



*...Promoting Human Rights*

## **LAWYERS ALERT INTERVENTION ON SEXUAL MINORITY PROTECTION AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE**

### **Introduction and Background**

Lawyers Alert's work under the Gender and Minority Protection thematic area advances the protection, inclusion, and human rights of vulnerable and marginalised communities through evidence-based advocacy, legal protection, institutional engagement, and community systems strengthening. Central to this approach is the organisation's standardised rights documentation and response mechanism built around the LADoCT violations documentation platform, through which rights violations are monitored, documented, analysed, and linked to pro bono legal representation, referrals, advocacy, and strategic interventions.



As part of these interventions, Lawyers Alert established the Sexual Minority Protection Network in 2020 as a secure platform for legal assistance, rights education, referrals, rapid response interventions, and coordinated protection mechanisms for sexual minorities in Nigeria. The Network was developed in response to increasing incidents of violence, discrimination, arbitrary arrests, exclusion, and other rights violations affecting LGBTQI+ persons, particularly during the COVID-19 lockdown period. Through the initiative, over 30 community-based organisations and grassroots clusters across Benue, Nasarawa, and Plateau States were strengthened



to support community protection systems, documentation and reporting of violations, referral pathways, and coordinated rights response mechanisms for LGBTQI+ persons nationwide.

The interventions, continuously deployed within and outside funding limits, have significantly strengthened the leadership, advocacy, governance, and institutional capacity of grassroots LGBTQI+ organisations, enabling them to engage more effectively with government institutions, security agencies, healthcare systems, and community structures.

Through coordinated advocacy engagements, Lawyers Alert and its partners secured commitments from key institutions; State Ministries of Health, State Action Committees on AIDS, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), healthcare management institutions, and traditional and religious leaders to reduce discrimination, improve access to services, and strengthen protections for sexual minorities and key populations.



**APIN public health**



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Lawyers Alert has also contributed to improved access to justice and legal support by strengthening referral systems and rapid-response mechanisms that link affected persons to Lawyers Alert's network of pro bono lawyers across Nigeria's 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. Dedicated emergency response channels and safe reporting mechanisms enabled timely interventions for community members facing rights violations, unlawful arrests, harassment, violence, and discrimination. As part of strengthening community resilience and legal literacy, Lawyers Alert also built the

capacity of over 2,000 LGBTQI+ community members on human rights protections, documentation and reporting of violations, navigating interactions with law enforcement, and access to justice within a human rights framework.

Our interventions have further contributed to institutional and behavioural shifts within key public institutions. State actors and healthcare facilities in project locations committed to improving stigma-free healthcare access for key populations, retraining healthcare workers on non-discrimination and rights-based service delivery, and integrating inclusive approaches into institutional practices. The initiative also strengthened collaboration with security agencies, leading to improved responsiveness to rights violations and increased protection support for community outreach interventions in some locations. Collectively, these interventions strengthened community ownership, expanded protection pathways, improved institutional engagement, and advanced a more coordinated and resilient movement to protect minority rights in Nigeria. Through sustained legal support, capacity strengthening, strategic advocacy, and evidence-based engagement, Lawyers Alert continues to promote a rights-based environment where vulnerable and marginalised persons can access justice, protection, dignity, and equal opportunities without discrimination.

Beyond direct project outcomes, the intervention generated significant unintended positive results, including increased recognition of LGBTQI+ organisations as legitimate stakeholders within broader human rights and governance spaces. Community organisations supported through the initiative gained increased visibility, credibility, and participation in government and multi-stakeholder platforms, including state-level human rights engagements and public events. Partnerships with traditional and religious leaders also contributed to emerging community-level conversations around inclusion, non-discrimination, and social protection for vulnerable populations.

