, have succeeded in putting the issues of legal and operational framework for the certification and practice of paralegals on the agenda of stakeholders. The dialogue that has so far taken place has led to the identification of, critical stakeholders, workable strategies and roadmap for the achievement of this objective. loans.

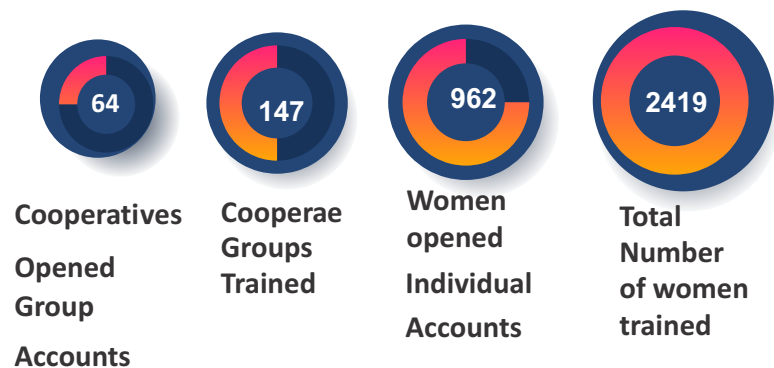


- Cooperative groups from Wudil were able to access loans from the Wudil Micro Finance Bank under a Federal Government Project called GEEP. A group in Rano accessed a small loan from another project while two others in Bichi and Dawakin Tofa also got small loans.
- The linkages established has provided the groups formal state recognition and inclusion into the state cooperatives database.

- Through working to establish links between women and the leadership of government economic empowerment institutions, four MOUs were signed between micro finance banks and IWEI by the end of the project.



# Project Successes



The objectives of cooperative strengthening training were to strengthen the capacity of the women for effective and efficient management of their cooperative groups and businesses and to prepare women and women groups adequately for linkages with economic empowerment institutions and other forms of support available. Training included leadership, business-skills, book-keeping, financial management, sales marketing and customer skills.

Although most of the rural women across the 6 project LGAs were already engaged in one form of income generating activity or the other they faced a myriad of challenges developing and making their small businesses profitable; due to their inability to determine their expenses and profits, poor saving habits, high costs of production, as well as poor access to markets leading to overdependence on their menfolk.

Moreover, although some of the women may belong to business cooperative groups, most of such groups existed just in name. As such other challenges included: poor understanding of the roles and responsibilities of cooperative groups, individualistic approach to business. They also have poor understanding of the advantages of working in groups and poor access to finance and information.



- Women in target communities were increasingly more willing to engage local leaders and stakeholders to explore availability of economic opportunities.
- Economic inclusion of women through support to open both group and individual bankaccounts with micro finance banks. Groups supported to become registered cooperatives.
- There was a noticeable increased visibility and participation of women in economic activities in target communities. The more organized the cooperative groups became the more they attracted interest and participation of other women.

# Project Achievements

# Project Achievements

Objective 1: To strengthen the response capacity of the legal clinic centres through capacity building of paralegals and education for target community women, youth and children.



Females trained as teachers on legal education



Women complete legal education classes



91 Paralegals trained on basic paralegal skills

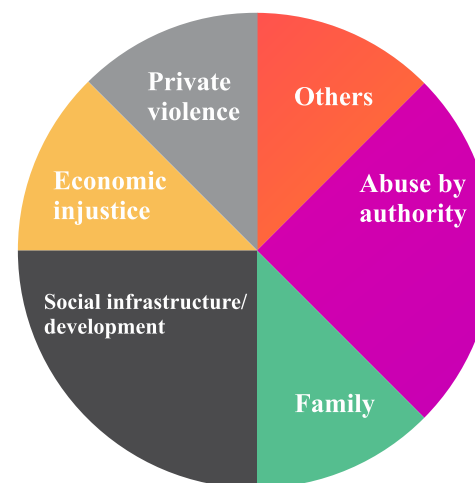


90 Paralegals trained on specialised Paralegal areas

Numbers reached through community education by Paralegals



Case types



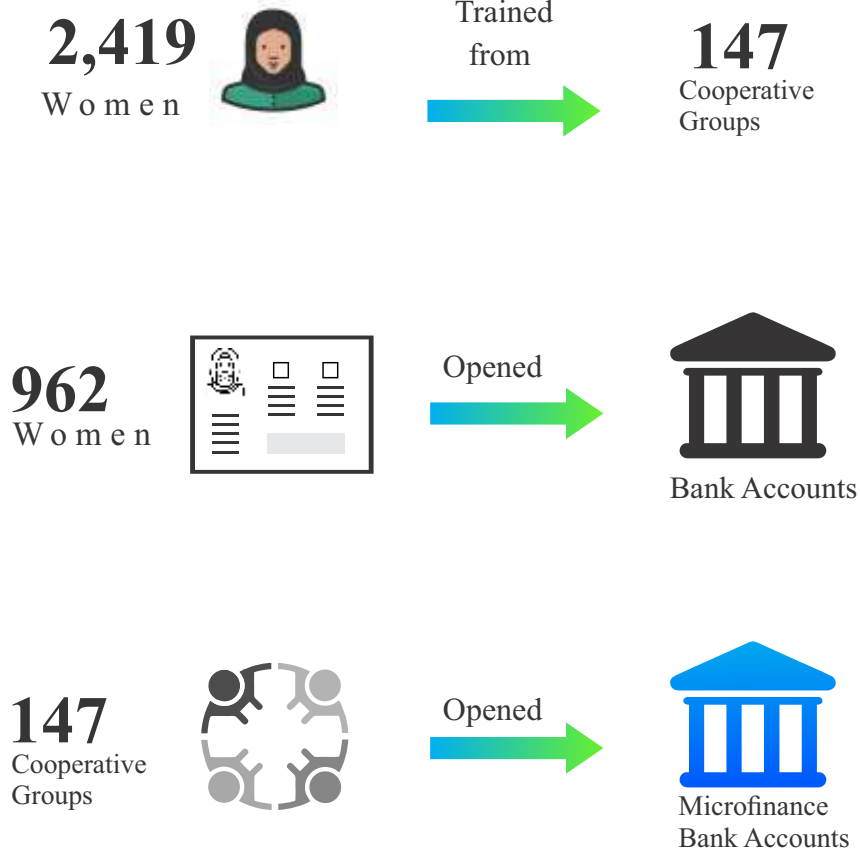
Cases by Gender

67% Female

33% Male,

# Project Achievements

**Objective 2: To Establish Links Between Women And Leadership Of Governmental Economic Empowerment Ins**



**16 Paralegals trained on Criminal Justice System provide legal aid services in Police stations and satellite prisons**

## 4 Police Stations

152 Arrestees



Accessed Legal Advice



106 Arrestees



Released

## 4 Satellite Prisons

123 Arrestees



Accessed Legal Advice



64 Arrestees



Released

Source: IWEI Database

# Lessons Learned



## Lessons Learned

- Community driven approach of project implementation gives room for community ownership and hence broader outreach.
- Using Government agencies and/or Government recognised institutions to facilitate at trainings within their sphere helps gain support as it relieves the fear of impersonation. As such, the project paralegals are trained by the LACON and NBA.
- The Government needs to incorporate legal education in women's mass literacy programmes as women need to know more about their rights and how to protect them. *Many of the women that graduated from legal education classes refused to stop coming to classes as they wanted to learn more.*

*Ignorance and low literacy levels compound poor access to justice especially for women. Majority of cases received were from women of which 61% were on family matters, concerning marital problems, wife neglect and men not taking responsibility of their wives and children. Cases received from men were more to do debt, breach of contract, land/ animal disputes.*

- The project focused more on working with stakeholders such as the NBA, LACON, Ministry of Justice, and the Media in the quest to achieve Project Objective 2, leaving behind the traditional leaders who were only involved in informal feedback sessions through the paralegals. This made some of the village heads put up a bit of resistance. Some felt threatened because paralegals were intervening in cases that they felt was within their jurisdiction.



# Lessons Learned

- Working at the Police and Prison stations increased the confidence of the community-based paralegals, especially the females.



- The presence of paralegals greatly helps to allay the fears of detainees and their families who generally have mistrust of the police as they are seen to be perpetrators and violators of their rights.
- Including Lawyers who supervise and support our community-based paralegals is important as they also build their capacity on laws and how to improve handling of cases. The lawyers follow through on cases that require legal mitigation. The lawyers too learn from the community-based paralegals as many of them have never been to rural communities or court, so the experiences they have gained is immeasurable and an eye opener.
- Our most significant learning for this project is there is a serious need for

projects of this kind that build capacity of volunteers as community-based paralegals touch the grassroots, especially women. There is a low level of knowledge on rights, how and where to seek for justice if they are violated, and lack of legal service providers living within the rural communities.

- This project afforded us the opportunities to build our capacity as an organisation in the field of human rights and access to justice to the extent that when organisations are looking for CSOs in Kano state, IWEI is always recommended as an NGO that should be invited to meetings and the only organisation that works with community-based paralegals.
- The Project has also created awareness in rural LGAs of the State and built capacity of volunteers residing in the communities. We are most especially proud of the fact that women are paralegals and they have testified that it has given them recognition in their communities. Learnings from the economic empowerment of the women cooperatives meant we were able to replicate the training to 100 women and youth(male and female) under another fund.
- This project can be scaled up to other states.
- We were able to build strong partnerships with:
  - ✓ LACON at State and National level which led to request for IWEI to collaborate and host a 2 day National Paralegal Summit in October. The State Coordinator gave us a letter of introduction which we were able to present to the Prison Services before commencement of the extension period.
  - ✓ Police at State and LGA levels which led to improved relationships.

# Stories from the Field

The project, through both the initial phase and the extension phase, recorded a number of success stories that reflect the impact it has had in the implementation communities. Below are a few of the success stories.

## Stories from the Field

### “If not for the paralegals... I could have gone into prostitution”

In Gidan Marabus community, in Rano LGA, 23-year old Bara Sani (not real name) had been forced into a marriage with one Mato by her father, Mallam Sani. Bara's marriage to Mato was an unhappy union in which she suffered physical abuse and neglect.

To add to her woes, Mato was also seeing another woman who eventually had a child for him. After the baby was weaned, Mato entrusted the care of the child to Bara, who accepted to bring up the child even though people kept asking her why she would not leave. But she felt it was her fate.

When Bara's mother-in-law accused her of not taking proper care of the child, Bara finally decided to leave the marriage. She asked her husband to find them another place to live, he refused. Instead, he told her he wanted her to get pregnant for him with their second child. Bara chose to part ways. Through an IWEI paralegal who also happened to be her relative, Bara sought a way out of her doomed marriage. The IWEI paralegals in Rano invited her father, Mallam Sani, for a meeting. He verbally abused the paralegals and threatened to disown Bara if she went ahead to seek for a divorce. Eventually, the paralegals supported Bara to seek divorce through the court.

According to Bara, “At court, the judge told me to pay back the dowry of N5,000 and another N5,000 on top to which I agreed but before the divorce



would be finalized, he gave us two weeks to see if we could reconcile our differences. Instead as we got home, my husband gave me my divorce papers. My father who was unhappy with my going to court to seek for divorce disowned me and said I should never come back to his house. I did not have to pay the N10,000 as I told my now ex-husband that he should pay me back the expenses I had incurred looking after our children. He did not want to have to pay so he let me go.”

Bara, who is now happily married to a new husband, also said, “We were married in court with the support of the paralegals since my father had disowned me over the divorce of my first husband. If not for the paralegals, only God knows where I would have been by now. As my father had rejected me, I could not go to other members of my paternal side. I could have gone into prostitution.”

## Stories from the Field

### Making Justice Accessible To Detainees

Paralegals are making justice accessible to detainees and reducing time spent in detention awaiting trial. They also help to reunite those detained with their relatives who sometimes are not aware of the arrest of their loved one. This happened to 20 year old Kallama (not real name) who had been detained day for stealing a goat and his family were not even aware as they had not been notified.

A female paralegal, Halima, was visiting the police station in Bichi LGA to identify those in need of legal first aid services when she came across Kallama, a first time offender. She took up his case and went to his village, a remote location which entailed travelling by car, motorbike, and continuing the rest of the journey on foot.

She met with his family and told them about his plight and that the court sitting was for the following day which she advised them to attend. The next day Kallama's relatives came to court where he was convicted and the presiding Judge sentenced him to 20 lashes and six months imprisonment or a fine of N10,000. Kallama's relatives were angry with him for stealing and wanted to leave him to serve the prison sentence. However, after Halima explained the dangers of being imprisoned and advised them to pay the fine, they paid and he was released.





## Stories from the Field

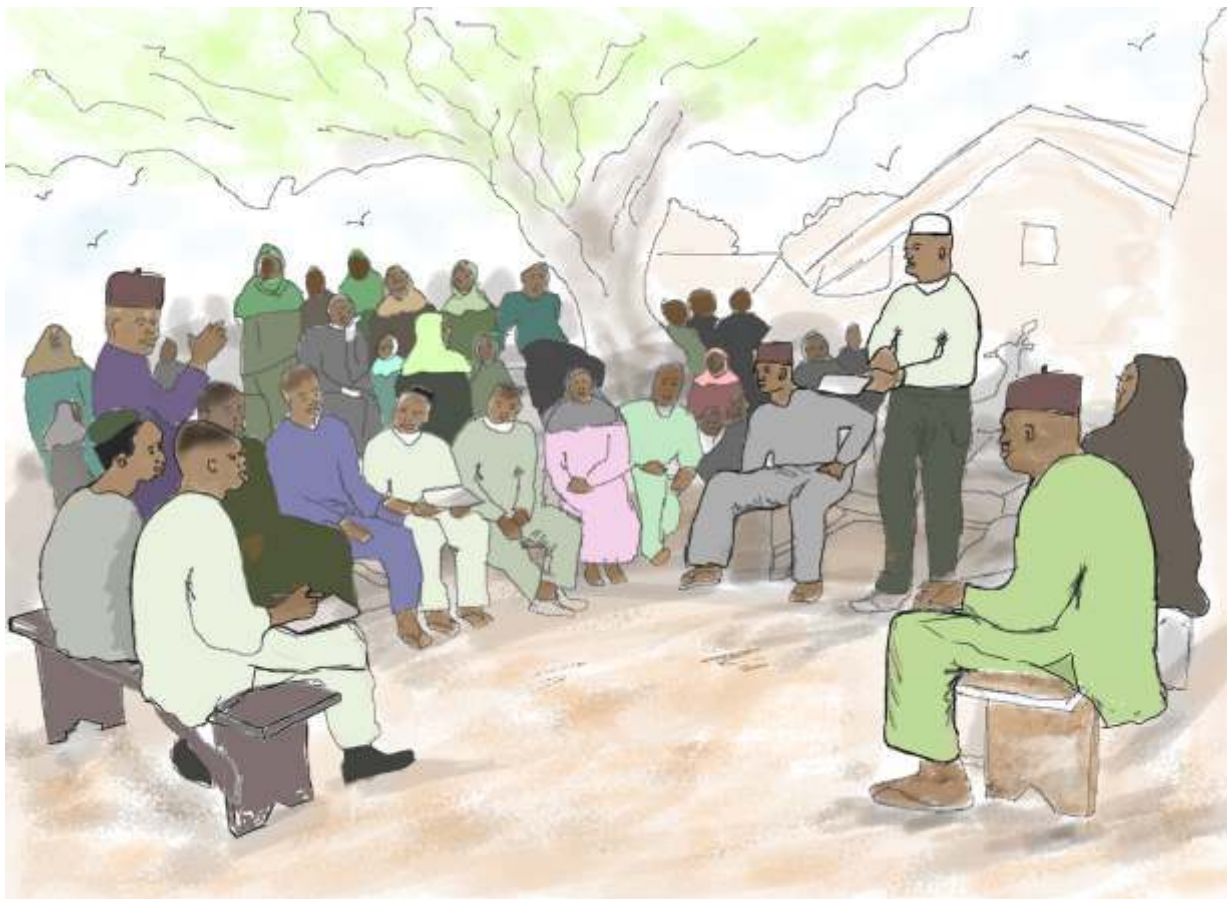
### Community Action with Support from Paralegals

**T**ofa is a remote settlement in Rano LGA of Kano State. It is mainly surrounded by rocks, and the village dwellers are mostly farmers or animal rearers. Abu Daso Quarry Company was using explosives to break the rocks to sell to construction companies. This was hazardous to the community as it was causing cracks in their buildings and killing their animals due to falling rocks.

Through word of mouth, the community heard about Rano Legal Clinic Centre, so they sent a representative to report the case to the paralegals. With support from the paralegals, a letter was drafted and delivered to concerned authorities including the Office of the Special Adviser to Kano State Government on Solid Mineral Resources, as well as the company.

After a series of follow up sessions by both IWEI and the paralegals, the Special Adviser and her team went to the village to investigate the allegations and assess the damage caused by the company. Thereafter a meeting was organized with the Company, the Emir of Rano, paralegals and representatives from Tofa in order to settle the issue.

Following a series of meetings, an agreement was finally reached and those who had suffered damage to their buildings accepted compensation (monetary & building materials) and an apology from the Company. The company no longer operates in that area as they could not meet the terms of the agreement, which was essentially to use modern equipment.





## Stories from the Field

### More Profits and Improved Lifestyles for Kwa Farmers

**K**wa Cotton Farmers is one of the groups trained, mentored, and monitored in Dawakin Tofa for over two years with support from the MacArthur Foundation. Prior to attending the training, they were concerned only about their individual businesses and were generating zero revenue for the non-functioning cooperative.

Drawing from the training they farmers received, they revived their group through setting up of rules and regulations, and making the attendance of meetings mandatory for members. They also began keeping records of sales, and developed a culture of savings as they were taught.

The training and mentoring also made them look for different business opportunities, and though the cotton farming they first ventured into failed, they were able to learn from their mistakes. Since then the group have gone into rice and maize farming, and poultry farming. They have learnt to diversify according to the seasons, resulting in more profits and improved lifestyles for the members.



## Stories from the Field

### Raising their voices

**H**aving attended IWEI's women legal education classes, married adolescent girls and women like Liti Ilu and Rabi Abdullahi are now defying centuries old cultural traditions that deny women the right to raise their voices and stand for their rights – thanks to the legal and human rights knowledge they acquired while attending IWEI's legal education classes.

#### Liti Ilu -Standing up for my rights

About five years ago, I was 20 years old at the time, I met and fell in love with Mamman and a year later we got married. At first our marriage was okay but gradually Ladidi my mother in law started to make my life miserable and I endured this for 2 years. In the end, she made Mamman divorce me though it was against his will.

After my divorce I joined IWEI's legal education class at Darki where coincidentally I met my former mother-in-law Ladidi who also happened to be in the same class.

Overtime, as a result of lessons we were learning in the legal education class, which also included Islamic religious knowledge and periodic lectures on marital issues bordering on the rights of men and women in marriage, my mother in law softened towards me and we started to talk with each other.

“Later, Ladidi decided to allow Mamman and I to remarry, however, his brother who was instrumental in instigating Ladidi's dislike of me decided he wouldn't allow me to return to Mamman's house by coming up with all sorts of excuses. After 4 months of



waiting, I got fed up and one day I asked myself: ***‘what is the use of the knowledge that I have acquired at the legal education class if I cannot stand up for my rights?’*** and with that I promptly returned back to my husband's where I have been living happily ever since along with my mother-in-law” Liti recalled with a smile.

***Liti's story demonstrates how with knowledge, women are able to claim their rights***



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