

### Fieldwork phase 2

FemIDEAS aims to develop new approaches for preventing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in Higher Education (HE) by bringing together insights from lived experience, activists, academics, and policymakers. We focus on how to create institutional culture change in HE so that the issue is challenged and victim-survivors are heard and supported. Nigeria is the 2nd country in the study and fieldwork was conducted remotely. To do this safely and ethically, we worked in close collaboration with our support partner Stand To End Rape (STER) in Lagos. STER assisted with reaching participants and screening to ensure participants were safe and that it was appropriate for us to engage them in the study.



25

People took part in an interview



14

Universities & states represented



4

Non-government organisations represented

### Support provided to participants

- Support pack with info on free, confidential, local and online support organisations.
- Post-interview debrief & 'check-in' via WhatsApp and email.
- Access to specialist counselling from STER.



Stand To End Rape INITIATIVE

### About the interviews

#### Fieldwork dates

November - December 2023

#### Interviews

Online, via Zoom

#### Recruitment methods

- Targetted out-reach by STER via existing networks.
- Email, WhatsApp & X
- Project website

#### Participant groups

Who took part in an interview?

52%

University students

84% women

4%

Academic university employees

8%

Other (non-academic) university employees incl. policy-makers

36%

Student & NGO activists

### Emerging themes in the data\*\*

- **Safety measures:** participants spoke of well-established measures employed to protect themselves from abusive lecturers, incl. forming alliances with other students, never attending a lecturer's office alone, over-achieving, altering clothing and behaviour to avoid being targeted.
- **Closing ranks:** a culture of impunity means lecturers accused of sexual misconduct are often seen to form unions with each other and 'close ranks' to silence students.
- **Gender dynamics and protectionism:** typical gender relations in society mirror those in HEIs, in which there is an emphasis on patriarchal superiority and protection (of women) rather than instituting change.
- **Speaking out:** fears about speaking out are often connected to a dominant victim-blaming narrative. Speaking out could be met with significant consequences for the victim-survivor, incl. being prevented from progressing their studies or passing their exams.
- **Accountability:** data underscored the need for proper accountability and for the responsibility of SGBV in HEIs to be located with policy-makers and faculty who abuse, rather than victim-survivors.
- **Policy & procedure:** There was an emphasis on punitive, carceral responses to deal with perpetrators. Participants discussed that this would be coupled with support for victim-survivors incl. to speak out safely; both practical and therapeutic.
- **Resources:** data point to contrasts in safety and responses to SGBV between private and federal universities, evidencing the role of the neoliberalisation of universities and increased resources.

### Challenges & learning

**Recruitment;** sometimes challenging due to the misunderstanding that participation would lead to employment opportunities.

**Frame of reference;** often through the NGO lens, with responses linked to the sustainable development goals (SDGs), rather than institutional practices.

**Participation as risky;** risk of being labelled a 'bitter feminist' or 'queer' by peers; the risk of negative consequences at university and the influence of campus 'occultists' made talking to the research team risky for some participants.

**Religious and cultural divides;** at times led to some communities being inadvertently 'othered', limiting discussion.

**Anti-LGBT laws;** produce significant challenges for speaking out incl. to the research team, and create an environment of fear in HEIs, exacerbating SGBV and homo/transphobia in HEIs.

#### Notes:

\*\* Themes subject to change as analysis continues

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