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PROMOTING A SOCIETY FREE OF GENDER VIOLENCE

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE BY PEACE INITIATIVE KENYA (PIK) PROJECT

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Taking stock

About Peace Initiative Kenya

Pace Initiative Kenya (PIK) is a three-year USAID funded project working towards the prevention of and response to gender based violence (GBV) in Kenya. The project aims at supporting prevention of Gender Based Violence and improving the current GBV response framework at the national and county levels.

The PIK project is implemented by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), together with local partners; Nyabende Support Programme; Rural Aids Prevention and Development Organisation (RAPADO) and Amjutine Children Care and Protection Centre (AMJUTINE) Rural Women's Peace Link (RWPL), Sauti Ya Wanawake – Pwani, Health Care Assistance Kenya (HAK) through GBV hotline 1195 and African Woman and Child Feature Service (AWC).

The project covers nine counties: Taita Taveta, Kwale, Mombasa, Kisumu, Migori, Kisii, Uasin Gishu, Nandi and Trans Nzoia to improve GBV prevention, as well as increase access and utilization of GBV services through community outreach and other awareness raising efforts.

At the national level, the PIK project works closely with the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), Ministry of Devolution and Planning, specifically the Directorate of Gender, Anti-Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Board and other stakeholders to support the Government in creating an enabling environment for coordination of GBV prevention and service provision.

Project Goal:

- To improve national and county-level gender-based violence (GBV) service delivery systems and policy implementation.

Project Objectives:

- Strengthen county engagement in preventing and responding to GBV
- Increase access and utilization of GBV services through community outreach and other awareness raising efforts

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INTERNATIONAL RESCUE
COMMITTEE



AFRICAN WOMAN AND CHILD FEATURE



Jebiwott Sumbeiywo, Chief of party PIK project during PIK partner's conference to explore gains and identify opportunities made since inception of the project three years ago.

PHOTO: JANE GODIA

PIK partners recount the impact and value of partnership

BY JANE GODIA

As curtains fall on the Peace Initiative Kenya (PIK) project in September, implementing partners came together in a conference to take stock of what they have managed to achieve so far.

Reflect

According to Jebiwott Sumbeiywo, Chief of party PIK project, it was important that the partners come together to learn and share experiences.

“The main highlight was to

review performance and use the opportunity to reflect on gains and challenges as well as consider the future in case we are able to secure more funding,” explains Sumbeiywo. “It was also a great opportunity for new partners to interact with the older ones.”

The meeting brought together International Rescue Committee (IRC), African Woman and Child Feature Service (AWCFS), Healthcare Assistance Kenya (HAK), Rural Women Peace Link (RWPL), Sauti ya Wanawake Pwani (SYWP), Women's Empowerment Link (WEL), African Women's

Entrepreneurship Programme (AWEP), Amjutine Children Care and Protection Centre, Nyabende Support Programme, and Rural Aids Prevention and Development Organisation (RAPADO).

PIK was established to strengthen county engagement in preventing and responding to Gender Based Violence (GBV) and to increase access and utilization of GBV services through community outreach and other awareness raising efforts.

According to Sumbeiywo, the meeting was also used to help partners design future plans, identify organization

capacity issues; and how to strengthen the partnership as they work on many other areas.

“Partners were able to discuss various models they are using and how others can replicate them in their organization.”

Beyond the PIK partnership, Sumbeiywo notes that PIK is working with county governments in ensuring that Gender Based Violence is brought to zero across the country.

Achievements

“The synergies that have been created with the county governments are some of the achievements registered by PIK,” says Sumbeiywo.

Sumbeiywo reiterated that focus on gender based violence is going to become even more important as we move closer to 2017 General Elections. This is because violence is one of the factors hold back women from going for competitive politics.

Speaking at the partners meeting, Betty Mugo, Agreement Officer Representative for PIK project at USAID said the forum was important because it enabled the partners to refocus and asked themselves if they are on the path to realization of the vision of the project.

Expose

“It was important for the partners to learn from each other,” says Mugo. “Of utmost importance was that the meeting was able to expose the new partners to the more experienced ones, which is very important in capacity development and learning.”

Mugo notes: “The fact that partners could articulate the work they are

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doing in a more descriptive and rich manner was very encouraging.”

According to Arthur Okwemba, Executive Director African Woman and Child Feature Service, the partners’ meeting was one of a kind, especially coming at the tail-end of a very enriching and inspiring project.

“The learning and experience sharing by a galaxy of partners with diverse knowledge and skills was indeed enriching and humbling. I personally learnt so much and appreciated the long and successful walk we have accomplished as PIK family in bringing out SGBV issues from the private to the public sphere,” says Okwemba.

Analytical

“The emphasis that we be analytical in our reporting of results and sharing the success stories through the eyes of our beneficiaries, were key take home for me,” he observes.

Okwemba adds: “We are just starting to witness the fruits of this investment and I hope the gains we have registered so far will be guarded jealously. This is because some of the platforms and models we have developed are going to be needed more than ever before as we advance towards the General Election in 2017, just under two years from now.”

Violet Muthiga, Executive



The meeting served as a platform to enhance the capacity of new partners”

Betty Mugo, Agreement Officer Representative for PIK project at USAID

Director Sauti ya Wanawake Pwani concurred: “The PIK project has enabled women to engage with duty bearers both at the national and county level in addressing GBV.”

“The project has enabled women to hold leaders accountable on GBV interventions that are working towards protection of women and girls.”

According to Muthiga, gender based violence conversations are becoming more of a development issue rather than a woman’s issue.

This was echoed by Fred Yego, PIK programme officer at Rural Women

Peace Link, who felt that the partners’ meeting provided an opportunity to understand what the others are doing. “We learnt more about each other as the meeting gave a platform for us to interact and engage more as partners,” says Yego.

According to Fanis Lisiagali, Executive Director Healthcare Assistance Kenya (HAK), the meeting brought out the positive partnerships and how they help to augment the work of other partners such as HAK.

“If we continue like this and get more funding, we are likely to replicate this good work to other 47 counties,” she added.

Nancy Gitonga, Chief Executive Officer African Women’s Entrepreneurship Programme (AWEP), which works with women survivors of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) by empowering them economically to improve their livelihood, said: “The partners’ conference was a very powerful convening. I was able to understand what the other partners are doing and where they are at within programme implementation of the projects.”

She observed: “Even though the project is coming to an end, AWEP will continue to collaborate with other partners even if it means looking for other sources of funding.”

Community Based

Organizations attending the meeting were equally excited. “For us the meeting acted as a great opportunity to learn how to do things and how to enhance our work as CBOs,” said Carren Omanga, Chairperson Nyabende Support Programme based in Kisumu County.

She added: “Coming from this meeting we realised that we cannot work alone and will network with the other partners so that we are able to learn from each other.”

Sentiments

These sentiments were echoed by Paul Omole, Programme Coordinator Partnerships and Advocacy at Rural Aids Prevention and Development Organisation (RAPADO) who said the meeting was a great opportunity for community based organisations to learn and practice new strategies of dealing with various issues that confront the community.

During the meeting, the CBOs and NGOs agreed to undertake exchange visits to learn from each and to ride on other partner’s platforms to realize their goals.

For now, the PIK partners are witnessing the end of a project with their heads held high and hope new partners will come on board to support this good work in order to make home and communities a place free of gender based violence.

GBV map website:

Log to www.gbvkenya.org for gender based violence service providers in Kenya for quick reference

HAK calls for joint efforts in addressing GBV



Fanis Lisiagali, the director and founder of Healthcare Assistance Kenya (HAK) displays a J-Card also known as Jikinga Card which has been distributed across the country to enable more Kenyans access GBV services. PHOTO: GEORGE NGESA

BY ODHIAMBO ORLALE

Over 3,350 Gender Based Violence (GBV) cases were reported by survivors using the toll free helpline 1195 run by Healthcare Assistance Kenya (HAK) between the period of January to April 2015.

“The distress calls to the Nairobi-based organisation included 315 sexual violence cases which were handled by HAK and some of its partners,” says Fanis Lisiagali, also known as Mama J-Card who is the director and founder of HAK.

There were other 143 GBV cases which were also reported to HAK by its partners in nine of the 47 counties where Peace Initiative Kenya (PIK) has

been implementing projects aimed at improving GBV response frameworks.

The nine counties are Mombasa, Kwale and Taita-Taveta in Coast region; Kisumu, Migori and Kisii in Nyanza region; Nandi, Uasin Gishu and Trans Nzoia in North Rift region.

Cases

According to HAK’s official records about 20,115 distress calls were made to the office in 2013 out of which 8,115 were GBV cases.

In 2014, there were 17,900 GBV responses, out of which the actual GBV cases were 4,897.

Indeed, for the past three years, HAK has been running the first ever 24-hour GBV Rapid Response Call Centre

where women and children survivors of rape, sodomy, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), physical assault and psychological torture call for assistance.

Healthcare Assistance Kenya has tele-counsellors at the Rapid Response Call Centre, who coordinate and facilitate survivors’ fast access to healthcare facilities for immediate prevention and treatment of infections such as HIV among other sexually transmitted infections.

Rescue

HAK comes to the rescue of women distressed with the ever increasing violence cases in Kenya, especially sexual and child abuse. Women and children in Kenya undergo untold suffering silently due

to fear, stigma, poverty, and lack of knowledge in the event of being sexually abused and genitally mutilated among other forms of violence.

Sexual violence is noted as a trend that continues to contribute to increased infections such as HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Infections. It is a fact that violence affects each and every one of us. The very woman who is a potential victim/survivor to violence is a relative to someone out there and is a great contributor to the society.

HAK’s approach to GBV is aimed at providing the necessary protection to women and children so as to address Gender Based Violence as a vice from a united front or team.

Campaign

HAK holds continuous campaigns against violence on women and children that is aimed at preventing violence and promoting peace for women’s protection and elimination of violence in homes and across the entire country.

Says Lisiagali: “Violence affects each and every one of us. The protection of women and children, therefore, calls for all of us across the societal divide to stand up to the call and relentlessly fight Gender Based Violence with emphasis on sexual violence that is meted on the women and children of Kenya.”

Public participation key to gender responsive budgeting

BY BEN OROKO

Members of the public have been challenged to use their constitutional right that allows public participation in county business to push for Gender-Responsive budgets in their respective counties.

Budgets

A Gender officer with the International Rescue Committee (IRC)'s Peace Initiative Kenya (PIK) project, Ruth Oywaya says that Gender Based Violence (GBV) issues have not been captured in county budgets for the benefit of women and girls.

Oywaya emphasized on the importance of public participation in the county budget making processes to ensure they push for gender-



Ruth Oywaya, a program's officer with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) during a PIK project planning meeting. PHOTO BEN OROKO

responsive budgets which speak to among other matters, prevention and management of GBV in communities.

Challenged

Speaking in Kisii during a PIK project planning meeting, Oywaya challenged PIK community activists to sensitize local communities on the need to hold county governments accountable when it comes to gender-responsive budgets. This

will ensure gender-specific needs are captured in county budgets.

"As community members and activists, you have a role to sensitize your communities on the importance of participating in the county budget making process, to ensure gender issues affecting members of your communities are taken care of in the budgets," urged Oywaya.

She reminded community members that county governments will not come up with gender-responsive budgets until they are pushed through the public participation budget making process.

Allocations

As community members, Oywaya observed that one must have knowledge on GBV issues for them to push for a gender-responsive budget. Once the budget has been approved by the county assembly, the public should interrogate the allocations against specific GBV issues affecting their communities as part of the efforts of holding county governments accountable in relation to addressing GBV issues at community level.

Stop Kangaroo' courts, Otara warns Abagusii community

BY BEN OROKO



Kisii County Member of the National Assembly Mary Otara opens a Gender desk at the Constituency office to serve survivors of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) and ensure the access justice.

PHOTO: BEN OROKO

A major development to tackle gender based violence (GBV) happened in Kisii County recently. County Women Representative Mary Otara established a Gender desk at the Bonchari Constituency office to support in addressing cases of GBV.

This great action comes amid partnership between the office of the Kisii County Women Representative and Peace Initiative Kenya Project (PIK) project that implements various

activities advocating against GBV in the county. The project strives to strengthen county engagement in preventing and responding to GBV and to increase access and utilization of GBV services through community outreach and other awareness raising efforts.

PIK works with various county governments' leaders to lobby for establishment of GBV structures, allocation of resources for improved GBV services and awareness raising on the crisis of GBV at the county level. PAGE 7>>

Members of the public cautioned against paying for the P3 form

BY BEN OROKO

Community Activists from Kisii County, working under the International Rescue Committee (IRC's) Peace Initiative Kenya (PIK) Project have advised Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) survivors against paying for the Kenya Police Medical Examination form, commonly known as P3.

Led by Christine Opanga, the activists told SGBV survivors to stop paying for the P3 forms as this was against the law.

Speaking at Mananasi shopping centre in Bomachoge Chache Sub-County, during the Kisii County PIK project planning meeting, Opanga regretted that the sale of P3 forms to SGBV survivors remains a serious challenge to those seeking justice, leading to the collapse of several GBV cases due to poor documentation.

Fraud

"It is worrying that unsuspecting members of the public, particularly SGBV survivors from this region continue being defrauded by corrupt police officers through payment for the P3



Community activists who are members of AMJUTINE, a CBO implementing partner of PIK during GBV coordination meeting. PHOTO: VALINE MORAA

forms which are supposed to be free to the survivors to facilitate access to justice," stated Opanga.

Cases

Opanga who is a trained paralegal, observed that it is required under the law that all assault cases be documented in the P3 form, but the cost of documenting, preserving and presenting the evidence in court still falls on the GBV survivor.

Her sentiments were backed by Edward Mauti,

who lamented that due to ignorance, majority members of the public and SGBV survivors were forced to pay for P3 forms to the tune of Ksh1, 000. Yet such documents are supposed to be given for free to the survivors to assist them access justice.

This comes amidst reports that although the Kenya Police Medical Examination form, also known as P3 forms are not for sale, members of the public lack that basic information and continue paying for the forms.

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The project targets women and men as partners in GBV prevention and as change agents in the fight against GBV.

Speaking at Ibeno CoG Primary School grounds in Nyaribari Chache sub-County where she donated sanitary towels to school girls in the area, Otara said the desk will help provide Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) survivors with the necessary information and ensure they access justice.

"I am informing members

of the public and other stakeholders that the office of the Kisii County Woman Representative has a gender desk at Elimu Centre," said Otara adding that the desk has been established to help intensify GBV awareness campaigns and pursue justice for the survivors in the area.

Caution

During the meeting Otara warned members of the Abagusii community against settling defilement cases through 'Kangaroo' courts, as the process compromises the judicial process and destroys the lives of the affected women

and girls.

Otara decried cases where the local community members, whose daughters have been defiled, are coerced by either village elders or chiefs into an out of court settlement, instead of allowing the law to take its course.

According to Otara, most 'traditional courts' were stage-managed and mainly seek to absolve the perpetrator from any form of criminal liability.

She said that the traditional courts, commonly known as 'kangaroo' courts, have continued to deny survivors

of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) access to justice.

"The 'traditional courts' have served to impede sexually abused girls and women's access to justice through the formal justice system," Otara noted.

In most cases, families of the perpetrators collude with elders, community policing members and chiefs to ensure the cases are settled through informal alternative dispute resolution mechanisms which often rule in favour of the perpetrators.



National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) chairperson Winfred Lichuma alludes to challenges and gaps in the reporting and availability of essential data for evidence-based GBV programming. PHOTO: FILE

New policy a big win for SGBV survivors

BY WAIKWA MAINA

Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV) survivors can now breathe a sigh of relief after the Ministry of Health unveiled a new policy framework to standardize and improve data management of SGBV.

The new policy which comes in the wake of increasing cases of SGBV around the country will help improve response, increase awareness on SGBV and enhance multispectral networking.

Unlike in the past where SGBV was mostly documented and classified in general as Gender Based Violence (GBV), the new policy places SGBV in its own category. It also offers all-inclusive medical care including psychosocial



The reviewed document is among the best in the Ministry of Health policies but there is a clause that makes it mandatory for a guardian or a relative to sign a consent form allowing for forensic investigations,

A medic at Nyeri Provincial General Hospital.

support.

This will be the first time that SGBV is recorded separately by Ministry of Health's data systems

commonly known as District Health Information System (DHIS).

The document known as County Dissemination of SGBV Management Documents and Tools in the Health Sector states that cases of SGBV have been on the increase since 2008, where 45 per cent of Kenyan women aged between 15 and 49 years have experienced either physical or sexual violence.

Prevalence

“One in five Kenyan women (21%) has experienced sexual violence. Divorced, separated or widowed women are more likely to be exposed to violence (60%) than their married (42%) and never-married (25%) counterparts.

The data notes that 37 per cent of women, who have experienced sexual violence,

report current husbands or partners as perpetrators. In Nyanza, it's noted that 57 per cent of women who have experienced physical violence, followed by those in Western (45%). Women in Nairobi are the least likely to report physical violence (29%).

The document indicates that in 2014, 38 per cent of ever-married women aged between 15 and 49 experienced physical violence committed by their husband or partner, while 23 per cent experienced violence in the 12 months prior to the survey from their husband or partner. Further, nine per cent of ever-married men age 15 to 49 experienced physical violence committed by their wife or lovers.

Higher levels

Again, the report shows that women in Western, Nyanza and Nairobi regions reported higher levels of physical and sexual violence committed by a spouse or other partner than women in other regions.

All this issues will now be tackled under the new arrangement. The system has been aligned with the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) framework, which establishes an integrated and functional SGBV multi-sectoral monitoring and evaluation system. NGEC is one of the key stakeholders at the national level that Peace Initiative Kenya (PIK) Project works closely with to support coordination, improve on gender mainstreaming and policy frameworks for gender based violence prevention and response. **PAGE 9>>**

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The Commission's chairperson Winfred Lichuma says that although the review of SGBV prevention, response and management in Kenya shows significant improvement, there are notable challenges and gaps.

One of this is the frequency of reporting and availability of essential data for evidence-based programming and decision making mainly due to underlying structural factors as well as lack of a comprehensive SGBV monitoring and evaluation frame work.

Ensuring Justice

The new policy by the Ministry of Health covers almost every loophole used by suspects to evade justice in the courts of law.

However, medics express concern that the reviewed document still has a dangerous clause that criminal lawyers can use to weaken prosecution cases.

"The reviewed document is among the best in the Ministry of Health policies but there is a clause that makes it mandatory for a guardian or a relative to sign a consent form allowing for forensic investigations," says a medic at Nyeri Provincial General Hospital.

"We have had cases where parents get compromised by suspects, a deal is fixed and the case is withdrawn or some cases involving the children are never prosecuted after parents or guardians get compromised by the suspects."

In 2011, police crime report documented 2,660

cases of defilement and 130 cases of male rape, while a joint report by Teachers Service Commission (TSC) and Centre for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW) indicated that 12,660 girls were sexually abused by male teachers between 2003 and 2007.

The reviewed document provides comprehensive information about management of Sexual Violence in Kenya, focusing on the necessity to avail services that address the needs of survivors including medical, psychosocial, legal or referral services that address perpetrators as well as the Sexual Offences Act Medical (treatment) Regulations.

This should cater for the needs of children given that most cases (60percent) that are present in health facilities are children as well as providing for clinical management that details procedures on point of contact with survivor.

Unlike in the past where there were poor follow-ups which affected investigations, each SGBV case reported at

health facilities will have its own page from first date the victim sought treatment to the final stage where the victim is fully recovered and integrated into the community.

The policy has additional information on medical management of child survivors, male survivors, perpetrators, psychosocial support and psychological assessment as well as legal and forensics issues.

Intergration

On children, the process will include integration of the treatment of children as per age groups with clear guidelines on the type of investigations to be conducted based on the specimen collected, management of male adult survivors, management of perpetrators, history taking and examination as well as change in ARV regimen for all survivors from duo to triple therapy.

In Forensics Management Amendments, it makes it very difficult for any person to compromise the

investigations, as strict specimen for medical and forensic purposes documentation is systematically arranged, including exhibit management and preservation of evidence, with focus on poor resource settings, chain of custody of evidence and type of documentation to be filled in all evidence based forms, and all the evidence will have a backup in a register.

The new policy also requires all SGBV cases to be reported to the county governments on monthly basis.

"The SGBV Data Tools is revised to align with the current and evaluation standards, modernization of data collection tools in most facilities and updating some of the documents," reads the document.

It notes: "There was lack of proper data flow from facility to all subsequent levels, insufficient data on prevalence rates of SGBV in Kenya, lack of SGBV indicators in DHIS and insufficient SGBV data upload into DHIS."



PIK partners follow through the presentations during a conference held at the Fairview Hotel Nairobi. PHOTO: VALINE MORAA

Sauti takes to social media to address SGBV



Violet Muthiga during a leaders forum under PIK project held in Mombasa County PHOTO: VALINE MORAA

BY ODHIAMBO ORLALE

Women in the six counties in the Coast region are walking tall, thanks to a local Non-governmental organization that has given them voice and visibility as far as the anti-Gender Based Violence (GBV) campaign is concerned.

Sauti Ya Wanawake Pwani

(Voice of Coast Women), popularly known as Sauti, has been holding civic education and public awareness programmes in Mombasa, Taita-Taveta, Kwale, Kilifi, Tana River and Lamu counties for the past 14 years and their efforts are bearing fruit.

The women, who are commonly referred to as Sauti Chapters, are using social media to communicate and

educate against GBV. They have formed small supporting groups using WhatsApp and Facebook to reach out to the group members and the public on their mobile phones. Through these they are able to share any information, incidents and news on matters of Sexual and Gender Based Violence.

Says Violet Muthiga:

“Sauti, a grassroots women organisation is using social media such as WhatsApp in trying to address SGBV at the community level.”

She notes: “The platform is used to share SGBV information including laws that address the vice.”

According to Muthiga, who is the Executive Director of Sauti, the social media is also an accountability tool that has attracted Members of the County Assembly and Officers Commanding Stations (OCS).

“They are asked questions by the women which they are able to address instantly.”

Through the WhatsApp and FaceBook support group network, officials from FIDA, police and the County Assemblies use the forum to respond to questions raised by Sauti Chapters.

Social media tool

Muthiga reiterates that the social media is also used as a follow up tool that strengthens referral mechanisms for SGBV survivors.

However, Muthiga notes that access to cellphone remains a challenge as only 60 per cent of women in leadership positions have phones.

“Nevertheless, since Sauti Chapters hold frequent meetings, they are able to share any emerging issues.”

According to Muthiga, they have now moved a notch higher by partnering with women in the villages whom they have trained to engage with the national and respective County governments on how to include GBV in

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their annual budgets as well as policies and legislative agenda.

“We are happy with Taita-Taveta County in particular where the Government set aside funds this year to celebrate the International Women’s Day and other related anti-GBV activities.”

Findings and recommendations

Muthiga is also happy that some of the findings and recommendations by the Peace Initiative Kenya (PIK) Assessment Report on GBV Responses in the respective counties have been acted upon by national government through the Gender Directorate Ministry of Devolution and Planning and in some of the affected counties.

Sauti started as a local women’s movement in Mombasa, in 2001. The main aim was to create a safe space for grassroots’ women to discuss issues that affect them and to become a forum that contributes in the fight for women’s and children’s rights.

The movement champions for women’s issues while at the same time building women’s confidence to challenge oppressive systems and advocate for change.



Sauti, a grassroots women organisation is using social media such as WhatsApp in trying to address SGBV at the community level.”

Violet Muthiga, Executive Director of Sauti Ya Wanawake Pwani

Sauti is a partner organization of Peace Initiative Kenya (PIK) and implements the project’s GBV work in Mombasa, Kwale and Taita Taveta counties.

The organisation’s head office is in Mombasa, and it operates in the six counties within the coastal region by promoting grassroots women as decision makers, lobbyists and leaders. It seeks to increase their participation at all levels of democratic governance.

Sauti is able to sustain its activities through a pool of volunteers, networking and collaboration with partners and stakeholders.

Muthiga cites the setting up of local community forums as a key achievement for the organization. “Sauti Chapters use the forums to highlight GBV cases in their respective areas,” she says.

In addressing SGBV, Sauti takes up the cases and links survivors to referral mechanisms and actions through partners like Federation of Kenya Women Lawyers (FIDA) and respective Court Users Committees (CUC) for action.

The CUC have been very useful to women’s movement at the Coast because it gives them an opportunity to freely meet and raise their issues and grievances with the magistrate and other court users on a one-to-one basis.

Says Muthiga: “Our efforts have borne fruit and in the past year we have had two cases heard and determined in the favour of GBV survivors.”

Challenges

According to Muthiga, one of the major challenges they are facing as an organisation is culture. She notes that GBV is dynamic and it keeps changing.

Muthiga singles out Female Genital Mutilation as a major issue in Taita-Taveta

and Kwale counties where it is practiced by some of the residents who have relatives across the border in Tanzania.

Says Muthiga: “Female Genital Mutilation is linked to tradition in those counties where it is also viewed as a woman’s issue and not a human rights and a national issue.”

However, the battle is not lost as the organization has brought on board scores of male champions to lead from the front in the anti-GBV campaign. These include local khadhis, police bosses, and some Members of the County Assembly among others.

Lack of resources and a rescue centre for GBV survivors poses another challenge for Sauti. Muthiga is appealing for support from donors, development partners and the county governments.

According to Muthiga, Sauti aims at working closely with Members of County Assembly (MCAs) and Members of Parliament (MPs) to influence legislation and policies that will address the GBV problems in the Coast region.

“Each county is unique and needs laws to address its GBV problems,” she says.

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PIK in Pictures



Ruth Oywaya, Gender officer at IRC and Nancy Gitonga, Executive Director at AWEF at the PIK partners meeting.



Arthur Okwemba, Executive Director AWCFS making a presentation at the PIK partners' convening.



Conor Phillips, IRC Country Director addresses implementing partners



Jacky Ouma, Finance Office Nyabende shares her journey to empowerment during the 2015 PIK Conference



PIK implementing partners in a group photograph where they were joined by IRC staff including the country director.



Team from Women Empowerment Link, an implementing partner of PIK consult during the convening.



Violet Muthiga, CEO Sauti ya Wanawake Pwani converses with Jane Godia, Managing Editor AWC during the PIK Partners Conference

PIK aids Anti-FGM Board on Communication Strategy

BY JANE GODIA

While the war against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has been going on for decades, the number of girls going through the process remains disturbingly high.

According to Jared King'oina, a programme officer at the Anti-FGM Board, with over 140 million girls in Africa undergoing FGM, the continent leads on the global scene. "In Kenya, 21 percent of women have undergone the cut yet, it has been outlawed and The Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act passed in 2011."

Statistics

King'oina notes that statistics from the Kenya Demographic Health Survey (KDHS) indicate that North Eastern Province, which hosts Garissa, Moyale, Marsabit, Mandera and Wajir counties have 98 per cent cut recorded compared to Eastern provinces which stands at 28 percent. Overall 11 percent of women ages 15 to 19 are circumcised compared to more than 20 per cent of women over age 30.

The KDHS report notes that people are moving away from removing the entire genitalia to just cutting part of the clitoris.

Whichever way it is done,

King'oina notes, FGM is not good for women. He says: "Certain communities, like in Taveta, have now moved to cutting infants. There is increasing subjugation of infants and young girls to the practice to avoid law enforcement officers."

But even with so much financial, human and time resources being invested in campaigning against the vice, the progress has been painfully slow.

Gaps

The Anti-FGM Board believes one of the gaps that have contributed to this is how the message has been communicated for many years; and how the media has been utilized in this war.

This is why the Board partnered with Peace Initiative Kenya (PIK) Project to develop a communication and media strategy to guide the work of the Board around FGM. The strategy is to assist the board in its core functions of creating public awareness around the dangers posed by the vice.

According to Jane Mwareru, the Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Board, the Communications and Media Strategy is important to enhance visibility of the board; enhance media coverage of the Board's



Peace Initiative Kenya (PIK) partners attend a retreat to develop a Communications and Media Strategy for the Anti FGM Board. The process is being supported by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) through (PIK). PHOTO: JANE GODIA

activities; gain support among key stakeholders; and facilitate mobilization of resources.

The process of developing the Communications and Media Strategy is being supported by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) through its PIK Project.

According to Jebiwot Sumbeiywo, Chief of Party PIK, the project is supporting the Board to enable it meet the most important aspect of its mission which is communicating a clear message around the elimination of FGM.

Plan

"The Board has most recently worked on a Strategic Plan and the success of the plan will be hinged on a good communication strategy," says Sumbeiywo.

She adds: "The Board was established recently and it is not well resourced to meet its mandate hence the decision to support it. The support to the Board is one of the priority areas of PIK."

According to Sumbeiywo,

PIK's objective is also to support the national and county governments to meet their mandate around gender based violence among other issues.

"Ultimately when the Board reduces FGM nationally PIK will be meeting its objective," she notes.

Echoed

Her sentiments are echoed by Mwareru who observes that the relation between the Board and IRC has been a fruitful one. She said the two organisations are looking forward to strengthening their collaboration since both are keen on addressing issues of sexual and Gender Based Violence which remains worst forms of human rights abuses for women and girls.

"Female Genital Mutilation is the worst form of GBV with many serious effects," says Mwareru.

"It's unfortunate that many people view it as a cultural practice without looking at it as a violation of women's and girls' rights."

Giving sex workers second chance in life

BY HENRY KAHARA

Emmie Mbone is one of those commercial sex workers who had no hope of generating income from other ventures other than selling sex.

However life changed for better when a friend introduced her to the Africa Women's Entrepreneurship Programme (AWEP), an implementing partner organization of the Peace Initiative Kenya (PIK) Project that empowers women economically to free them from sexual and gender based violence.

According to Mmbone, Beatrice Iminza was the person God used to change her story.

"I met Beatrice at Pumwani Maternity where I had gone to deliver my third born child."

Source of income

"Life was like hell and I felt like I could sell the child. I never had a source of income," she recalls adding that Iminza stood by her side and introduced her to AWEP.

At AWEP, she was able to join a group of women who were trained on life skills. They were taught how to make detergents, beads, necklaces and fish smoking among other things. "Since then I decided to change my life and started living a responsible life different from commercial sex work," says Mmbone.

Today, she has opened a



Emmie Mbone, a beneficiary of the Africa Women's Entrepreneurship Programme (AWEP), an implementing partner of the Peace Initiative Kenya Project (PIK). PHOTO: HENRY KAHARA

new chapter in her life and instead of posing in dark alleys as a sex worker, she is a fish monger.

Investment

Mmbone says that she decided to invest in fish business since she was assured of good returns.

"I get my fish at Gikomba market. Due to fish demand I wake up very early, at 6am I am in the market and at 9am, I am back in the house," she explains.

She says that it is better to brave the chilly morning instead of the cold nights in the streets entertaining men who would sometimes abuse her and fail to pay.

"During the day, I spend time selling detergents to my customers," she says adding that she opens her fish business in the evening.

"Most of the time people buy fish in the evening so there is no need of opening the business in the morning,"

she notes.

She admits that her life has changed since the time she started the new business. "Currently my life has changed since I can now afford to buy a packet of milk which I could not. I am also taking care of my children and at least living a responsible life," she intimates.

Empowered

"She has really changed. That one I can confirm," says Virginia Ndunda, her friend.

"We too are single mothers and we need to be empowered. If in any case there is a chance consider us," says Ndunda adding that their efforts to get Uwezo fund has not borne fruits.

She says that corruption has denied them access to government funds and hence they have lost hope.

For now Mmbone status has changed and women are frequenting her business for advice. She is a hero on her

own. Recently, she started a group where they sensitise women on the need to embrace safe sex.

"Some of these women who are commercial sex workers in this area are my friends. I know them and because I have transformed, I am creating awareness," says Mmbone, adding that it is not an easy job.

"It is hard to convince them to reform. They are the only ones who can make a decision to change their way of living," she notes.

For now, she plans renting a permanent structure where she can carry out her business without disruptions when it rains.

Transformed

According to Beatrice Iminza, Mmbone's case is a typical example of how women can be transformed if empowered.

"Her story is a testimony that slum women can embrace change. They only need to be empowered," notes Iminza.

AWEP Kenya Chapter targets to empower at least 108,000 women over the next three years. Of these, 10,800 must be youth and 1,080 people with disability.

According to Susan Oyuko, a Programme Officer at AWEP, some of the major challenges facing women that AWEP seeks to address is poor access to skills, tools, knowledge and information to grow business.

"We have a vision to have women who are champions of social and economic progress within their community," says Oyuko.

AWEP support bears fruit for GBV survivor

BY HENRY KAHARA

Beatrice Iminza, 52, has become a celebrity in Makadara Constituency. She is among small and micro entrepreneurs who recently met President Uhuru Kenyatta at Kenyatta International Conference Centre.

Iminza was not only lucky to meet President Kenyatta but she was also among the few people in the meeting who shook his hand.

She currently runs a kitchen in Makadara after she recently won a tender to cook lunch for the National Youth Service (NYS), under a programme spearheaded by the Ministry of Devolution and Planning.

Iminza says that under the NYS programme, they cook and sell food that range from rice, beans to Ugali and greens and every meal must be served with a fruit.

“I am really happy that an ordinary Kenyan like me can get a government tender,” said a jovial Iminza.

Success

She attributes her success to the support she has received from the African Women’s Entrepreneurship Program (AWEP) which has offered her a shoulder to lean on.

“AWEP has helped to change my life. I was among 30 sexual and gender based violence women survivors who took part in entrepreneurial and product



At Work: Beatrice Iminza prepares meals. She recently won a tender to cook lunch for the National Youth Service (NYS), under a programme spearheaded by the Ministry of Devolution and Planning. PHOTO: VALINE MORAA

development training. Once we completed the 8-months training, AWEP provided us with a seed capital of Kshs 20,000 each which I used to finance the NYS feeding programme,” said Iminza.

Survivors

AWEP is an implementing partner of the Peace Initiative Kenya (PIK) project and is working with survivors of sexual and Gender Based Violence to transform their lives through building their self esteem and start up businesses.

AWEP has been equipping women with education, tools and skills to access business and leadership opportunities and become agents of change within their communities.

“I would like to tell women that time when men used to be sole providers is long gone.

I urge women to come out of their cocoons and start doing something constructive. I am convinced that women can excel in academics, business, politics and even in the corporate world,” says Iminza.

In addition to running the kitchen, Iminza also makes traditional baskets and beads, a skill she acquired from AWEP.

She has not kept the knowledge she gained to herself and she is currently training other interested women during her free time.

“I sometimes get orders to make the baskets. This is a good part time job,” she notes adding that her goal is to empower more women so that they can live better and happy lives.

Iminza notes that most family squabbles emanate from money matters and can be resolved if both women

and men engage in productive work to complement each other.

She says that she has been involved in helping women to know their rights.

“I am currently serving in Gender Based Violence (GBV) programmes where we sensitize women on their rights,” says Iminza.

She notes that for long women have been marginalised and time had come for them to rise and shine.

“My husband died in 1990 and immediately after burying him his brothers chased me out of the home and barred me and my children from inheriting what was rightfully his,” says Iminza.

“I tried my best to educate my children and although some of them did not complete their education, I am happy with what I have achieved,” she recalls.

Shaping communities

Iminza says that the hardships she underwent as a young mother has inspired her to join community work.

“Today, I have turned my house into a rescue centre and provided shelter to women who have been beaten by their husbands,” says Iminza, who is in charge of the Makadara Gender Based Violence group.

“Women are much affected by GBV and our main aim is to help get rid of the harmful practice. In the meetings we train women on how they can live peacefully with their husbands and the community at large,” notes Iminza.

Turning the page of GBV to one of bliss

BY HENRY KAHARA

It is already 1.00 pm and most people have taken a break to enjoy their lunch. However, this is not the case for Elizabeth Wanjiku who has to work around the clock to beat deadlines.

Wanjiku weaves sweaters at Uhuru Market in Nairobi.

On one side of her knitting machine is a note book, a pen and an order paper. She has just received an order from St Elizabeth Lunga Lunga Primary School.

Business

"I am supposed to be through with the 140 pieces in two weeks time," explains 43-year-old Wanjiku.

Since her business is still young, Wanjiku works alone and hence the need to be faster so that she can beat deadlines in addition to delivering quality products.

Wanjiku is also pursuing a course in Social Work and Community Development at Carlile College. She has to master the art of multitasking to achieve her targets.

This is the main reason why she has a note book which also contains some of her class work.

"I don't have much time and, therefore, I'm trying to squeeze the little time I have to revise.

For instance while taking tea, I go through my notes,"



Elizabeth Wanjiku learns the art of reliance after she left an abusive marriage. She represents scores of women who have been trained through the African Women's Entrepreneurship Programme (AWEP). PHOTO: HENRY KAHARA



“Sauti, a grassroots women organisation is using social media such as Whatsapp in trying to address SGBV at the community level.”

Violet Muthiga, Executive Director of Sauti Ya Wanawake Pwani

Wanjiku.

When she left her matrimonial home in Limuru, Wanjiku came to Nairobi where she settled at Mukuru kwa Njenga with her three children who were very young at the time.

"I rented a house in the slums and started life from the scratch. I did menial jobs including washing clothes in other people's houses to fend for my children," Wanjiku recalls.

"At that time I just wanted some little money to help me feed my children and pay the rent."

Eventually she got a job at Mukuru Kwa Reuben where she would prepare porridge for the young children who were brought there.

"I worked in the organisation faithfully and the matron would encourage me to work hard. Actually she is the one who advised me to go back to school," says Wanjiku.

Skills

The same matron also introduced Wanjiku to African Women's Entrepreneurship Programme (AWEP) Kenya Chapter where she was among 30 sexual and gender based violence survivors who underwent 8-months training on life skills and economic empowerment. This helped her to become self-reliant.

AWEP is an implementing partner of the Peace Initiative Kenya (PIK) Project that is supported by USAID. The project is headed by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and has local partner organizations on board that are working towards prevention and

says Wanjiku, a mother of three.

For now the schedule is too tight because apart from the tender she is still receiving daily orders from other customers and preparing for her second year final exam.

Wanjiku's journey has been fraught with challenges but her undying spirit has kept her going.

"I was once married. My husband was a primary school teacher and a drunkard who not only beat me but was also not providing for the family. This is what made me walk out of my marriage," explains

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response of Gender Based Violence (GBV) in the Country.

“I can say AWEP has really changed my life. They took us, as a group, and trained us on how to make detergents, beads and mats. In addition, they taught us how to handle customers and keep records,” says Wanjiku.

At the time she joined AWEP Wanjiku had saved some money. She used the savings to buy a knitting machine. She was able to get a stall at Uhuru Market where she now weaves sweaters.

“AWEP has helped me to be where I am today,” says Wanjiku adding that AWEP through the PIK project also gave each one of them a seed capital of KSh20,000 which helped her improve the business.

Self employed

For now Wanjiku is self-employed and two of her children are in high school while one is in primary school.

“When I am through with my work here around 4:30pm I go for classes. I am currently in my second year and will soon be sitting for my exams,” explains Wanjiku.

“My life has really changed and now I know God can lift you from nothing to something,” she notes.

The change from nothing to something has come with additional responsibilities. Currently Wanjiku is a very busy woman since she has to attend her classes as well as work and fulfil her role as a mother.



Caren Omanga of Nyabende Support Programme under Peace Initiative Kenya (PIK) project demonstrates inappropriate touching of female students when corporal punishment is administered. PHOTO: VALINE MORAA

PIK gives thumbs up to children rights

BY VALINE MORAA

If there is one fundamental right that children must enjoy, then is the right to participation, which ensures their views and ideas are considered in all matters that affect them.

These rights are expressed in both national and international instruments which include the Constitution of Kenya 2010, Children's Act 2001, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC).

Countries are expected to put in place measures that ensure these rights are enjoyed in their totality. It is encouraging that Kenya has made commendable steps in

setting up avenues, forums and structures that ensure effective child participation in decision making processes.

One of these is the Kisumu County Children's Assembly, one of the many assemblies nationwide that offer children a platform to meet and discuss issues affecting them.

Children's Assembly

According to Bilha Akoth, a children officer working with the Kisumu County Department of Children's Services, which is under Ministry of Labour, Social Services and Security, the Children's Assembly was established in 2012.

“It was also in the same year that the County Children Assemblies in all the 47 counties in Kenya were launched and

operationalized,” says Akoth.

Akoth notes that the assemblies were established to provide children with a structure through which they could meet and raise views on pertinent issues that concern them.

The objective of the structures was to empower children with knowledge and skills on their rights and responsibilities. It also meant involving them in policy formulation, planning, implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation.

Promoting participation

“The assemblies provide a forum to promote children's participation in local, national and international events as well as facilitating networking among children and other relevant

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organizations,” explains Akoth.

She adds: “The assemblies also promote nationhood and cohesion among Kenyans by bringing together children from diverse backgrounds to discuss their issues.”

In understanding the right of children to express themselves freely, Peace Initiative Kenya (PIK) took part in the Kisumu County Children Assembly held at the Ahero Township Pastoral Centre.

The meeting was held under the theme ‘Access to Education for Every Child in Kenya’. The forum was organized by Kisumu County Department of Children’s Services in partnership with PIK and other stakeholders.

Awareness

A radio talk show, in a local language station supported by PIK was held prior to the children’s forum. The objective was to create public awareness on issues around Gender Based Violence (GBV) and child protection.

“The Kisumu County

Children Assembly, like other County Children Assemblies, is modelled on the lines of the County government assemblies. It is headed by a Governor and has a Speaker. The delegates represent various schools,” explains Jemin Konyango, Nyando Sub-county Children officer. “It has a total of 40 members who are referred to as honourable members.”

At the forum, issues addressed included harmful social practices like drug and substance abuse as well as inadequate facilitation of infrastructure in schools.

The Assembly also raised concerns over the high number of children not accessing education. It noted the poor implementation of legal instruments such as corporal punishment.

“The Government should implement banning of corporal punishment in schools and ensure that every child has access to quality, free and compulsory basic education,” notes Victor Oyuga, a delegate to the Assembly.

His sentiments are echoed

by Penninah Vulimu who represents children living with disability at the Assembly. “Primary school education for children with disability is not free. I am surprised the House is saying primary schooling is free yet ever since I was in Class One and now in Class 8, my parents have been paying school fees,” observes Vulimu.

“For us, there is nothing like free primary education, a directive passed by the Ministry of Education. Our teachers still administer corporal punishment and afterwards make us toil in the farm for a whole day and miss classes.”

Implemented

“The Ministry of Education needs to ensure that laws put in place are implemented in all schools and not just a select few,” says Vulimu who has hearing disability, but expressed herself through sign language with the help of an interpreter.

At the forum, PIK addressed gender based violence and the delegates identified sexual harassment and exploitation in schools as a form of GBV affecting

children.

“We have cases where both male and female students are told to take-off their clothes before corporal punishment is administered,” claims Brian Okoth who is the Governor of Kisumu County Children Assembly.

He says: “There is also the issue of inappropriate touching especially of female students when corporal punishment is being administered to them by male teachers.”

His sentiments are echoed by Speaker of the Assembly Diana Adhiambo who notes: “We also have cases where students have sexual relationships with their teachers in exchange of good grades or a leadership position in school.” She adds: “Such acts infringe on the rights of children and also cause psychological harm.”

Other forms of GBV that were addressed by PIK at the forum included sexual abuse of children at the household level and outside such as defilement and sodomy, child labour, early and forced marriages as well as female genital mutilation/

Useful tips

PIK also informed the delegates about 1195, the toll free GBV helpline and other GBV services offered by Healthcare Assistance Kenya, a PIK implementing partner which runs the helpline.

A list of Dos and Don’ts in the case of a sexual violation was also provided.

They include:

• **Do not clean yourself or bathe before being treated. If you change clothes put the dirty ones in a brown paper**

bag or wrap them in a newspaper. Never use plastic (polythene) bags to store your clothes after sexual violence.

• **Do not cut your nails or brush your teeth.**

• **If you must pass urine, do it in a clean container and bring it with you to the health centre for laboratory testing.**

• **Present the issue to a health practitioner within 72 hours (3 days) from the time the incident occurred.**

• **Report the matter to the police.**

• **Seek psychological and legal**

support.

While closing the forum, Kisumu County Minister for Education, Youth, Culture and Social services, Jenipher Kere praised the kind of leadership that was at the County Children Assembly and expressed willingness to support the assembly sittings and other children activities.

She advised children, parents and all stakeholders to be steadfast and take the first line in safeguarding the rights and welfare of children.

New law a win for anti-domestic violence campaigners

BY FAITH MUIRURI

The enactment of Protection Against Domestic Violence (PADV) Act 2015 marks the beginning of a solid foundation to protect survivors of domestic violence.

The new law introduces stringent penalties for perpetrators of domestic violence. Any person who commits an offence under this law is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding KSh200,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year or to both.

In addition, individuals who disobey court protection orders will be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding KSh100,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to both such fine and imprisonment.

Relief measures

A close scrutiny of the law reveals that survivors will now be advised on relief measures available.

Section 6(1), requires that a person who receives a report or investigates a domestic violence case must advise the complainant on all relief measures available, including access to shelter and medical assistance.

The Peace Initiative Kenya (PIK) Project through its implementing partner, the Women Empowerment Link



Survivors of Gender based Violence can now heave a sigh of relief following the enactment of the Protection Against Domestic Violence Act 2015. PHOTO: FILE

(WEL) was actively engaged in lobbying Members of Parliament among other key stakeholders during the passage of the Act.

The law received a lot of support from both male and female legislators and was passed with the third reading.

The law sets out various forms of violence which include child marriage, interference from in-laws and sexual violence within marriage.

The law further addresses retrogressive cultural practices such as female genital mutilation, forced marriage, forced wife inheritance, virgin testing and widow cleansing.

Other forms of violence cited under the law include damage to property,

defilement, depriving or hindering the applicant access to or a reasonable share of the facilities associated with their place of residence, economic abuse, emotional or psychological abuse.

Domestic Violence

In addition, the law addresses the effect of domestic violence on children which has not been captured in the Children Act.

“Section 3 (3) makes it illegal for anyone to subject another person with whom the child has a domestic relationship to physical, sexual, or psychological abuse in the presence of the child,” explains lawyer Joyce Majiwa, a lead consultant in the PADV Act.

Further, the categories

of persons who can make an application on behalf of children affected by domestic violence has been expanded.

Other salient features in the law include the training of police officers to deal with family related matters or domestic violence; facilitating the reporting process to ensure cases are expedited promptly.

However, the law has failed to capture proposals that had initially empowered police officers to arrest without a warrant and prefer charges against any person who is reasonably suspected to have assaulted or threatened to assault a family member or breached a protection order.

Other proposals that have been shelved include provisions PAGE 20>>

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that allowed a survivor to lodge complaints against police officers.

“The bill had proposed a clause that vested applicants with rights to complain against police officers in the event that they are not satisfied with the services rendered,” she explains.

Gaps

The new law also fails to take into account the establishment of temporary emergency shelters and safe houses at the county level for the protection of victims of domestic violence.

The proposals would have paved way for the development of standards to ensure that shelters established or recommended pursuant to this Act are registered and run in accordance with the values and principles of the constitution.

The proposals contained in Section 8 had further called for public education and awareness on issues relating to domestic violence; research and development of programmes for eliminating domestic violence and promoting reconciliation and non-violent means of resolving disputes within the family.

The PADV Act 2015 gives effect to Articles 29(c), 45 and 50 (9) as enshrined in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution. Article 29 (c) which states that every person has the right to freedom and security, which includes the right not to be subjected to any form of violence from either public or private sources.

Article 45 (1) stipulates that the family is the natural and fundamental unit of society and the necessary basis of social order and shall enjoy the recognition and protection of the state.

Article 50 (9) directs Parliament to enact legislation providing for the protection, rights and welfare of victims of offenses.



Commitment: Itumbe location Chief Henry Mirera, displays a T-shirt to affirm the message during a meeting to sensitize locational advisory Council members on Gender Based Violence (GBV) at Giasaiga Resource Centre. PHOTO: BEN OROKO

Chief warns against out of court settlements

BY BEN OROKO

Bobasi sub-county chief Henry Mirera has blamed the low conviction rates in Gender Based Violence (GBV) cases in the area to disappearance of the survivors just when they are required to testify in court against the perpetrators.

Mirera lamented that though the chiefs and their assistants have been blamed by the public for failure to pursue defilement and rape cases to their conclusion, most survivors disappeared anytime they are called to testify in courts.

The chief spoke when officials from the International Rescue Committee (IRC)- Peace Initiative Kenya (PIK) project paid him a courtesy call during a training to create awareness on GBV in his location.

The chief revealed that affected families conspire

with perpetrators to defeat justice through out-of-court settlements.

“In as much as the members of the public want to blame the chiefs and their assistants on failure to ensure survivors access justice through the courts of law, some parents and relatives of the survivors conspired to frustrate the cases and will use any means to ensure that survivors do not testify against perpetrators in court,” Mirera lamented.

Lack of evidence

The chief said that this has led to the collapse of many defilement cases due to lack of substantial evidence, especially in cases where the survivors are minors.

Mirera however warned that action will be taken against individuals who advocate for out of court settlements of defilement and rape cases.

His sentiments were echoed by Kisii County PIK Programmes Co-

ordinator, Christine Oponga who warned local communities against performing cleansing rites which she said deprived the survivors their right to justice.

“We are aware of cases where a child is defiled by a close relative and a family convenes a meeting to reconcile the affected family members. During the meetings family cleansing and reconciliation rituals are conducted to the detriment of the affected child who will live in trauma and self-denial based on the experience she went through during the sexual abuse ordeal,” stated Oponga.

Describing defilement as a crime, Oponga warned local community members against obstructing justice for the survivors through traditional social arbitration mechanisms which do not respect the children’s rights to access justice when they have been sexually abused.