

Context-setting

Identity politics - the political use of a collective group identity which instrumentalises ethnicity or religion to mobilise some populations and exclude others from access to power and resources - is not new in Nigeria. In the last period of colonial rule, identity politics was institutionalised in the British policies of 'indirect rule' and the 'tri-partite federation', in which each region had a 'majority ethnic group' that was expected to take power at independence on this basis, rather than on the basis of allegiance to party policies which may cut across ethnic identity.² Despite some political challenges and counter-efforts, this trend has continued to be reproduced in the post-colonial state.³ The more sophisticated version of the pre-1999 transition to civilian rule was no longer parties that were openly regionally and ethnically based, but national parties within which contenders vied to deliver the votes of 'their' people - defined on the same ethnic/regional lines. Again, none of the parties made much effort, if any, to define and win public support for policies and proposed governmental programmes.

Nonetheless, despite the long history of identity politics, the period since 2000 has some qualitatively new features - in particular, it is the first time in Nigeria's post-independence history that laws have been enacted specifically on the grounds that they were religious. The features of the immediate context in which this happened include the religious resurgences and growth of both ethnic and religious identity politics which occurred with the obvious failures of independence promises, and a cynical disillusionment with the political arena as corrupt and self-serving. The economic and social exigencies caused by World Bank-type structural adjustment policies have also contributed to the conditions in which the religious and ethnic based right have been found more persuasive than they had been in the past.

Ironically, despite the growth of fundamentalist tendencies, the new religious laws were not the result of pressure from a right-wing religious party or group (see also Sanusi, this publication). The initiative came from the newly elected governor of Zamfara State, who claimed that it was part of his election platform, though apparently he made only one remark at one rally. It was certainly not part of his party's platform, nor does it seem to have been reflected in any of his written campaign materials or major campaign speeches, as reported by a national press that would certainly have found this grist to their mill. Faced with a small and recently created state with little infrastructure, few natural resources, relatively few people with high formal education and little capital (the states created recently did not receive the same large start-up grants as states created previously), Governor Sani had to find some way to make himself popular. He did it by claiming to undertake *shari'atisation*. The governors of eleven other states (most but not all Muslim majority states) either decided to follow suit or were pushed into passing similar acts for fear of being seen as anti-*shari'a*, as well as by demonstrations and threats (including of violence against their families).

Reactions to *shari'atisation*

As might be expected, condemnations of *shari'atisation* were rife. Christian and other non-Muslim communities (especially those in the north) feared the imposition on them of Muslim religious laws. Human rights NGOs and others were concerned about rights to religious freedoms of non-Muslims, the violation of constitutional provisions of secularity in the state,

and the 'barbaric' nature of some of the punishments enacted. Women's rights activists were concerned that this would be a rationale to discriminate against women and restrict their rights (the first announcement of *shari'anicisation* in November 1999 included a restriction on women's movements in public).

Amongst members of Muslim communities, reactions were varied. Ironically, amongst some of those who had consistently stood for the 'Islamisation' of Nigeria, like Ibrahim el-Zakzaky, there was opposition, on the grounds that passing and implementing harsh punishments without a prior transformation of society to more just socio-economic relations wherein the needs of the poor could be met was not Islamic. Some Muslims are, of course, also members of the human rights and women's rights NGO and activist communities, and reacted as described above. Others felt that, as Muslims, they could not simply oppose *shari'anicisation*, because, lacking Arabic and years of study of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), they were inadequately equipped to critique what was happening, even if they were uneasy about it. This feeling was strengthened after the experiences of Lawal Batagarawa and others. Lawal Batagarawa is a much respected Muslim Hausa poet who was prominent in nationalist struggles of the late 1950s in the Northern Elements People's Union (NEPU). NEPU's anti-imperialist, socially egalitarian and social justice stand drew its justification from Muslim discourses as well as from anti-imperialist theory. Batagarawa pointed out the dangers of the political use of religion, reminding people that *shari'a* had been used to oppress the *talakawa* (common people) and nationalist activists during the colonial period. The reactions were so vitriolic and threatening that subsequently advertisement space was taken out in which to iterate his support for *shari'a*.

The dominant discourse was that to criticise - even in the mildest of ways - the *shari'anicisation* project, was to be, by definition, anti-*shari'a*, anti-North and anti-Islam. This discourse was maintained both through reiterations in the mass media (electronic and print), and social sanctions, including the threat of and actual violence by vigilantes. Vigilantes sometimes act individually, sometimes as *hizbah* committees claiming the right to monitor and enforce *shari'a*, both as *ad hoc* groups and with overt local state support (especially in Zamfara) or tacit support.

Nonetheless, the new *shari'a* acts did have widespread mass support in Muslim communities in both the north and the southwest of Nigeria. This can be attributed to a number of factors. A strong element was the identification with a religious or regional community⁴ that offered some hope, following the general loss of credibility and legitimacy of politics and politicians and the election as president of a 'born-again' Christian from the southwest (President Obasanjo). However, there was also the association of 'Islamic law' with morality, and the belief that strong punishments would result in a decline in both immoral behaviour and the violence which results in public insecurity. It was believed that strong punishments were needed to deal with widespread public acts of violence, armed robbery, inter and intra-community conflict and the lack of effectiveness of the police in ensuring public safety and security. The concern with immorality was not so much around sexuality, but very particularly around corrupt state and government practices - it is, after all, the poor who suffer most

from public embezzlement, 10 per cent-ing and similar corrupt practices, because it is they who most need the infrastructure and services (health, education, potable water, etc.) that are then not delivered. In addition, since the charity tithe (*zakat*) is one of the '5 pillars of Islam', many people had expectations of a serious social welfare programme resulting from *shari'atisation*.

It was also welcomed by some Christians as justifying a move toward 'Christian law' for Christians. Yet other people justified it as a rationale for their own support for increased local state autonomy *vis-à-vis* the federal state - especially in the oil-rich delta region and the south east of Nigeria.

In part, the rhetoric over *shari'atisation* - by both its proponents and its opponents - is overblown. Throughout its colonial and post-colonial history, Nigeria has had multiple and parallel legal systems - all of them administered through and implemented by state legal and judicial institutions - with family and personal status issues most often settled through Muslim or customary law. Thus Nigeria has always had different laws for different communities (by religious faith, by ethnicity). What the new acts did was to foreground the issue of religious laws, pass new criminal legislation creating some new offences (mostly around sexuality, like the *zina* laws and the prohibition of lesbianism)⁵ and recognise whipping, stoning, *qisas* and *diyyat*⁶ as punishments for infractions. In addition, many vigilantes held the passing of the acts to justify the imposition of practices that often have no legal basis at all, such as restrictive dress codes for women, controls on women's movement and use of public transport, and music and dancing at private social ceremonies - including single-sex occasions.

This, then, was the situation in late 1999/early 2000 in which actors had to work to counter the political use of religion. BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights has been in the forefront of that struggle and closely involved with defending the rights of women, men and children - in particular of those convicted under the new *shari'a* criminal legislation acts passed in Nigeria since 2000. In fact, BAOBAB was the first (and for several months the only) NGO with members from the Muslim community who were willing to speak publicly against retrogressive versions of Muslim laws and to work on changing the dominant conservative understanding of the rights of women in enacted *shari'a*. BAOBAB was also the first, and again for some time the only, NGO to actually find the victims and support their appeals. The rest of this paper will focus on the strategies and activities of BAOBAB and its allies in the struggle to counter fundamentalism under the new *shari'a* acts since 1999.

BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights

BAOBAB was established in 1996 with the mandate to defend, promote and develop women's human rights in customary, secular and religious laws. Thus BAOBAB has undertaken research and produced reports on women's rights and laws in Nigeria, including on access to justice, for the Oputa Human Rights Violations Investigation Panel, and (with other non-governmental organizations) on Nigeria's record in fulfilling obligations under the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as well as a series of legal literacy leaflets. BAOBAB draws public attention to women's rights

issues, for example through co-organising with the Civil Resource and Documentation Centre Nigeria's first National Tribunal on Violence Against Women; organising art competitions for young people on building women's human rights cultures; and co-ordinating and participating in both national and international campaigns and networks for gender justice, like the current national Domestic Violence Bill, the international solidarity network Women Living Under Muslim Laws (for which BAOBAB coordinates in Africa and the Middle East), and the International Criminal Court Gender Caucus. BAOBAB runs training workshops for paralegals, and in leadership skills for women and gender awareness in project management and research, amongst others. BAOBAB also supports women and girls to fight or redress rights violations in individual cases, ranging from domestic violence, forced marriage, rape and sexual abuse, to achieving custody and guardianship and maintenance rights for their children.⁷ Here, however, I shall be concerned only with the programmes and activities that directly relate to countering the political use of religion to vitiate women's rights.

Even before 1999, a major part of BAOBAB's work had involved de-mystifying religious laws by documenting how historical, political, economic, socio-cultural and gender specificities mark the construction of all laws (customary, secular or religious), and the empirical diversity of Muslim laws historically and contemporarily, within Nigeria and in the Muslim world more generally. BAOBAB members had also participated in work on critiquing gender-bias and reviving and developing understandings of the *Qur'an* that are not misogynistic.⁸ These understandings were reflected in BAOBAB's legal literacy activities (workshops, legal leaflet production, paralegal training), thereby providing a basis to oppose fundamentalist claims that *shari'a* is divinely given without human intervention, that it is timeless, or that their version is the only true form of *shari'a*.

Following the passing of the *shari'a* acts, from November 1999 on, BAOBAB continued with these activities, but also added new ones in a multi-pronged strategy. This strategy can be divided into two main areas - those focusing primarily on Muslim communities and within Muslim discourses, and those aimed at bridging community divides and developing mutual solidarity and support through shared understandings and critiques, objectives and strategies.

BAOBAB's work within Muslim discourses

An immediate challenge was to the dominance of the view that it is inherently anti-*shari'a* or un-Islamic to criticise the passing of the new *shari'a* acts and raise questions about the nature of *shari'a* and its relation to the state. This obviously is the view that is preferred by those claiming to speak for *shari'anicisation* in Nigeria, as it immediately invalidates all criticism. It is maintained by ignoring criticisms from those who are not Muslim (as being infidels with no right to comment) and by accusations of being apostate (widely reported in the mass media - especially radio and the Hausa press)⁹ for those who do identify as Muslim. These accusations are more than merely abuse, however - apostasy is linked with a death penalty. In the context of vigilantes and the failure of state authorities to maintain security and the rule of law, these accusations are a very real threat, and raise the likelihood of physical attack, if not actual death.

To counter this, BAOBAB works to ensure that countervailing views also enter the public domain. BAOBAB has made public statements criticising the nature of the passing of the *shari'a* acts (lack of open discussion, lack of democratic process, infringement on constitutional and human rights), siting the critique largely within Muslim discourses (such as referring to the verse which says the rule of Muslims is by consultation). BAOBAB has also pointed out the gender and class biases in the laws and their implementation. BAOBAB has also encouraged others to speak publicly, through organising joint statements with other NGOs and initiating a coalition of NGOs for the Protection of Women's Rights in Religious, Customary and Secular Laws (a coalition of over 60 NGOs across Nigeria, including many working in predominantly Muslim areas). BAOBAB's example encouraged other individuals and organisations within Muslim communities to intervene publicly. In addition, BAOBAB reached out to particular individuals and organisations to try to persuade them to engage in an open discussion about their reservations concerning what was being done in the name of Islam - sometimes without initial success, as in the case of the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations of Nigeria. Gradually, more and more Muslims, like Iman¹⁰ and Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, have been willing to make known their reservations and concerns about the gender politics of *shari'anicisation*.

The inhibition against speaking up however is not only due to intimidation. Many Muslims feel that they do not know enough to make a valid critique. BAOBAB's project here has been to make more widely available information about the nature of laws (including specifically Muslim laws as historical, context-laden, and changing human constructs), about critiques within Muslim theology of male-biased interpretations (both historical and contemporary), about the struggles of Muslim women for rights from early Muslim history onwards, and about the debate around 're-opening the doors of *ijtihad*'¹¹ (which permits considering justice, equality, the needs of the community, the principle of lesser evil, and so on, and draws on other discourses - e.g. international human rights covenants - that may throw light on these needs). Making this history, and the existence of these long-held debates, accessible outside the very small group of men who read Arabic, provides the basis for many to feel confident that their concerns are not traitorous to Islam, are shared by many within the Muslim world, and to reclaim a long and varied history of struggle for women's rights within the Muslim world. BAOBAB's work here takes a number of different forms.

In order to challenge the notion of a single (and misogynistic) Islamic law and provide a basis for the critique and reconstruction of particular laws in the *shari'a* acts, BAOBAB has made historical, empirical and *fiqh* knowledge more widely available. From BAOBAB's research and that of others in WLUML, as well as secondary sources, BAOBAB publishes legal literacy leaflets and academic articles, and is in the process of preparing national analytical work, paralegal training manuals and other training material on women's rights in religious, customary and secular law in Nigeria. In addition, BAOBAB contributed towards the preparation of an international handbook published by WLUML.¹² These publications are largely for the benefit of the relatively small proportion of people in Nigeria who read in English (with on-going translations of the legal literacy leaflets into Hausa and Yoruba).

However, BAOBAB also uses the national (and occasionally international) media, not only writing newspaper articles, but also giving radio and television interviews, as well as public lectures and talks, to make this information as widely available as possible.

In addition to writing and talks, BAOBAB has been working directly with people to equip them to engage. These training workshops include the paralegal training described above, and a series of legal and rights consciousness workshops run by BAOBAB staff and volunteers across Nigeria on a variety of topics (child marriage, women's rights in marriage, violence against women, women's political and civic rights and responsibilities, etc.). The work of the BAOBAB volunteers in outreach teams in the states affected has been impressive. For instance, despite quite overt surveillance and intimidation from the local state security agents, the voluntary outreach team in Zamfara state, with the support of BAOBAB facilitators and materials, has continued to engage in public education on women's rights and the importance of girl child education. The team feels that this strategy will change the situation so that instead of 'most women seeing the implementation of *shari'a* as meaning that they should keep quiet and accept whatever comes out of the *shari'a* implementation as it is ... it would help women to further develop themselves to the point of asking for their rights'.¹³

Most directly related are the bridge-building workshops (see below for description). The materials that have been most illuminating for participants in these workshops have been the bridge-building background documents and the Great Ancestors slide show. The Muslim background document contains quotations that relate to issues of women's rights from the *Qur'an* and the *hadith*,¹⁴ along with different columns citing progressive and conservative interpretations, laws and practices in different Muslim communities around the world. During the workshops, participants take a topic (e.g. women's custody rights, or witnessing, or right of movement) and discuss the different constructions that have been and can be put on particular verses and the very different consequences they have for women's lives. By doing so, the participants demonstrate to themselves that different Muslim communities have interpreted diversely and emphasised different concerns in constructing Muslim laws and practices. Thus they understand that, while many of these interpretations do not respect the human rights of women, others have done so, indicating that non-recognition of women's rights is not a necessary feature of Muslim laws, and that change and diversity are features of all laws enforced in society rather than the uniform universality claimed by the political religious right.¹⁵

The performance of the Great Ancestors slide show¹⁶ at training workshops has been effective in breaking down misconceptions about Muslim women's acquiescence in their oppression as women, whether in the name of religion or custom. This is a presentation of some fifty women in the Muslim world, including Africa and Asia as well as the Middle East, dating from 800 AD (i.e. after the very early history of the Mecca/Medina period) to the 1950s. It shows that there is a long history of Muslim women fighting for sexual and reproductive rights, for civil and political rights, and for economic, cultural and social rights, as individual women and for women as a group, as well as for their communities. Further, it reveals that while many used Muslim discourses to fight for rights in Muslim laws,¹⁷ or presented arguments based

on appeals to Qur'anic *surah* and *hadith*, Muslim women have also struggled for rights in defiance of the religious constructions of their times or simply outside them. The effects of this have been to enable women (and men) from Muslim communities to reclaim a history of active struggle for rights in the Muslim world, which helps break down some of the inhibitions to present-day struggle.¹⁸

BAOBAB also challenges the specific implementation of laws by supporting the appeals of those convicted under the new *shari'a* criminal legislation, which, while gender-neutral in language, has been implemented as distinctly discriminatory to women and the poor. BAOBAB made the choice to pursue the appeals in the *shari'a* system (as opposed to the secular system in the first instance), thereby demonstrating that people have a right to appeal and to challenge injustices, including those perpetrated in the name of Islam. Every appeal in the local *shari'a* courts strengthens this process. Since the first cases - those of Bariya Magazu, where BAOBAB had to convince her family and various opinion-leaders in the village to agree to an appeal, and the Jangedi case, where a man convicted of theft refused to appeal and had his hand amputated - many victims have no longer acquiesced to injustices, but have actively sought help. Furthermore, in both Safiya Hussein Tungar-Tudu's and Amina Lawal's cases, members of their community have spoken about the abuse of *shari'a* and taken action to protect them from local vigilantes. These are actions that would not have happened when BAOBAB first started this work in 1999. At that time, even finding a lawyer from the Muslim community willing to represent the victim was not easy. Winning appeals in the *shari'a* courts, as BAOBAB and others have done, establishes that convictions should not have been made.

In carrying out the activities above, BAOBAB has drawn on and developed international links in the Muslim world to share argumentation (*fiqh*), case law and strategies, as well as to share empirical and analytical knowledge in order to challenge specific restrictions (such as dress code, movement restrictions, pregnancy as evidence for *zina*,¹⁹ etc.). This has been a huge practical support, as well as a means of showing solidarity internationally.

Building bridges between communities and using other discourses

Complementary to the Muslim community/Muslim discourse work that BAOBAB carries out, is the work to build solidarity and common visions for women's rights across different communities, thereby also providing the basis for a common front against all forms of fundamentalisms. In particular, BAOBAB has been holding a series of meetings, to clarify practices, beliefs and laws concerning women's rights, in communities of both Muslims and Christians. These workshops, dubbed the Bridge-Building Meetings, bring together groups of women and men rights activists and opinion leaders from Muslim communities, and, separately, from Christian communities. The groups are selected to include both those for whom religious community is a primary identity marker (for instance, *imams* or nuns), and those for whom it is one of a number of facets of identity. Each group also includes members of diverse groups within the overall community (e.g. Catholics, Anglicans and Pentecostals amongst Christian communities).

The aim of these meetings is to give each group space to examine their own community's practices regarding women's rights, especially where they are ascribed to religious beliefs and laws. In BAOBAB's experience it is counter-productive to begin with a joint group as each group often then feels it necessary to defend its own religious beliefs and practices, thereby missing the opportunity to examine critically the potential for abuse of women's rights in their own communities. The same process used in examination of the history and critique of women's rights in one's own religious community is then applied to other religious communities. Each meeting also incorporates discussions of the political uses of religion (often referred to as 'fundamentalisms' or 'religious extremism and bigotry') world-wide, and such tendencies as they are developing in Nigeria. A second stage of meetings brings together the participants from both Christian and Muslim backgrounds to develop joint understandings and critiques of the political use of religion and religious bigotry - noting the similarities, parallels and threats posed by fundamentalists, whether Christian, Muslim or ethnic. This is part of the process of developing a common broad agenda for promoting women's rights that would be acceptable to people from diverse religious backgrounds. The workshops then work to produce a common vision and agenda for women's rights, and common strategies to combat the political use of religious or ethnic identity.

So far, eight such meetings have been held. They have been extremely successful in clarifying issues of gender rights in religious establishments and practices, the history of the political use of religion in Nigeria and elsewhere, and in building a sense of trust for further work.²⁰ In addition, they have frequently been able to 'convert' some religious conservative opponents to respect for BAOBAB; others have become actual allies in the work of developing women's rights in all forms of laws.

BAOBAB has also initiated or been instrumental in setting up broad coalitions of NGOs and individuals that can work together from different regions, communities and interest groups in Nigeria. These include the Coalition for the Protection of Women's Rights in Religious, Secular and Customary Laws, already mentioned, which provides a platform where NGOs supporting a particular struggle could both explain the context and reasons for their strategy, and negotiate support and solidarity in specific ways from other NGOs in the coalition. Thus, for instance, while BAOBAB was initiating and supporting Bariya Magazu's appeal, Project Alert²¹ and BAOBAB were also together supporting Stella Ekeke's petition for divorce and custody of her children following domestic violence (which blinded her in one eye) in Igbo customary law (in which children have been regarded as the property of the father). In taking these issues together, the Coalition members were educating each other about different forms of identity politics while noting the similarities of their effects for women's lives, thus negating the 'other/outsider/enemy' position that 'fundamentalisms' erect. During this period the Coalition worked on understanding two different contexts and situations, and on developing means whereby it could support the NGOs directly involved, rather than in initiatives that might prove counter-productive or divisory.

Similarly, national coalitions like the NGOs against violence against women, or around CEDAW, help to focus the attention of diverse groups on common issues affecting women, while simultaneously requiring that the different contexts in which these occur be taken into account. Again the links between groups (and the communities with which they work or are from), and the understandings that are promoted by working together on common issues, help prevent the 'othering' on which identity politics depend for successful mobilisation.

At the theoretical-political level, whilst drawing on Muslim (or other religious) discourses, BAOBAB also insists on the right to claim human rights discourses. BAOBAB points out that international human rights law and language are not solely the domain of the West, noting that, for instance, of the twenty-two countries who initiated what became CEDAW, eleven had Muslim communities and seven of the eleven were Muslim majority states. Furthermore, the other eleven were Third World or East European countries. Hence CEDAW should be seen as reflecting their concerns, rather than simple Western imposition. Importantly too, BAOBAB insists that the universality of human rights is a principle and a process through increasing recognition of diverse contexts and inclusion, rather than a given of current international human rights law (see Imam 2003).

Why these approaches?

Approaches that rely on appeals to secularity and recourse to international human rights covenants have been criticised as being likely to be viewed by Muslim communities as western impositions. On the other hand, approaches that rely on working within religious discourses have often been dismissed as short-sighted because inherently limiting, and therefore both time-wasting and reactionary. BAOBAB has chosen to negotiate a strategy that is neither wholly secular nor completely circumscribed by religious discourses - and which in the process runs the risk of falling between two stools. Why has BAOBAB taken this risk?

There are a number of related reasons for engaging in contestations of religious discourse. First, there is the refusal to allow a few men to reserve, for themselves, the right to define the norms and rights of any community (in this case Muslim). BAOBAB insists on the rights of women as members of the community to participate in defining culture and community (including religious obligations and rights). Secondly, BAOBAB recognises that rights must be regarded by communities as part of their world view, not imposed upon them. Opposing Muslim fundamentalists on the grounds that their views are barbaric and contravene international human rights would simply not be heard by most Muslims, and may in fact make them defensive instead. Opposing them by pointing out their inconsistency, and the actual or potential rights developments within religious and cultural histories and experiences, is more likely to reach people. However, challenge from within religious discourses is not necessarily the 'safe' course in the context of possible physical, social and political danger from vigilantes or the Islamist state - rather more hostility is directed at the 'traitors from within' than at the 'infidels' from without.

On the other hand, rejecting human rights or other discourses is also limiting. Human rights discourse - especially in the arena of women's reproductive and sexual rights - is an international product, and claims based on it can be empowering. However, it is important to recognise diversity, and build supportive approaches to constructing shared platforms amongst different communities.

Endnotes

- ¹ My thanks to Mufuliat Fijabi for her extremely helpful comments on the draft of this paper.
- ² Jibrin Ibrahim (1991) 'Religion and Political Turbulence in Nigeria', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol 29 (1), pp. 115-36.
- ³ Ayesha M. Imam (1993) 'Politics, Islam and Women in Kano, Northern Nigeria', in Valentine Moghadam (ed.) *Identity Politics and Women: Cultural Reassertions and Feminisms in International Perspective*, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, pp. 123-44.
- ⁴ It should be noted, however, that although the north of Nigeria is often referred to as being Muslim, there are many non-Muslims. At least two states in the north are predominantly Christian, and several others are around 50:50 between Muslims and other religious adherents. The other area where there is a strong Muslim presence is the south west of Nigeria, which is also roughly 50:50 between Muslims and others (mostly Christian).
- ⁵ So far as I am aware, previous legislation prohibited sodomy (whether male-male or male-female), but not specifically homosexuality. The new *shari'a* criminal legislation also does this. However, it also for the first time adds specific clauses prohibiting lesbianism.
- ⁶ The payment of fines to the victim or his or her relatives, and the principle of retributive justice (an eye for an eye).
- ⁷ See www.baobabwomen.org for more information on BAOBAB's mission and activities.
- ⁸ Both of these - the empirical legal work and the philosophical *fiqh* work - were primarily undertaken through the international solidarity network Women Living Under Muslim Laws, through participation in the Women and Laws and Qur'anic Interpretations Programmes - see www.wluml.org for publications that resulted.
- ⁹ This includes the western media - for instance, the Voice of America Hausa Service has more than once broadcast personal attacks on Ayesha Imam (first Executive Director of BAOBAB).
- ¹⁰ A woman lawyer in Abuja who writes under a *nom-de-plume*.
- ¹¹ Re-establishing interpretative reasoning as a recognized and valid principle of *shari'a*, rather than considering changes as wrong innovations.
- ¹² WLUML (2003) *Knowing Our Rights: Women, family, laws and customs in the Muslim world*, WLUML: Pakistan.
- ¹³ BAOBAB voluntary outreach facilitator in Zamfara State - personal communication via Mufuliat Fijabi, Senior Programme Officer, BAOBAB.
- ¹⁴ The *hadith* are accounts of events or situations in the life of Prophet Muhammad. Most scholars view them as second only to the *Qur'an* in defining the contours of Muslim law.
- ¹⁵ Similarly the Christian background document looks at scripture, arguments around interpretation and the diverse practices of Christian communities. Thus members of Christian communities also analyse and recognise misogyny in Christian discourses and the necessity to combat the Christian religious right.
- ¹⁶ Developed primarily by Farida Shaheed of Shirkat Gah, Pakistan, for WLUML, with contributions from others in WLUML's international solidarity network (including BAOBAB).
- ¹⁷ Some of which are unheard of in Nigerian *shari'a* in contemporary times, like the right to negotiate a monogamous marriage and have this upheld by a *shari'a* court.
- ¹⁸ Shown in other forums, it has also helped to break down the patronising and condescending attitudes that some Christian and secular activists have towards Muslim women, as eternally passive and downtrodden.
- ¹⁹ Extra-marital sexual relations.
- ²⁰ Their reputation is such that BAOBAB has been asked to run similar workshops in other countries in Africa, and has begun doing so.
- ²¹ A Nigerian NGO that focuses on documenting and combating violence against women.