



ISLAMIC WOMEN'S INITIATIVE FOR JUSTICE, LAW AND PEACE (IWILAP).

IWILAP'S ANNUAL REPORT

2024.



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I. Foreword

By Dr. Mwanga Ashah Mastullah (PhD), Executive Director.

The year 2024 marked a pivotal chapter in the journey of the Islamic Women’s Initiative for Justice, Law, and Peace (IWILAP). It was a year defined by bold action, institutional growth, and measurable progress in advancing justice, dignity, and equality for Muslim women and girls in Uganda. Operating at the intersection of Islamic jurisprudence, human rights, and public health, IWILAP continued to demonstrate that faith-responsive, community-rooted solutions can deliver transformative and lasting change.

Throughout the year, IWILAP implemented integrated interventions across legal aid, strategic litigation, policy advocacy, research, and community education. While Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) remained a core priority, our work also addressed gender-based violence, women’s economic and property rights, and access to justice through both formal legal systems and faith-based mechanisms, including the Qadhis Courts. These efforts strengthened legal awareness, improved access to referrals and remedies, and contributed to visible shifts in community attitudes and institutional responses to Muslim women’s rights.

Our achievements in 2024 were made possible by strong, values-driven partnerships. IWILAP extends its deepest gratitude to all partners and supporters whose solidarity and collaboration enabled us to reach vulnerable communities and respond to urgent needs

We are particularly grateful to the Afya na Haki Institute (AHAKI) for its sustained financial, technical, and social support, which enabled IWILAP to expand legal aid services, advance strategic litigation, and deepen advocacy for abortion and SRHR within Muslim communities.

IWILAP also sincerely appreciates the Alliance of Inclusive Muslims (AIM) for its principled partnership in advancing inclusive, rights-affirming interpretations of Islam. AIM’s collaboration strengthened advocacy and helped situate gender justice and bodily autonomy within faith-respectful frameworks that resonate locally while upholding universal human rights. We further acknowledge Acting Globally for its steadfast collaboration, which enhanced IWILAP’s reach in legal empowerment, advocacy, and movement-building and amplified our visibility within national and international gender justice ecosystems. We also value the collaboration with CEHURD, Springs Public Interest Hub, and Women with a Mission.

I extend heartfelt appreciation to IWILAP’s staff and volunteers for their professionalism and courage, and to the communities we serve, whose strong response to the filing of Qadhi’s Court Constitutional Petition No. 0010 affirmed the urgency of this work. As we look ahead, IWILAP remains committed to scaling impact, strengthening partnerships, and contributing to global efforts to advance gender justice, reproductive autonomy, and faith-responsive human rights.

Dr. Mwangi Mastullab Ashab (PhD).
CEO & General Counsel, IWILAP.

II. GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS.

IWILAP-Islamic Women's Initiative for Justice, Law and Peace.

AHAKI-Afya na Haki.

GBV- Gender Based Violence.

IWILAP- Islamic Women's Initiative for Justice, Law and Peace.

SRHR- Sexual, Reproductive, Health and Rights.

III. Executive summary.

The 2024 Annual Report highlights the Islamic Women’s Initiative for Justice, Law and Peace (IWILAP)’s continued leadership in advancing access to justice, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and dignity for Muslim women and girls in Uganda. Throughout the year, IWILAP strengthened its innovative Rapid Legal Response model, expanded its geographic reach, deepened strategic partnerships and advanced high-impact strategic litigation positioning the organization as a key actor in rights-based and faith-sensitive governance reform.

In 2024, IWILAP responded to the urgent legal and SRHR needs of vulnerable Muslim women and girls by providing timely, free, and community-embedded legal aid. Our Rapid Legal Response mechanism enabled survivors to access justice swiftly across multiple districts, including Budaka, Iganga, Kibuku, Kabimbiri, and other underserved communities. This approach has proven effective in addressing urgent cases of gender-based violence, family law disputes and SRHR-related rights violations, particularly in rural areas.

A major milestone in 2024 was IWILAP’s advancement of strategic litigation, including the filing of a constitutional petition challenging the governance and operations of Qadhi Courts. This landmark case seeks to strengthen accountability, fairness and gender-responsive justice within religious judicial structures, with far-reaching implications for Muslim women’s access to justice nationwide. The petition has elevated IWILAP’s visibility and credibility as a leader in constitutional advocacy at the intersection of religion, law and women’s rights.

The organisation’s impact in 2024 was driven by the dedication and professionalism of IWILAP staff, whose commitment ensured effective program implementation and high-quality service delivery. Staff engagement remains central to IWILAP’s sustainability and institutional strength.

IWILAP further strengthened its collaboration with key partners, including Afya na Haki Institute (AHAKI), the Alliance of Inclusive Muslims, Acting Globally, Springs Public Interest Hub, CEHURD, and Women with a Mission. These partnerships enhanced legal service delivery, policy engagement and SRHR advocacy, underscoring IWILAP’s role as a trusted implementing and strategic partner.

Looking ahead to 2025, IWILAP remains firmly committed to empowering Muslim women and girls, legal practitioners, SRHR service providers, policymakers, religious leaders and other stakeholders to advance equitable access to SRHR and justice. With strategic donor support and expanded partnerships, IWILAP is well positioned to scale its impact, deepen governance reform and continue delivering transformative, faith-responsive solutions for Muslim communities.

a. Summary of key achievements.

During the 2024 reporting period, the Islamic Women’s Initiative for Justice, Law and Peace (IWILAP) recorded transformative achievements that underscore its growing leadership, institutional maturity, and impact in advancing access to justice and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for Muslim women and girls in Uganda.

i. Landmark Strategic Litigation and Governance Reform.

One of IWILAP’s most significant milestones was the filing of Constitutional Petition No. 0010 on 30 April 2024, in the matter of *Mwanga Mastullah Ashab and the Islamic Women’s Initiative for Justice, Law and Peace v. Attorney General*. This landmark petition challenges the State’s failure to enact legislation operationalizing Qadhi Courts, as required under Article 129(1)(d) of the Constitution of Uganda.

Brought under multiple constitutional and human rights provisions, the petition seeks to strengthen accountability, fairness, and gender responsiveness within religious justice systems. This case positions IWILAP at the forefront of constitutional advocacy at the intersection of religion, law and women’s rights, with the potential to deliver systemic and long-term impact for Muslim communities nationwide.

ii. Expanded Legal Aid and Rapid Legal Response.

Through its Rapid Legal Response model, IWILAP provided free legal aid services to 65 vulnerable Muslim women and girls across Budaka, Iganga, Kibuku, and Kabimbiri districts. These interventions addressed urgent cases involving family law, gender-based violence, and SRHR-related rights violations, particularly in underserved and rural communities. This expansion demonstrates IWILAP’s growing reach and the scalability of its community-based legal aid model.

iii. Breaking New Ground in Qadhi Court Practice.

IWILAP supported and participated in the first-ever hearing before the Qadhi’s Court in Budaka—*Divorce Cause No. 001 of 2024*. The case involved complex SRHR considerations following severe pregnancy-related complications. This milestone represents a critical step in advancing gender-sensitive jurisprudence within Islamic judicial spaces and strengthening women’s access to justice in faith-based courts.

iv. Knowledge Production and Thought Leadership.

In 2024, IWILAP strengthened its visibility and thought leadership by publishing its first monthly newsletter, amplifying national awareness of the Qadhi Court constitutional petition and its broader governance implications. The newsletter is publicly accessible and reflects IWILAP’s commitment to transparency, public education, and advocacy.

Additionally, IWILAP published a research study titled “Barriers to Accessing Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights among Muslim Women in Uganda.” This research contributes evidence-based insights into the structural, cultural, and legal barriers affecting Muslim women and girls, providing a valuable resource for policymakers, advocates, and development partners.

v. Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening.

IWILAP invested significantly in staff and partner capacity building. Staff participated in the Advocacy for Reproductive Justice in Africa short course organized by Afya na Haki Institute and attended the Regional Strategic Consultation on Family Law Reform in Africa organized by Musawa. These engagements strengthened IWILAP’s technical expertise and regional networks.

IWILAP also reinforced its alliance with the Muslim Female Lawyers Network (MFLN) through specialized training on SRHR and abortion from an Islamic perspective, strengthening a critical cadre of faith-literate legal professionals.

vi. Strategic Partnerships and Exchange Learning.

Through exchange learning visits with implementing partners, including Women with a Mission, and participation in the PAMOJA workshop organized by AHAKI—IWILAP, enhanced peer learning, paralegal training approaches, and collaborative implementation models.

Overall, 2024 marked a year of accelerated growth, credibility, and influence for IWILAP. With proven impact in legal aid delivery, strategic litigation, research, and capacity building, IWILAP is well positioned for strategic investment and partnership to scale its innovative, faith-responsive justice model nationally and regionally.

IV. ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND.

The Islamic Women’s Initiative for Justice, Law and Peace (IWILAP) is Uganda’s first and longest-standing Muslim women-led non-profit organization dedicated to advancing human rights, with a particular focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender equity, access to justice and Muslim women’s religious freedom. Since its establishment in 2013, IWILAP has grown into a nationally recognized and trusted institution at the intersection of law, public health, faith and gender justice. IWILAP delivers its mandate through an integrated model of research, advocacy, legal aid, and strategic litigation, grounded in both Islamic jurisprudence and international human rights law. Vision.

To serve as a representative and credible voice for Muslim women, advocating for human rights, gender equality, and the ability of all women to reach their full potential.

A. Mission.

To pursue justice for Muslim women through human rights-based legal aid, research and advocacy, strategic litigation, and the promotion of lived realities that advance freedom from violence, equity, and justice for all.

B. Strategic Objectives.

- To strengthen IWILAP’s institutional capacity as a leading Muslim woman-led justice organization
- To develop sustainable resource mobilization mechanisms to support long-term impact
- To empower Muslim communities to claim and protect their rights through legal aid and capacity building
- To contribute to Uganda’s justice system and rule of law through advocacy, partnerships, and implementation at all levels

V. The SRHR and Abortion Legal Aid Project overview.

Muslim women and girls in Uganda continue to face deeply rooted structural and social barriers that undermine their access to SRHR and reproductive justice. These challenges are driven by limited access to information, restrictive cultural and religious norms, gender inequality, and policy environments that fail to respond to

women's lived realities. Discussions on SRHR and abortion within Muslim communities remain highly sensitive and often silenced, leaving women and girls without the knowledge or support needed to make informed decisions about their bodies and health.

As a result, communities face high rates of early and forced marriage, unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, maternal morbidity and mortality and gender-based violence. Young Muslim girls, particularly those of school age, are among the most affected, often lacking access to sexuality education, SRHR information and decision-making power.

IWILAP's SRHR and abortion legal aid project directly responds to these realities. Through free legal aid, community sensitization, and capacity building, IWILAP has supported vulnerable Muslim women and girls to access justice, protect their rights and seek redress without fear or stigma. A key pillar of the project has been engagement with Qadhi's Court judges, Muslim religious leaders and Muslim female lawyers, strengthening faith-responsive accountability and increasing institutional support for women's rights.

IWILAP has also convened and trained health workers, community leaders, and grassroots actors, building a coordinated, rights-based response to reproductive injustice.

Through this work, IWILAP has demonstrated measurable growth, increasing demand for its services and strong potential for scale. With strategic donor investment and partnerships, IWILAP is well positioned to deepen its impact, expand geographically, and continue transforming the lives of Muslim women and girls through sustainable, faith-sensitive, and rights-based solutions.

VI. SRHR Strategic Litigation & Advocacy Project Context and Rationale.

Building on its expanding national footprint and demonstrated capacity, IWILAP's 2024 project addressed long-standing and systemic barriers faced by Muslim women and girls in accessing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Throughout the year, IWILAP responded to challenges arising from restrictive legal frameworks, harmful cultural norms, and exclusionary religious interpretations that historically limited women's autonomy and access to essential health services.

In 2024, Muslim women and girls continued to face significant obstacles in accessing safe abortion services, family planning, maternal health care and accurate information about their reproductive rights. These challenges were further compounded by gaps in legal protection and misinterpretations of religious law.

The project focused on expanding access to reproductive health information and services while strengthening advocacy for policies that prioritized SRHR and gender equity. Through community legal education, stakeholder engagement, and policy dialogue, IWILAP contributed to shifting attitudes and improving awareness among service providers, policymakers, and religious leaders.

Throughout 2024, IWILAP's work remained aligned with Uganda's commitments under international frameworks, including the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By the end of the reporting period, the project had strengthened local capacities, enhanced institutional accountability, and reinforced IWILAP's position as a trusted implementing and strategic partner in advancing SRHR for Muslim women and girls.

The outcomes achieved in 2024 underscore IWILAP's growth, effectiveness, and readiness for scale. Strategic donor support during this period translated directly into tangible impact, positioning the organization for deeper, broader, and more sustainable engagement in the years ahead.

A. Situation Analysis of SRHR and Abortion Rights in the Ugandan Muslim community.

Throughout 2024, limited access to justice and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services remained a persistent challenge for Muslim women and girls in Uganda. Structural barriers including restrictive legal frameworks, entrenched cultural norms, patriarchal decision-making, and conservative interpretations of religious teachings continued to undermine women's autonomy over their bodies and reproductive choices. As a result, Muslim women and girls faced disproportionate barriers in accessing essential services such as family planning, maternal health care, safe abortion information and SRHR education.

Despite the fact that the fundamental principles of Shari'ah uphold women's dignity, wellbeing and the right to make informed decisions regarding marriage, motherhood, contraception, and protection from violence, these principles were often poorly understood or selectively applied within communities. This gap between faith-based values and lived realities significantly limited Muslim women's ability to claim their rights, with adverse consequences for their physical, emotional, and psychological wellbeing, as well as that of their families.

In 2024, maternal mortality remained high within Muslim communities, driven by limited access to quality maternal health services, low uptake of contraception, and restricted access to safe and legal termination of pregnancies where permitted by law. Many women continued to experience unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and preventable pregnancy-related complications. These challenges were further exacerbated by domestic violence, sexual coercion, and silence around sexuality, which increased women's vulnerability to miscarriage, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.

Against this backdrop, IWILAP played a critical and transformative role in 2024. Through sustained legal aid, community engagement, strategic litigation, and faith-sensitive advocacy, IWILAP actively challenged harmful norms, amplified the voices of Muslim women and girls, and expanded access to SRHR information and justice. By working directly within communities and alongside religious leaders, service providers, and policymakers, IWILAP contributed to breaking long-standing silences around SRHR and abortion rights, laying the groundwork for more informed, rights-affirming, and inclusive approaches to sexual and reproductive health within the Ugandan Muslim community.

VII. Intersecting Legal, Social, and Cultural Challenges Constraining Muslim Women's Rights in 2024.

A. Social Challenges

1. Community Stigma and Social Pressure.

During 2024, Muslim women and girls continued to experience intense social scrutiny, particularly in rural and peri-urban communities where conservative religious and cultural norms were deeply entrenched. Women who sought education, legal redress, SRHR services, or participation in public life were often labeled as rebellious, immoral, or disrespectful of their faith and community. This stigma discouraged many women from asserting their rights, accessing services, or reporting violations, thereby reinforcing cycles of silence and exclusion.

2. Gender-Based Violence and Underreporting.

Muslim women faced persistent risks of gender-based violence, including domestic abuse, sexual coercion, and emotional violence. Social expectations around female obedience and family preservation discouraged disclosure, leading to widespread underreporting. Survivors frequently feared community backlash, family rejection, or dismissal by religious leaders. These social barriers limited access to justice, psychosocial support, and health services, exacerbating women's vulnerability and isolation.

B. Cultural Challenges.

1. Patriarchal Norms and Gender Roles.

Throughout the project period, patriarchal norms remained dominant within many Muslim communities, reinforcing rigid gender roles that prioritized women's domestic responsibilities over education, leadership, and economic participation. Women and girls experienced restricted mobility, limited educational opportunities, and exclusion from decision-making spaces. Those who challenged prescribed roles often faced stigma, familial pressure, or social exclusion, constraining their ability to pursue personal and professional growth.

2. Sexual and Reproductive Health Norms.

Cultural expectations continued to prioritize motherhood and traditional family roles over women's autonomy and well-being. Access to contraception, family planning, maternal health services, and abortion-related information was heavily influenced by cultural perceptions of morality and honor. Many women lacked the confidence or permission to seek SRHR services independently, resulting in delayed care, unintended pregnancies, and preventable health risks.

C. Legal Challenges.

1. Limited Access to Justice for SRHR Violations.

In 2024, Muslim women faced significant legal barriers when seeking redress for SRHR violations, including denial of maternal care, unsafe abortion outcomes, and sexual violence. Limited legal literacy, fear of formal justice systems, and the perceived conflict between statutory law and religious norms discouraged many women from pursuing legal remedies.

2. Restrictive Legal Frameworks and Religious Interpretations.

The intersection of restrictive national laws on abortion and conservative interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence created confusion and fear around lawful SRHR services. Women and service providers often lacked clarity on the legal exceptions permitting abortion and post-abortion care, leading to denial of services even in legally permissible circumstances. This gap disproportionately affected Muslim women, particularly those in rural and underserved areas.

VIII. Why Legal Aid Matters: IWILAP's Role in Advancing Muslim Women's Rights.

Throughout 2024, legal aid proved to be one of the most critical tools for advancing the rights, dignity, and autonomy of Muslim women and girls in Uganda. In a context marked by gender inequality, poverty, restrictive

social norms, and limited legal literacy, access to justice remained out of reach for many Muslim women. IWILAP's sustained investment in faith-sensitive, rights-based legal aid filled this gap and positioned the organization as a trusted bridge between marginalized Muslim communities and the formal justice system.

A. Expanding Access to Justice for Marginalized Muslim Women.

During the reporting period, Muslim women continued to face profound barriers to legal recourse, including financial hardship, limited awareness of their rights, fear of stigma, and exclusion from formal legal institutions. IWILAP's provision of free legal aid enabled women from marginalized and underserved communities to pursue justice in cases involving domestic violence, sexual abuse, inheritance disputes, land rights violations, and family law matters. By removing cost barriers and providing culturally responsive legal support, IWILAP enabled Muslim women to navigate legal processes with dignity and confidence.

B. Protection from Gender-Based Violence.

Gender-based violence remained widespread in 2024, with many Muslim women experiencing abuse in silence due to fear of community backlash and lack of trusted support systems. IWILAP's legal aid interventions empowered survivors to report violence, seek legal redress, obtain protection orders, and access referrals for psychosocial and health services. Through survivor-centered legal representation, IWILAP contributed to breaking cycles of abuse and strengthening women's safety, agency, and access to justice.

C. Advancing Gender Equality Through Legal Empowerment and Strategic Litigation.

Legal aid served not only as a response mechanism but also as a transformative tool to challenge discriminatory laws, practices, and interpretations that constrained Muslim women's rights. IWILAP supported women in asserting their rights in both formal courts and informal justice systems, including religious and community-based structures. Through strategic litigation and legal advocacy, particularly in sexual and reproductive health and rights matters, IWILAP contributed to broader efforts to promote gender equality, accountability, and legal reform.

D. Legal Awareness and Rights Education.

Beyond individual casework, IWILAP used legal aid as a platform for community education and empowerment. Throughout 2024, the organization conducted legal awareness initiatives that expanded knowledge of women's rights, legal procedures, and available remedies. By equipping Muslim women and girls with accurate legal information grounded in human rights law and Islamic principles, IWILAP reduced misinformation, challenged harmful norms, and strengthened women's ability to make informed decisions about their lives and bodies.

E. Reducing Vulnerability to Exploitation.

Muslim women, particularly those in rural and economically marginalized settings, remained highly vulnerable to exploitation in marriage, employment, property ownership, and reproductive decision-making. IWILAP's legal aid interventions mitigated these risks by providing timely legal advice, representation, and mediation. Women who might otherwise have faced forced marriage, denial of inheritance, land dispossession, or coercive reproductive practices were supported to assert their rights and seek fair outcomes.

F. Strengthening the Rule of Law and Accountability.

By enabling Muslim women to engage meaningfully with legal institutions, IWILAP contributed to strengthening the rule of law and promoting equal treatment before the law. Legal aid enhanced accountability among duty bearers and reinforced the principle that women, regardless of religion or socioeconomic status, are entitled to justice, protection, and remedy under the law.

G. Supporting Women’s Economic Empowerment.

Legal aid also played a critical role in advancing women’s economic rights. Through support in land, property, and inheritance disputes, IWILAP helped women secure assets essential to their economic independence and long-term stability. These interventions reduced dependency, enhanced resilience, and reinforced the link between legal empowerment and sustainable livelihoods.

IX. Key Activities Implemented in 2024.

A. Rapid Legal Response on Abortion and SRHR Cases.

Throughout 2024, IWILAP provided rapid legal responses to abortion-related and broader SRHR challenges affecting Muslim women and girls. In total, the organization handled 190 cases, delivering timely legal aid through both Qadhi Courts (100 cases) and the secular justice system (90 cases). These interventions strengthened women’s legal awareness, enhanced their ability to claim their rights, and facilitated access to justice across formal and faith-based legal systems. By working across parallel justice mechanisms, IWILAP ensured that Muslim women and girls could pursue remedies aligned with their lived realities while upholding constitutional protections, human rights standards, and principles of dignity and bodily autonomy.

B. Strategic Litigation on Abortion and SRHR Governance.

IWILAP filed a landmark constitutional petition addressing systemic barriers to justice for Muslim women arising from the delayed operationalization of Qadhi courts in handling SRHR-related matters. The petition Constitutional Petition No. 0010 of 2024, filed on 30 April 2024, challenged structural gaps that limited Muslim women’s access to timely, culturally legitimate justice in abortion and SRHR cases. This case marked a significant step in advancing constitutional accountability and recognition of Muslim women’s SRHR within Uganda’s legal framework.

C. Preparatory Work for Strategic SRHR and Abortion Rights Cases.

In 2024, IWILAP also undertook planning and preparatory processes for additional strategic litigation addressing unfair treatment and harmful practices faced by Muslim women within community and institutional settings. These proposed cases were intended to establish legal precedents affirming that obstruction of access to lawful abortion services and violations of medical confidentiality constitute violations of fundamental rights, including freedom from cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment and the right to privacy. While the groundwork, including legal analysis and stakeholder consultations, was completed, the filing of these cases was postponed to the subsequent implementation year due to time and financial constraints.

D. Stakeholder Engagement and Community Outreach.

In 2024, IWILAP actively engaged key stakeholders at multiple levels to strengthen coordinated responses to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) violations affecting Muslim women and girls. A key partnership with Budaka Health Centre IV was strengthened, culminating in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to ease referrals and improve access to timely, survivor-centred services.

Throughout the year, IWILAP worked closely with Budaka Health Centre IV, particularly in cases involving sexual abuse and abortion-related complications, where survivors were referred for medical care and psychosocial support. This collaboration reinforced trust between legal and health service providers and ensured that Muslim women and girls received integrated, rights-based responses that respected both medical ethics and confidentiality.

IWILAP also engaged Muslim religious leaders, including Qadhi Court judges, through targeted capacity-building sessions. These sessions increased awareness of SRHR, strengthened understanding of sexual violence and abuse, and equipped religious justice actors with the knowledge and tools to respond to such cases in ways that uphold dignity, justice, and Islamic principles of compassion and protection from harm.

These stakeholder engagements reinforced IWILAP's role as a bridge among health systems, legal institutions, and faith leadership, laying a strong foundation for sustainable, community-owned responses to SRHR challenges. SRHR Legal Aid Services Provided: Selected Case Illustrations (2024).

In 2024, IWILAP provided rights-based legal aid to vulnerable Muslim women and girls facing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) violations. Through community legal empowerment, court-based representation, mediation, and referrals for medical care, IWILAP helped survivors access justice, essential health services, and remedies consistent with constitutional, statutory, and faith-sensitive legal frameworks. The following anonymized cases illustrate the nature and impact of IWILAP's legal aid interventions.

1. Case Illustration 1: Access to Justice in a Pregnancy-Related Dispute.

(Pseudonym: Ms. Amina K.)

Ms. Amina K., a 19-year-old woman from Budaka Town Council, experienced serious pregnancy-related complications while in a marital relationship marked by neglect and lack of financial support. She later suffered a missed abortion and sought medical attention at a local clinic, from where she was lawfully referred to Budaka Health Centre IV for post-abortion care.

Subsequently, her spouse, without medical or legal basis, alleged that she had unlawfully procured an abortion and reported the matter to local religious authorities. Upon learning of the case, IWILAP intervened by providing legal counsel, clarifying the applicable medical and legal standards, and engaging relevant community justice actors. Through structured mediation and legal guidance grounded in constitutional protections and Islamic principles of justice and dignity, the matter was resolved without further rights violations. The intervention prevented criminalization, safeguarded the client's right to health and dignity, and restored family stability.

- E. Advocacy and Awareness Efforts.

1. Public Campaigns and Educational Outreach.

In 2024, IWILAP demonstrated exceptional leadership in advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) awareness within the Ugandan Muslim community through targeted public campaigns and community education initiatives grounded in Islamic principles, human rights, and public health.

IWILAP organized community-based awareness campaigns aimed at demystifying abortion and SRHR from an Islamic perspective, with the objective of correcting misinformation, reducing stigma, and strengthening community acceptance of women's health rights. These campaigns were designed to share credible religious, legal, and medical knowledge on SRHR, particularly as it relates to Muslim women and girls.

A flagship awareness campaign was held in Nampangala, Budaka Sub-county, engaging predominantly Muslim women and girls. The discussions revealed persistent SRHR challenges in the community, including widespread stigma, limited access to accurate information and increased instances of unsafe abortions. Participants

acknowledged that SRHR issues were rarely addressed in religious spaces, despite clear guidance in the Qur'an and Islamic jurisprudence on health, dignity and the protection of life. This silence had contributed to misinformation, fear and reduced access to lawful SRHR services.

By engaging religious and cultural leaders as key partners in these campaigns, IWILAP strategically leveraged their influence to foster trust and legitimacy. Community leaders were recognized as critical change agents due to their close engagement with families and their ability to shape social norms.

IWILAP's legal team remained committed to extending community legal education and SRHR awareness as a central pillar of its advocacy strategy, recognizing education as a powerful tool for prevention, empowerment, and sustainable change.

2. Collaboration with Religious and Community Leaders.

Throughout 2024, IWILAP strengthened strategic collaboration with Qadhi Court judges and Muslim community leaders to address systemic SRHR challenges affecting Muslim women and girls. Recognizing the pivotal role of religious justice systems within Muslim communities, IWILAP actively engaged Qadhi Courts to respond to SRHR-related disputes in a manner that was legally sound, faith-sensitive, and survivor-centered.

The engagements revealed significant capacity gaps, including limited confidence and technical knowledge among some Qadhi Court judges to effectively handle SRHR and abortion-related matters. IWILAP identified this as a critical barrier contributing to the underreporting of cases and inconsistent justice outcomes for Muslim women.

In response, IWILAP developed a forward-looking strategy to institutionalize capacity-building and specialized training for Qadhi Court judges on SRHR and abortion within Islamic jurisprudence, national law and international human rights standards. These efforts aimed to transform Qadhi Courts into safer, more accessible and rights-affirming spaces for Muslim women and girls. The planned trainings were positioned as a key intervention to strengthen faith-based justice systems and improve community trust in legal redress mechanisms.

3. Media and Strategic Communications.

IWILAP strategically leveraged media and knowledge production as advocacy tools to influence public discourse and policy conversations on SRHR within Muslim contexts. In 2024, IWILAP engaged media platforms to disseminate accurate, culturally appropriate information on SRHR, counter harmful narratives, and elevate Muslim women's voices in national conversations.

As part of its evidence-based advocacy, IWILAP published a research paper titled "Barriers to Accessing Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights among Muslim Women in Uganda," contributing critical data and analysis to inform programming, advocacy, and stakeholder engagement.

IWILAP also produced its first organizational newsletter, documenting the landmark Qadhi Court Constitutional Petition and related advocacy efforts. This publication strengthened IWILAP's visibility, transparency, and engagement with partners, donors, and the wider public, marking an important milestone in the organization's communications strategy. This can be reviewed under: https://iwilap.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/The-Qadhis-Court-Petition-Newsletter_NoCopy.pdf

Impact Statement.

Through sustained advocacy, strategic partnerships, and innovative community engagement in 2024, IWILAP significantly shifted conversations on SRHR within the Muslim community—from silence and stigma toward informed dialogue, legal awareness, and collective responsibility. These efforts positioned IWILAP as a trusted leader at the intersection of faith, law, and reproductive justice, creating durable pathways for systemic change.

4. Impact of IWILAP’s 2024 Advocacy on Policy and Public Perception.

In 2024, IWILAP’s advocacy efforts played a critical role in shaping policy conversations and transforming public perceptions on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) within the Ugandan Muslim community. Through strategic litigation, community engagement, faith-based dialogue, and evidence-informed advocacy, IWILAP contributed to both immediate and long-term shifts in how SRHR, particularly abortion and reproductive justice, were understood, discussed, and addressed.

a) Influence on Policy and Legal Frameworks.

IWILAP’s advocacy directly contributed to strengthening policy discourse and accountability around SRHR and access to justice for Muslim women and girls.

- **Advancing Legal Reform and Accountability:**

Through the filing of Constitutional Petition No. 0010 of 2024 on the delayed operationalization of Qadhi Courts, IWILAP elevated SRHR concerns within formal constitutional and governance spaces. The petition brought national attention to structural barriers affecting Muslim women’s access to justice, positioning SRHR as a constitutional and governance issue rather than a private or religious matter.

- **Prioritization of SRHR in Governance Spaces:**

IWILAP’s sustained engagement with policymakers, legal actors, and religious leaders ensured that SRHR challenges affecting Muslim women were no longer sidelined. Advocacy efforts contributed to increased recognition of the need for responsive legal and institutional frameworks that respect women’s health, dignity, and religious contexts.

- **Promoting Inclusion of Marginalized Voices.**

IWILAP intentionally amplified the voices of Muslim women and girls historically excluded from SRHR policy processes by grounding advocacy in lived experiences, legal evidence, and community testimonies. This contributed to more inclusive policy conversations that acknowledged the intersection of faith, gender, and health.

- **Shaping Public Perception and Social Norms.**

Beyond policy influence, IWILAP’s advocacy significantly shifted public attitudes and community narratives around SRHR in Muslim contexts.

- **Breaking Silence and Reducing Stigma.**

Through public awareness campaigns and community dialogues, IWILAP challenged the culture of silence surrounding abortion and SRHR. Issues previously considered taboo became subjects of informed discussion, particularly among Muslim women, girls, and community leaders.

- **Correcting Misinformation through Faith-Sensitive Advocacy.**

By grounding advocacy in Islamic teachings, constitutional law, and public health evidence, IWILAP countered harmful misconceptions that SRHR was incompatible with Islam. This approach increased community acceptance and legitimacy of SRHR services and rights.

- **Mobilizing Community Support.**

IWILAP's advocacy empowered community members to recognize SRHR as a matter of justice and well-being. Women increasingly sought legal advice, health services, and referrals, while religious and cultural leaders began engaging more openly on SRHR issues.

- **Strengthening Civic and Legal Awareness.**

Advocacy efforts enhanced legal literacy among Muslim women and girls, enabling them to better understand their rights, available remedies, and avenues for redress. This contributed to increased reporting of violations and engagement with legal and health systems.

F. Institutionalizing Accountability.

By combining litigation, policy engagement, and community advocacy, IWILAP reinforced accountability mechanisms within both formal courts and faith-based justice systems.

1. Shifting Power Dynamics.

Advocacy efforts challenged patriarchal and exclusionary norms by positioning Muslim women as rights holders and agents of change rather than passive beneficiaries.

G. Catalyzing Ongoing Reform.

While policy reforms take time, IWILAP's advocacy in 2024 created momentum for continued legal reform, capacity building of Qadhi Courts, and expanded partnerships in SRHR governance.

X. Impact Statement.

Overall, IWILAP's 2024 moved SRHR in Muslim communities from the margins to the center of legal, policy, and public discourse. By influencing governance frameworks and transforming public perception, IWILAP strengthened pathways toward equitable, faith-affirming, and rights-based access to SRHR for Muslim women and girls.

IWILAP's 2024 advocacy efforts demonstrated the transformative power of sustained, evidence-based engagement in advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for Muslim women and girls. Through strategic litigation, policy dialogue, stakeholder engagement, and community outreach, advocacy not only informed policy and legal actors but also shifted public discourse toward more inclusive, rights-affirming perspectives. These efforts strengthened awareness among policymakers, legislators, religious leaders, and communities regarding the lived realities, legal gaps, and systemic barriers facing Muslim women, particularly in relation to SRHR and abortion access.

As a result, a stronger foundation of institutional and community support has been established for vulnerable women and girls, fostering greater accountability and responsiveness within both state and faith-based systems. Increased awareness and continuous engagement have contributed to a gradual reduction in stigma and negative attitudes toward SRHR services within the Muslim community. Looking ahead, IWILAP anticipates that these gains will translate into improved access to justice, more responsive policy and legal frameworks, and a measurable reduction in SRHR-related violations and unsafe abortions. IWILAP remains committed to sustaining this advocacy momentum to advance dignity, equity, and justice for Muslim women and girls.

XI. MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING (MEL).

In 2024, the Islamic Women's Initiative for Justice, Law, and Peace (IWILAP) strengthened its Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework to ensure that its interventions remained responsive, evidence-based, and grounded in the lived realities of Muslim women and girls. MEL was treated not only as an accountability tool but also as a learning and adaptation mechanism to improve program quality, advocacy effectiveness, and institutional growth.

A. Monitoring and Data Collection.

IWILAP implemented continuous monitoring across all program areas, including legal aid, strategic litigation, SRHR advocacy, community engagement, and policy dialogue. Data were collected using a mix of qualitative and quantitative tools, including case-tracking systems, activity reports, community feedback sessions, stakeholder consultations, and policy engagement records.

Monitoring focused on tracking outputs and outcomes related to access to justice, changes in knowledge and attitudes on SRHR, responsiveness of duty bearers, and the inclusion of Muslim women's voices in policy processes. Particular attention was paid to documenting barriers faced by vulnerable women and girls, including stigma, legal constraints, cultural resistance, and service-delivery gaps.

B. Evaluation and Outcome Assessment.

Throughout 2024, IWILAP conducted periodic internal reviews to assess progress against planned objectives and indicators. These reviews examined the effectiveness, relevance, and reach of interventions, especially in relation to SRHR and abortion-related advocacy within the Muslim community.

Evaluation efforts emphasized outcome-level changes, including increased awareness among policymakers and community leaders, improved engagement with religious and legal institutions, and enhanced protection and support mechanisms for women and girls at risk. Lessons from strategic litigation, rapid response interventions, and policy engagement were systematically documented to inform future programming.

C. Learning and Adaptive Programming.

Learning was central to IWILAP's 2024 operations. Findings from monitoring and evaluation processes were used to adapt advocacy strategies, refine messaging, and strengthen engagement with both policymakers and

community actors. Regular reflection meetings were held with staff and partners to discuss what worked, what did not, and how approaches could be improved.

Key lessons included the importance of sustained dialogue with religious leaders, the need for culturally grounded SRHR messaging, and the value of rapid, coordinated responses in urgent legal and health cases. These insights informed the redesign of outreach strategies and strengthened IWILAP's ability to respond effectively to emerging SRHR and justice concerns.

A. Accountability and Ethical Practice.

IWILAP's MEL processes were guided by principles of accountability, confidentiality, and ethical engagement. Data collection prioritized informed consent, protection of survivors' identities, and sensitivity to cultural and religious contexts. Feedback from beneficiaries and stakeholders was actively sought and incorporated, reinforcing IWILAP's commitment to downward accountability and community-led advocacy.

D. Strengthening Institutional Learning.

In 2024, IWILAP used MEL findings to strengthen internal systems, improve documentation practices, and enhance reporting to donors and partners. Evidence generated through MEL contributed to policy briefs, advocacy submissions, and public engagement efforts, ensuring that IWILAP's advocacy remained grounded in credible data and lived experience.

This MEL framework enabled IWILAP to remain adaptive, accountable, and impactful throughout 2024, ensuring that its work continued to advance justice, dignity, and SRHR for Muslim women and girls.

XII. Challenges and mitigation strategies.

A. Cultural and Religious Resistance to SRHR Advocacy.

One of the major challenges faced in 2024 was resistance within some segments of the Muslim community to discussions on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), particularly abortion. Deep-rooted cultural norms, religious misconceptions, and stigma limited open dialogue and restricted women's access to accurate information and services. IWILAP adopted a faith-sensitive and culturally grounded advocacy approach, framing SRHR discussions within Islamic jurisprudence and ethics. Engagement with respected religious and community leaders was prioritized to legitimize conversations, reduce resistance, and promote community-owned change.

B. Limited Knowledge and Capacity within Religious Justice Institutions.

Qadhi courts, which play a critical role in resolving family and personal status matters, were constrained by limited knowledge and confidence in handling SRHR-related cases. The informal nature of these courts also discouraged reporting by Muslim women and girls. IWILAP strengthened collaboration with Qadhi courts and initiated targeted capacity-building plans to equip judges with knowledge of SRHR and abortion from an Islamic and legal perspective. Sensitization efforts focused on building confidence, professionalism, and survivor-centered responses.

C. Stigma and Fear Affecting Reporting and Access to Justice.

Stigma, fear of community backlash, and lack of trust in justice mechanisms continued to deter women and girls from reporting SRHR violations, gender-based violence, and reproductive health-related abuses. IWILAP expanded legal awareness initiatives and confidential legal support services, emphasizing survivor safety, confidentiality, and rights-based remedies. Community outreach and media engagement were used to normalize SRHR conversations and reduce the fear of seeking help.

D. Policy Gaps and Limited Responsiveness to Muslim Women's SRHR Needs.

Despite increased advocacy, gaps persisted in policy responsiveness and implementation, particularly regarding the unique SRHR challenges faced by Muslim women and girls. IWILAP intensified evidence-based advocacy by drawing on research findings, case documentation, and lived experiences to engage policymakers and legislators. Strategic litigation and policy dialogue were leveraged to push for inclusive, context-specific policy responses.

E. Resource and Operational Constraints.

Limited financial and human resources affected the scale and geographic reach of advocacy, legal aid, and community engagement activities. IWILAP strengthened partnerships with civil society organizations, legal networks, religious leaders, and media institutions to maximize impact. Strategic prioritization and integration of MEL findings helped optimize resource use and improve program efficiency.

F. Political and Regulatory Factors.

Restrictive legal and regulatory environments, shifting political priorities, and heightened scrutiny of SRHR-related advocacy posed challenges to program implementation. Ambiguities in laws governing abortion and SRHR created fear among service providers, community leaders, and survivors, limiting service access and legal redress. IWILAP engaged in strategic, evidence-based policy advocacy to clarify legal standards and promote rights-consistent interpretations of existing laws. Through policy dialogues, legal analysis, and engagement with legislators and regulators, IWILAP worked to advance a more enabling environment for SRHR service delivery and access to justice for Muslim women and girls.

The challenges encountered during the implementation of IWILAP's 2024 programmes highlighted the complexity of advancing justice, dignity, and rights for Muslim women and girls across multiple intersecting areas, including Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), access to justice, protection from gender-based violence, legal empowerment, and faith-informed human rights advocacy.

Despite these obstacles, IWILAP demonstrated resilience, adaptability, and strategic leadership. Through rights-based legal aid, strategic litigation, community sensitisation, engagement with religious and cultural leaders, and evidence-driven policy advocacy, the organisation mitigated risks while sustaining impact across its diverse programme areas. IWILAP's integrated approach, grounded in Islamic feminist principles and human rights law, enabled it to build trust within communities, strengthen institutional partnerships, and advance accountability within both formal and informal justice systems.

Continuous monitoring, learning, and stakeholder collaboration allowed IWILAP to respond effectively to emerging challenges and to refine its interventions in real time. The lessons drawn from 2024 have strengthened the organisation's institutional capacity and sharpened its strategic focus, positioning IWILAP to scale impact, deepen community transformation, and advance legal and social change for Muslim women and girls. Financial Overview.

Financial Management and Resource Utilization.

During the 2024 reporting period, IWILAP implemented its programmes with a strong commitment to prudent financial management, transparency, and value for money. Available financial resources were strategically allocated to ensure that core programme objectives, particularly legal aid provision, advocacy, community outreach, and stakeholder engagement, were delivered efficiently and with measurable impact. Expenditures were closely aligned with approved work plans, and funds were utilized to directly support beneficiary-focused interventions, institutional partnerships, and capacity-building initiatives within Muslim communities.

IWILAP maintained robust internal financial controls throughout the year, ensuring compliance with donor requirements and organizational financial policies. Regular financial monitoring enabled timely adjustments, cost-effectiveness, and accountability, allowing the organisation to maximise impact despite resource limitations.

Funding Sources and Resource Mobilization.

IWILAP's 2024 programming was supported through strategic partnership funding under the LIRA initiative, which enabled the organisation to advance critical work in legal empowerment, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), access to justice, and protection of Muslim women and girls. IWILAP acknowledges and deeply appreciates the confidence placed in the organisation by its funding partner, whose support was instrumental in achieving key outcomes.

Beyond project-based funding, IWILAP continued to pursue diversified resource mobilisation strategies. These included strengthening institutional partnerships, engaging potential donors, and developing sustainable initiatives aimed at enhancing both programmatic reach and organisational resilience. Notably, IWILAP initiated plans to establish a skills development and empowerment centre for survivors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV). This initiative is envisioned to provide economic empowerment to survivors while also creating opportunities for income generation, stakeholder collaboration, and long-term organisational sustainability.

Financial Challenges and Sustainability Measures.

The growing demand for IWILAP's services highlighted the need for expanded and more flexible funding mechanisms. Limited resources constrained geographical coverage and the scale of interventions, particularly in hard-to-reach Muslim communities where legal aid, SRHR information, and protection services were most needed. In response, IWILAP prioritised knowledge-sharing approaches—such as sensitisation and training of Qadhi court judges and Muslim women lawyers to extend impact beyond direct service delivery and strengthen community-level capacity.

Operational challenges were also experienced in supporting volunteer-led interventions, especially in remote areas where logistical costs and language barriers affected service delivery timelines. To mitigate this, IWILAP adopted cost-sharing approaches, strengthened volunteer coordination, and explored partnerships that could provide in-kind support and technical assistance.

XIII. Looking Ahead.

IWILAP remains committed to strengthening its financial sustainability through diversified funding, innovative programming, and strategic partnerships. By demonstrating accountability, measurable impact, and efficient resource use, the organisation continues to position itself as a trusted partner for donors and stakeholders committed to advancing justice, gender equality, and the rights of Muslim women and girls. Future investments will enable IWILAP to scale successful models, deepen community transformation, and sustain long-term impact across its programme areas.

XIV. Acknowledgements.

A. Partnerships and Collaborations

Strategic partnerships remained central to IWILAP's impact in 2024. Through collaboration with funding partners, advocacy allies, and community-based organizations, IWILAP strengthened its ability to advance access to justice, promote Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and respond to the lived realities of Muslim women and girls. These partnerships enhanced programmatic reach, institutional credibility, and sustainability.

1. Afya na Haki (AHAKI).

Afya na Haki (AHAKI) remained a key strategic partner to IWILAP in 2024. Through collaboration under the LIRA initiative, AHAKI supported IWILAP in delivering timely legal aid, pursuing strategic litigation, engaging religious and community leaders, and advancing advocacy on abortion and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) within Muslim communities. Beyond programmatic support, the partnership strengthened IWILAP's institutional capacity, accountability systems, and strategic direction. The collaboration significantly enhanced IWILAP's ability to respond to urgent cases, influence policy discourse, and uphold the rights and dignity of vulnerable Muslim women and girls.

2. Acting Globally.

IWILAP collaborated with Acting Globally to advance rights-based advocacy and amplify community-driven approaches to justice and gender equality. This partnership supported knowledge exchange, solidarity-building, and collective action on issues affecting marginalized populations, particularly in contexts where legal and cultural barriers intersect. Through Acting Globally, IWILAP benefited from broader regional and global advocacy spaces that strengthened its work at both grassroots and policy levels.

3. Urgent Action Fund (UAF).

Urgent Action Fund (UAF) provided critical support that enabled IWILAP to respond swiftly to urgent human rights and protection needs. UAF’s flexible and rapid-response approach strengthened IWILAP’s capacity to protect women human rights defenders and support high-risk interventions in volatile contexts. This partnership contributed to ensuring continuity of advocacy, protection of frontline actors, and resilience in the face of emerging threats and operational constraints.

4. Other Strategic Partners.

In addition to its core partners, IWILAP worked collaboratively with Spring Public Hub and Women with a Mission to support community engagement, advocacy, and capacity-building initiatives. These partnerships enhanced grassroots mobilisation, public education, and outreach to women and girls at the community level. Through collective efforts, IWILAP and its partners fostered shared learning, strengthened referral networks, and expanded access to information and support services for Muslim women.

XV. ANNEXES.

A. PICTORIAL.





IWILAP In-house counsel offering legal aid services in Budaka



IWILAP team at the Constitutional court during the filing of the Qadhi' court petition No. 0010



IWILAP team and partners pose for a group photo after the petition meeting.



Our Counsel haurab Nalubega attending a hearing at the Qadhi's court; IWILAP counsel was present



On the IWILAP Team poses for a group photo with a team from the global International Development. On the right if our Legal Counsel in a community legal aid outreach.



IWILAP Team & MFLN Counsel pose for a group photo after the strategic follow-up meetings on the filed Qadhi court constitutional petition No.0010 of 2024



A capacity-building training for the Muslim Female Lawyers Network (MFLN).



Our Rapid Response Legal Counsel provides legal aid in rural communities.



On the left are some of the beneficiaries of our legal aid services. On the right is a group photo of Muslims at a community legal empowerment event.

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