

# Mixed Observer Team empowering women and preventing gender-based violence (GBV).

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*Partners West Africa Nigeria (PWAN)*

**(A Case Study)**

## Overview

This case study shows how the SPRiNG Programme supported the Peace and Women Advocacy Network (PWAN) to strengthen women's leadership in peace and security in Niger State. PWAN supported the women-led Mixed Observers Team (MOT), which brings together representatives of security agencies, the judiciary, civil society, government institutions, disability groups, emergency services, vigilante groups, and traditional and religious councils to advance the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda.



With SPRiNG's support the MOT has evolved from the initial focus on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) case management, to a broader platform supporting Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) systems and WPS programming, thereby addressing gaps in women's participation, fragmented GBV response, and weak conflict prevention mechanisms. Key results include the completion of Niger State's first Action Plan under UNSCR 1325, training of 80 community actors on conflict management and GBV response, and economic empowerment of 70 vulnerable women. There are enhanced prospects of sustainability with successful registration of the MOT as a registered, independently funded community-based organisation.

## Context

Niger State faced significant gaps in women's meaningful participation in peace and security governance. Patriarchal structures systematically excluded women from security discourse and decision-making, even though they were disproportionately affected by conflict and insecurity. There was no state action plan on women peace and security 10 years after Nigeria adopted the First National Action Plan for domestication of UNSCR 1325. The State also lacked coordinated GBV response mechanisms amid high incidence of domestic and intimate partner violence exacerbated by women's financial dependence and fragmented responses to GBV and violence.

## Approach and Activities

The Mixed Observers Team (MOT) is a multisectoral platform of women working to tackle gender-based violence (GBV). Members are drawn from security agencies, justice institutions, government ministries, civil society, disability groups, emergency services, vigilante groups, and traditional and religious councils. Initially established with support from the FCDO Integrated Security Fund (ISF), the MOT focused on improving Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention and case management by strengthening coordination between women officers, community representatives, and authorities, and supporting survivors.

With support from SPRiNG, the capacity of MOT was significantly strengthened to address identified gaps and its focus expanded beyond GBV to cover Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) and the broader Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda. The MOT is now engaged in initiatives to stakeholder capacity building, policy development, institutional coordination, and community-level action, notably:

- Advocacy **visits to influential traditional leaders** to secure acceptance and ownership
- The drafting of **Niger State's Action Plan on WPS** under UNSCR 1325.
- **Training of 80 community leaders**, security personnel, and religious leaders on Gender-Based Violence response, early warning systems, and conflict mediation.
- **Sensitisation of Muslim and Christian institutions** on gender-based violence and peacebuilding
- **Skills acquisition for 70** vulnerable women

## Results and Lessons

Through facilitating trust-building with traditional and religious leaders, providing clear referral pathways, and formal registration as a community-based organisation, the MOT has evolved into a sustainable, women-led platform for peace and security.

### Results

As a result of sensitisation, capacity building and advocacy by the MOT, there is increased trust in both government and community circles for GBV response and peacebuilding initiatives evidenced by strengthened partnerships with traditional and religious leaders and reinforced community-wide ownership of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention and peacebuilding efforts.

Niger State completed its first-ever Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security under UNSCR 1325. GBV survivors have improved access to support services with increased awareness and referral of cases. which has contributed to referral. For instance, traditional rulers and community leaders have referred 15 sensitive cases to the MOT for resolution.

This shows the growing recognition of leadership and agency of women in roles they were historically excluded from playing in their communities- a notable shift in patriarchal power dynamics. Communities are benefiting from strengthened conflict prevention mechanisms.

The MOT has also empowered persons with disabilities by offering them a platform to contribute to discussions on issues affecting them. Finally, by facilitating the registration of MOT as a community-based organisation, the project has enhanced prospects for sustainability.

Potential crises were prevented through effective mediation, including resolving an interfaith conflict in Bida through swift intervention with respected traditional authority (Mayakin Nupe) that stopped what could have escalated into communal violence.

### Lessons

The project succeeded because it brought together people from security agencies, courts, and community groups, creating a team with both official authority and grassroots trust. Expanding beyond Gender-Based Violence to include early warning and broader peace work helped to increase the relevance of the hitherto gender-focused intervention.

Stakeholder engagement initiatives with traditional rulers and religious leaders helped to influence patriarchal power structures, promote trust and build local ownership, Finally, promoting women's economic empowerment and enhancing women's economic independence mitigates vulnerability of women to gender-based violence and abuse.

# About the SPRiNG Programme

Strengthening Peace and Resilience in Nigeria (SPRiNG) is a UK-funded initiative designed to support a more peaceful and climate-resilient Nigeria. By addressing the root causes of conflict and vulnerability, SPRiNG works to reduce violence, strengthen local systems, and promote inclusive governance across conflict-affected areas in North-West and North-Central Nigeria.

SPRiNG is grounded in a politically informed, evidence-based approach that integrates environmental science, political economy, and conflict analysis. Our goal is to create a more stable and peaceful Nigeria where citizens benefit from reduced violence and increased resilience to the pressures of climate change.



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