

## Advocacy case studies

# Advocacy in Nigeria: Peacebuilding and women's inclusion

**Summary:** Tearfund's partner provides advocacy training to a local community in Nigeria, supporting them to achieve women's participation in local governance structures and religious tolerance.

In Gidan Waya – a small town in Kaduna State – traditional rulers and councils hold a large amount of power, influence and respect in the community, particularly around development issues and conflict resolution. These councils are vital to the attainment of economic progress and political stability at the local level. However, women in Gidan Waya have not historically had the opportunity to participate in traditional council meetings.

The southern region in Kaduna State has struggled with communal, farmer/herder conflict, religious conflict, and violent extremism. These tensions and conflicts have led to displacement, fatalities and have also exacerbated the gender divide in the region, especially for women who were already excluded and marginalised in decision-making processes. All these factors have created a climate of unease and some people fear openly manifesting their religion.<sup>1</sup>

RURCON, a local NGO that Tearfund partners with, is working in Gidan Waya as part of [The Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action \(JISRA\)](#). The JISRA consortium (that Tearfund and RURCON are members of) believes that freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) and interfaith dialogue are essential and integral to the realisation of peaceful and just societies.

As part of the JISRA programme, RURCON decided to run advocacy training with communities in Gidan Waya. After the sessions, a group of local women began to meet together to discuss how they could ensure the inclusion of women in local decision making.

Before RURCON's training, different faith groups in Gidan Waya were largely living away from each other with little dialogue or interaction between groups. RURCON provided a space for both Christian and Muslim women to establish and strengthen friendships, working together to advocate on the issue of women's inclusion in local governance.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.refworld.org/docid/43f305ef0.html>

Together, they approached the district head and advocated for women's inclusion and participation in traditional council meetings. Their request was accepted and a woman named Maryamu was elected to the council. Alongside Maryamu's attendance at the traditional council meetings, an additional four Christian and five Muslim women are part of the community's newly established women's leadership group.

Maryamu shared why women's involvement in the traditional council meetings is so important:

'Without a woman in the council, women will not have the information of the discussion that is taking place...and they will be left behind. I was able to introduce [the voice of] the left behind – I introduced [topics to discuss as a council] such as women's limited access to inheritance... and now steps are being taken to see that women have inheritance from their families.'

As well as addressing female representation in local decision making, the advocacy training has also been a powerful interfaith initiative in an area that has experienced tensions between Muslim and Christian communities. Local RURCON staff shared that through the JISRA training they are seeing transformed mindsets in the community, as people work together on common goals despite religious differences.

Maryamu and the women's leadership group hope that this is just the start of change. When asked what next steps she would like to see, Maryamu shared:

'One tree alone cannot make a forest, so we need to advocate further for women's participation in governance across all levels in Nigeria'.

Tearfund, 100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE, United Kingdom.

☎ +44 (0)20 3906 3906 ✉ [publications@tearfund.org](mailto:publications@tearfund.org) [learn.tearfund.org](http://learn.tearfund.org)

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