



Addressing the shortage of female health workers

Developing a safeguarding approach in Northern Nigeria



Report to W4H and DAI Global Health, February 2020

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

DFID	UK Department for International Development
HTI	Health Training Institution
FYP	Foundation Year Programme
MOH	Ministry of Health
W4H	Women for Health

Principal author: Nikki Bradley MBE (hc), BA(hons) CQSW

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Georgia Taylor, Senior Technical Advisor, DAI Global Health

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Developing a safeguarding approach in Northern Nigeria

There is great organisational potential to adopt and strengthen a safeguarding approach in the HTIs with the right support from experienced and skills safeguarding practitioners

1. Executive Summary

This was a focussed exercise to ascertain the views of students and staff in the HTIs of Northern Nigeria in order to increase understanding about the prevalence and scope of safeguarding understanding and the experiences of those who work or study there.

The work described in this document was another building block in the foundation of work that needs to continue with the support of specialist staff, as there is inconsistent understanding of the main risks and how to respond to them. The lack of legal and procedural guidance from local and national government is apparent, and the local safeguarding expertise was not generally visible. However, there is great organisational potential to adopt and strengthen a safeguarding approach in the HTIs with the right support from experienced and skills safeguarding practitioners who can assist in using the Safeguarding Approach document to begin to build confidence and action.

2. Background and introduction

'We are training women to become good health workers, but our approach has also empowered them. Not only will fewer mothers and babies die when these women return to their villages but also their growing status, educational attainment and new vocation will shine a light for others to follow.' Dr Fatima Adamu, National Programme Manager, Women for Health, Nigeria

Since 2012 Women for Health (W4H) has been working to address the shortage of female health workers in Northern Nigeria. They have adopted an eight year, five state approach funded by UKAid to train a new generation of midwives.

W4H have been working locally to change attitudes to the education of young women and have developed a supplementary programme called the Foundation Year Programme (FYP) to help them qualify.

Since April 2018 W4H have focused on a "building back better" approach in the conflict and humanitarian areas in Yobe and Borno states, as well as ensuring sustainability of the progress achieved over the last five years in Katsina, Kano, Jigawa and Zamfara.

This report outlines an initiative that is part of the extension phase of the W4H project April 2018 - October 2020.

The conflict that started in 2009 in Northern Nigeria has had far reaching consequences with an estimated 35,000 people killed and millions displaced. Infrastructure gaps are still significant in governance, utilities, transport, education and health care, plunging the community into a reliance on external help in order to manage daily life.

This document is another building block in the foundation of work that needs to continue with the support of specialist staff

3. Objectives of the assignment

- The task was to attempt to establish a shared understanding about the concept of what a 'safeguarding approach' entails, building on the work that has already happened locally in some areas
- To elicit the views of as many as possible of those with a relationship with the health training institutions (HTIs) about the current strengths and challenges in maintaining the welfare of everyone in each institution.
- To use the learning from the first stage of the work to inform and shape the approach in the second stage of the work holding in mind the Trauma informed work that has started in Yobe state and Borno state.
- To produce a safeguarding approach document that could be shared across the HTIs
- To produce a final draft safeguarding action plan for the HTIs in Yobe and Borno, using a template that could be utilised by other HTIs and that could be a useful tool in translating the progress that has been made thus far to another NGO relationship.

As a result of the work undertaken during the first week of November 2019 in Nigeria, a power point presentation was also compiled for a meeting with the National Midwifery Council that was due to take place by the end of November 2019, and input was also given on the development of the Safeguarding Action Plans for HTIs other than Yobe and Borno.

The work was undertaken in three distinct stages across an eight week period (September – November 2019)

Stage 1.

a. Management workshop – a two day workshop with senior teaching staff and managers from each of the HTI. This workshop provided a platform for a series of visits that took place immediately after, to three of the HTIs.

b. Visits to HTI in Kanu, Jigawa and Katsina where a series of small group interviews followed a semi structured format to elicit the perspective of teaching staff, students, support staff and managers, the student union and matrons.

c. An exercise to summarise the key messages from the workshop and the visits was undertaken in preparation for Stage 2.

Stage 2.

a. (4th – 7th November 2019) Visits to the Maiduguri HTI in Borno State to conduct the same small group interviews, undertaking a direct work approach with students in order to gain a deeper understanding of their lived experience.

b. An opportunity to meet the team of psychologists who have led the Trauma informed approach to community resilience in Borno State and to attend the United Nations base in Maiduguri to listen to the formal presentation of initial findings.

c. A concluding meeting with the provosts of Borno and Yobe HTIs to agree the parameters of a safeguarding action plan. (N.B. This meeting was severely curtailed by the fact that both Provosts had undertaken a dangerous and lengthy journey on the same day and so had to leave our meeting by lunchtime, we therefore had to continue a dialogue through e-mail during the subsequent weeks).

Stage 3.

a. Completion of the safeguarding approach and the action plans for Yobe and Borno HTI.

b. Preparation of a presentation for the NMC

c. Dissemination of the safeguarding approach document and the template of the action plan to HTIs in Kanu, Jigawa and Yobe for them to use as the basis of their planning.

d. Completion of a summary report for W4H in London and Nigeria.

4. Approach and methodology

The consultant designed the intervention so that the team of five facilitators from varied but relevant professional backgrounds adopted a relational and strength based approach that encouraged exploration and involved a lot of listening and reflecting back from the W4H team to participants. The structure of the direct contact, the interview questions and the exercises that we facilitated were designed to support open and reflective conversations and to encourage dialogue. At times this appeared in direct contrast to the structure and predominantly didactic approach to teaching and the management hierarchy in the HTIs. The approach was based on a developing global understanding amongst safeguarding experts, in practice and in academia that the most effective way of safeguarding those who are most vulnerable to the misuse of power that fuels exploitation and abuse is to approach the concept of safeguarding within a scaffold of clear legislative and procedural supports to action. It is imperative to recognize that without that structure, as in Northern Nigeria the approach has to be one of community trust where those in power work to develop trust and protection through action, engaging with all of the relevant stakeholders and negotiating local solutions that can be tested and adapted to the local situation.

Without the structure that legislation and policy affords there is no organisational understanding of what is meant by safeguarding and no recourse to law or the criminal justice system. Therefore it was important to avoid a dense and detailed procedural approach such as an extensive document about a subject that government, either locally or nationally have not consistently legislated against.

Therefore the task for the Provosts of the HTIs involved with this project and also for the National Midwifery Council is more complicated than for those who live and work in more regulated policy environments.

There is extensive international evidence that focusing energy on documentation and procedure without a shared commitment to change, can assist those who want to abuse their power by exploiting vulnerability.

The consultant therefore avoided a traditional procedure in favour of an approach based on action learning and on developing a set of principles similar to Save the Children's 'code of behaviour' work globally.

The approach we took also posed a challenge in the complex power dynamics that exist between the W4H team, who are regarded in the role of benefactors and therefore awarded influence and power by the HTI staff and students. The local W4H team generously participated in activities that at times were clearly markedly different than their usual approach.

Cultural context and understanding

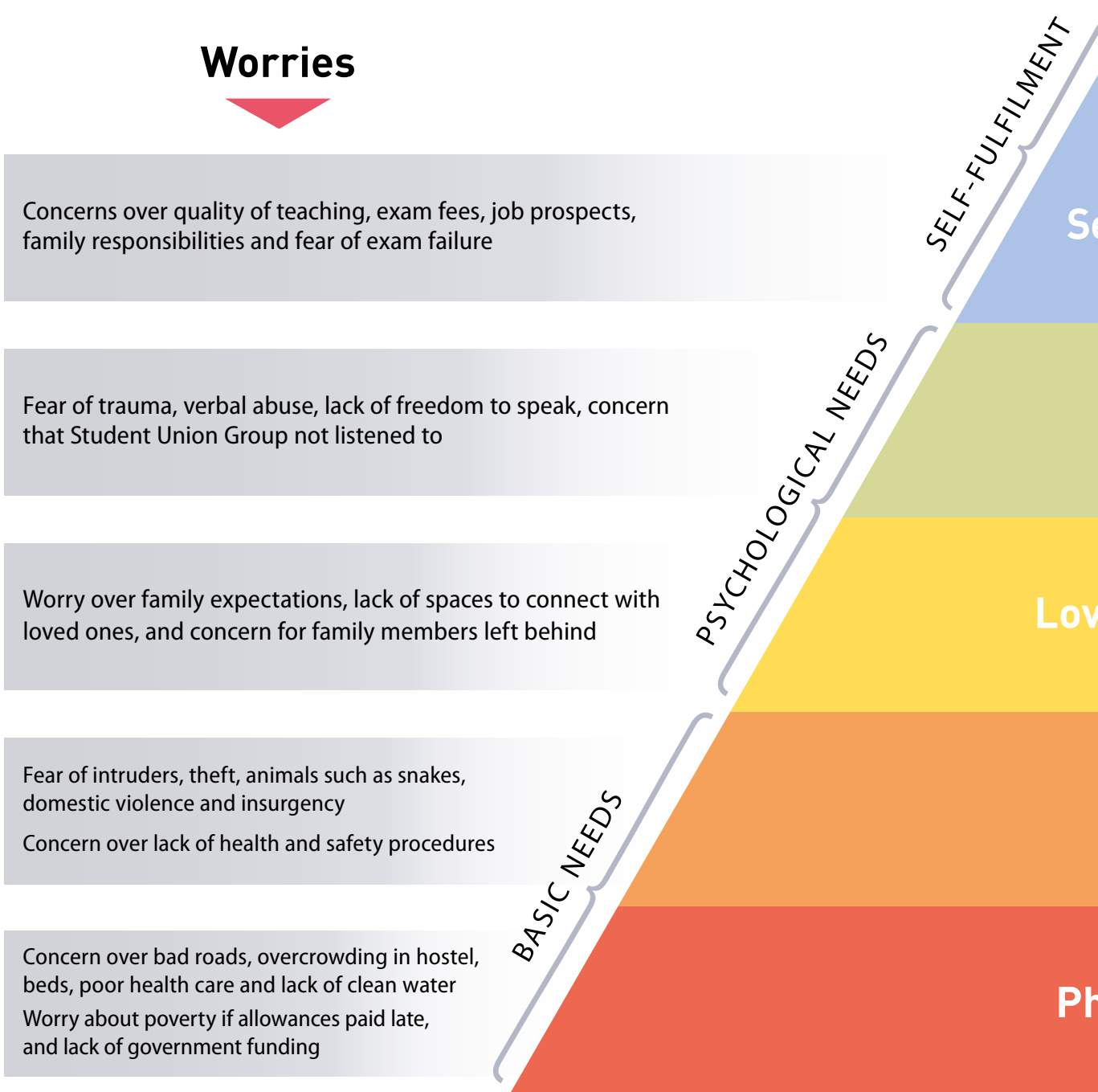
It was, of course, extremely important to acknowledge that whilst the approach that the team followed has a significant evidence base and has been tested in a diverse environment both

The approach encouraged exploration and involved both listening and reflecting back

Barriers to education framed against Maslow's hierarchy of needs – and potential remedies

Barriers to education

Worries



Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a motivational theory in psychology, often depicted as a pyramid. Maslow's theory proposes that basic needs (physiological and safety) must be satisfied before individuals can attend to needs higher up. Here we use the hierarchy to frame the barriers to education highlighted during consultation with students across the HTIs – and potential actions that could remove those barriers.

Good Things

Self-actualization

- ✓ *Qualifying as a professional, bringing employment and a salary to my community and helping my family out of poverty*
- ✓ *Gaining status in my community as a professional and having ambitions for the future*

Esteem

- ✓ *Recovering from trauma and gaining academic achievement*
- ✓ *Developing self respect in an institution that respects me*

Love/belonging

- ✓ *Wider work to support community recovering from trauma*
- ✓ *Sharing stories of the journey with others, offering help and support)*
- ✓ *Being part of a respected academic institution*
- ✓ *Taking part in activities outside of college hours*

Safety

- ✓ *Local strategies to identify and respond to risk and increase security patrols*
- ✓ *Negotiation and mediation with family members to support students*
- ✓ *Clear staff code of conduct and closer working with local police*

Physiological

- ✓ *National Midwifery Council to lobby for all HTIs to be upgraded, and support moves to convince government to release fees and salaries*
- ✓ *Repairs and maintenance*

Potential remedies

culturally, linguistically and across a range of countries, there were marked cultural differences at play within the working group and between the W4H team and the HTI staff and students. Helpfully this became an explicit conversation at times that allowed those differences to be shared and explored in an environment where gender and status are the highest context and where some differences are negated by legislation. One example of this was in relation to the scaling work that has been undertaken by the University of Joss to define patterns in mental health. We accepted that scales that have been developed in Europe and the United States of America can be useful guides as long as the way in which they are articulated is culturally sensitive to a local context.

5. Findings and analysis – what we learned

Student voice

The voice of students in every HTI was given the highest context and was predominantly sought using small focus groups, that were gender segregated. The gender segregation was based on a reasonable assumption made by the HTIs and W4H, that the young women in both the FYP programme and in the wider female student group would feel more comfortable talking in a single gender group. However, this premise was not really tested and there were many occasions in Borno where young people of both genders were clearly and comfortably socialising and studying together, although the mix was not as explicit as would be observed in a UK college for example.

The main messages from the consultation with students are outlined in the infographic (see page 6), and the team noted a significantly gendered experience for girls and boys. The overarching message was of a recognition across students that young women are potentially more at risk of bullying and sexual violence, coercion and exploitation than the boys in their colleges. In short, the girls need more protection which leads to a more restrictive lifestyle, the boys have more freedom but arguably their need for protection is not necessarily recognised. For example, there is significant evidence base that suggest that if adults are behaving in a coercive or abuse way they are likely to abuse their power towards everyone, all be it in different ways.

A much more comprehensive approach to ascertaining student's perspective was undertaken in Borno, than in the other HTIs using the 'Three Houses exercise. The 'Three Houses' technique was created by Nicki Weld and Maggie Greening in New Zealand (Weld 2008, cited by Turnell 2012) and is mentioned in the most influential Child Protection review in UK History that was undertaken by Professor Eileen Munro in 2011. The exercise helps a child, family or staff team think about and discuss risks, strengths, and hopes. It is usually most effective with older children or with families where you are finding it difficult to devise an effective intervention plan and can be used with individuals or a group.

In Borno, we used the Three Houses exercise to explore the three defined areas of 'worries, good things and dreams', with adult facilitators who were tasked with enabling students to work in as free a way as possible. We provided materials that including magazines, stickers, post it notes, coloured pens etc. The students were encouraged to freely express themselves on paper with a reassurance from the facilitators, at their request, that we would not feedback identifiable comments to the Provost or teachers, or that we would make the exercises available to the management of the school. The paper exercises were removed and brought back to the UK.

The students relaxed into the exercise quickly, although it was not a familiar working style for them. Three groups of FYP students, female midwifery students and male nursing students work simultaneously.

The overarching message was of a recognition across students that young women are potentially more at risk

The feedback from each group has strong similarities in relation to the baseline of Maslow's hierarchy of need, but nuanced differences in relation to the top three areas of functioning, love and belonging, self-esteem and actualisation. For example the boys reflected a wider world view with a strongly articulated analysis of the impact of class and poverty amongst their peers. They strongly upheld the aspiration to be influencers in their professional community, and they also aspired to have a partner and children.

'The insurgency has affected my lifestyle'

'Lack of financial and family support for some' (sense of social justice)

'Lack of scholarships'



'Return or restoration of unity and peace in this state' (ambition beyond their current situation)

'I want our school to become the best nursing college in Africa'

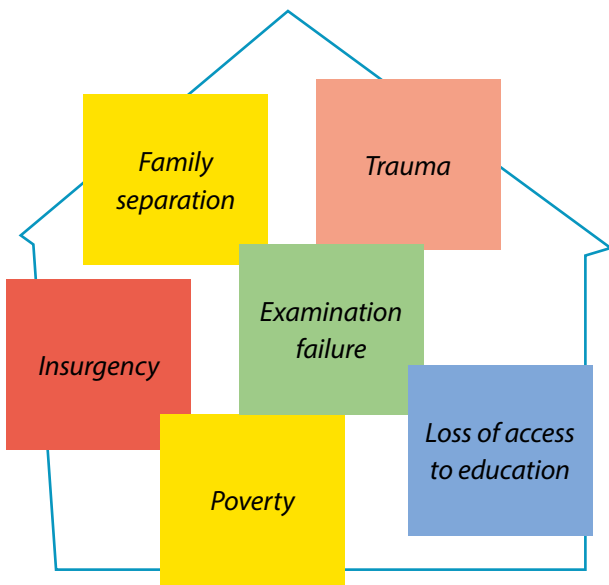
The importance of family was also prevalent in the feedback from both girl's groups but there was a strong community welfare message from the FYP students who had articulated their life threatening experiences in their 'House of worries' with powerful images of armed insurgents and words such as 'rape,

fear, trauma and kidnapping' and keenly felt the responsibility to family and community to make the best of the opportunity that FYP had provided them. Whilst their midwifery student peer group aspired to material things in a very age predictable way, the FYP students articulated their sense of duty and appreciation for the education route out of poverty and the opportunity to help their families and community.

The recognition of the concept of trauma by the FYP students, is likely to reflect the specific work that has been undertaken by Drs Dagona and Karik from the University of Jos who have undertaken some psychological screening of 111 young women who had first-hand experience of the worst of the violence during the insurgency period. The basic premise of this work has been towards supporting community resilience with much of the work based in the displacement camps around Maiduguri where many of the families of FYP students live.

The immediacy of the threat to FYP students and their families was explicitly illustrated in the Three Houses exercise where the 'House of Good Things' exercise (see infographic) for those with family members either missing, killed or living in the camps reflected a genuine appreciation of physical amenities that the other students experienced as substandard.

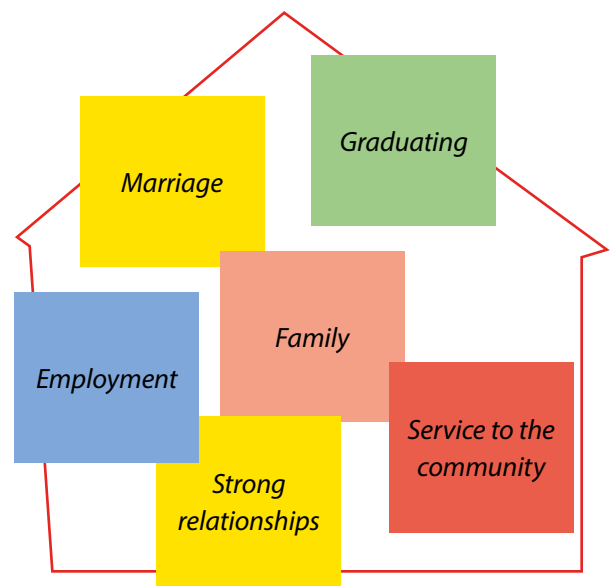
This contextual context is also apparent when comparing two screening outcomes, namely the Hope scale, the Depression scale. Screening exposed a high score on both scales which is very unusual as with depression generally comes a lack of hope. This hope was also apparent in the three houses exercise amongst FYP students and in the team's opinion is worth further exploration as it is likely to be linked to the provision of the supported training that the FYP programme offers to young women who without it could experience life as hopeless. In the FYP programme the students in Borno clearly demonstrated a hopeful and appreciative attitude to the future which is remarkable considering the level of trauma, displacement and continued uncertainty within which they live. They also articulated hope for their community



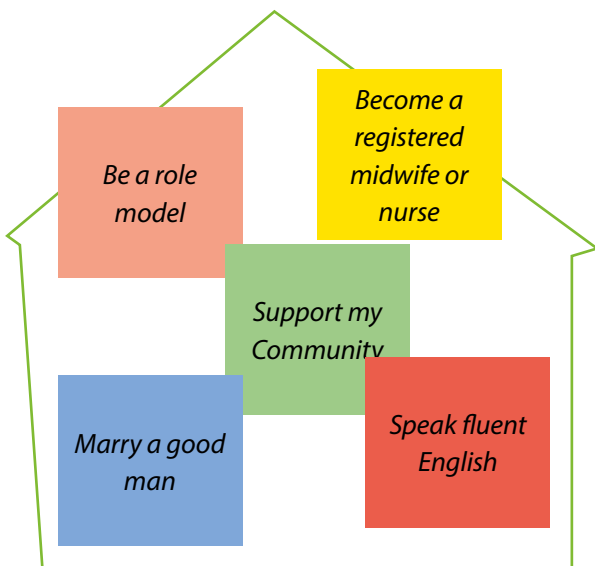
House 1: House of worries

The three houses exercise

This explored the three defined areas of ‘worries, good things and dreams’, with adult facilitators who were tasked with enabling students to work in as free a way as possible. We provided materials that including magazines, stickers, post it notes, coloured pens etc. The students were encouraged to freely express themselves on paper.



House 2: House of good things



House 3: House of dreams

The ‘Three Houses’ technique was created by Nicki Weld and Maggie Greening in New Zealand (Weld 2008, cited by Turnell 2012) and is mentioned in the most influential Child Protection review in UK History that was undertaken by Professor Eileen Munro in 2011. The exercise helps a child, family or staff team think about and discuss risks, strengths, and hopes.

in their 'House of Dreams'.

'My dream is to be a registered midwife' 'To help my community' 'To be a role model'

One factor that is important to bear in mind is that the FYP students and to some extent all of the students and staff that we interviewed are likely to have downplayed the impact of what they have experienced and to have a tendency to over emphasise the positive impact of help to those who they know have tried to assist them. This can create a tendency to downplay the challenges that still exist for everyone at the HTI.

The other group of young women who undertook the same exercise had hopes in the House of Dreams that were more developmentally predictable and that reflected a different starting position on Maslow's Hierarchy.

'I want to get married and have lovely children' 'I want to travel outside the state'

'To build a big house'

The connecting theme for all of the students was about the value of education and its capacity to enable a better quality life.

Our discussions with management and teachers in each HTI highlight a significant shared acknowledgment of issues that both cause risk and interrupt learning. However, the hierarchical nature of the HTIs creates some barriers to a collaborative approach. However, the Provosts at Yobe and Borno HTIs had really thought about these issues and are striving to address the gap between staff and students.

6. Conclusions

This project had highlighted that very significant challenges that face the staff and students in the HTIs of Northern Nigeria, and also illustrated their resilience, commitment and energy to find solutions to those challenges.

The work that W4H has undertaken to try to build on the extremely valuable FYP programme and the aspirational and protective structure and opportunity that the programme offers a vulnerable group of young women, has highlighted that the building blocks are in place in many of the this to continue to build understanding and experience.

However, in what was a very short visit, and where we had little opportunity to establish a trusted professional relationship, it was not possible to explore some of the areas of potential exploitation and abuse that exist in a legislative framework where, for example homosexuality is illegal and lesbian and gay students and staff are completely disenfranchised and silenced.

7. Recommendations

Recommendations for future work are that there is a formalisation of the informal safeguarding learning and development that has begun across the HTIs. As resources and particularly time are precious and scarce, I would recommend a web based learning, seminar and consultation model that could be facilitated from any base with a secure internet connection. The purpose of this would be to build on the concept of a shared understanding with initial work on the use of language and challenging preconceptions and assumptions and the creation of a confidential support network for Provosts as they work to find local safeguarding solutions with the support of their professional body the NMC.

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For further information contact: W4H National office: No 1 Adamu Dankabo Close, off Tukur Rd, Nassarawa GRA, Kano, Nigeria

Visit: www.women4healthnigeria.org Email: w4hinfo@women4healthnigeria.org Twitter: [@W4HNigeria](https://twitter.com/W4HNigeria) and [Facebook](#) April 2020