



Statistics from GBRCs indicate high levels of sexual violence
Page 11

Ray of hope in GBV campaign as more players join the war
Page 13

Couple in jail over genital mutilation
Page 15

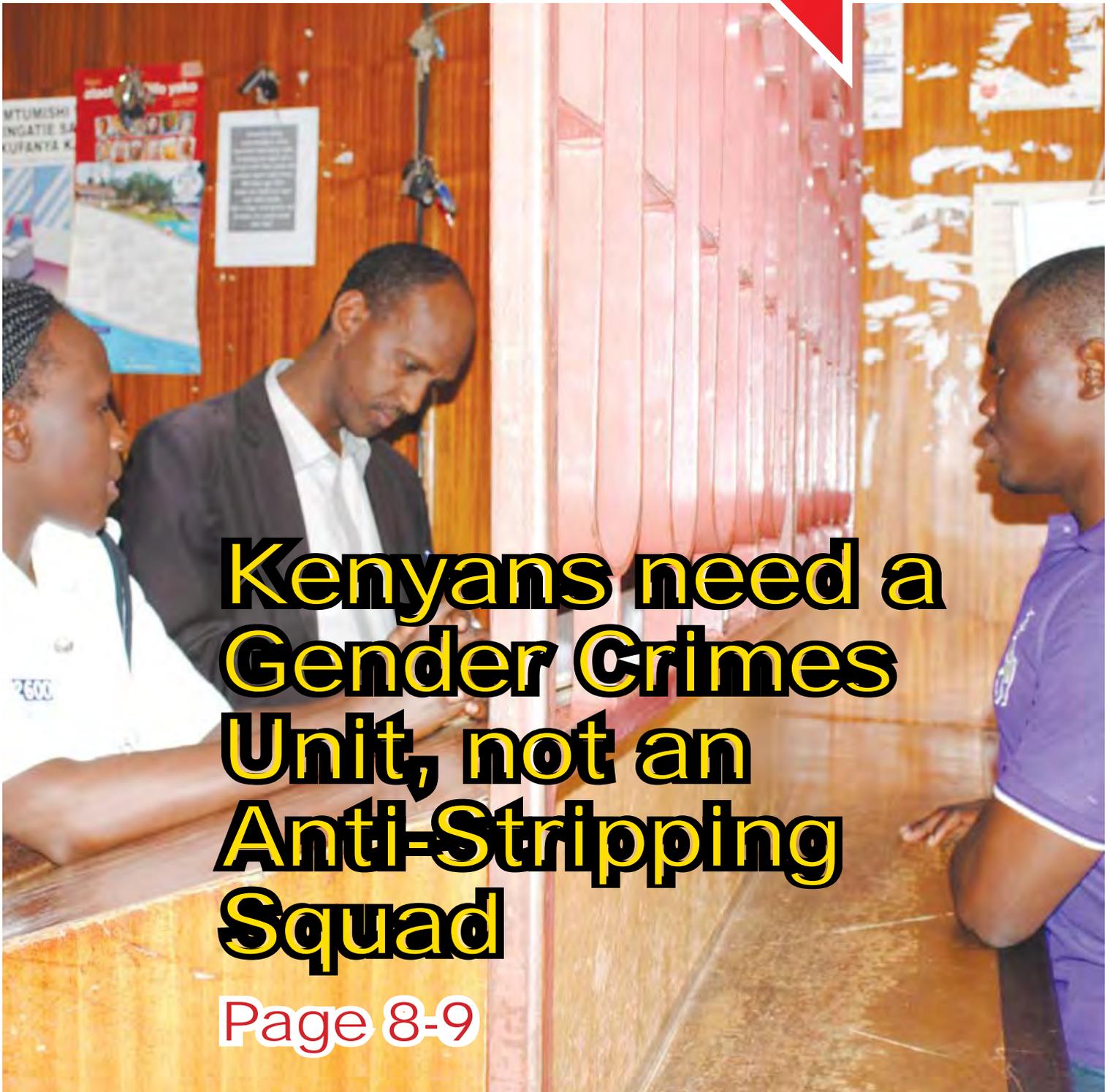


Tusemezane

PROMOTING A SOCIETY FREE OF GENDER VIOLENCE

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE BY PEACE INITIATIVE KENYA (PIK) PROJECT

| NOVEMBER 2014, VOLUME 5



Kenyans need a Gender Crimes Unit, not an Anti-Stripping Squad

Page 8-9

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; Coalition on Violence against Women (COVAW), 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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Contents

Page 3

Eradicating GBV our responsibility, President Kenyatta

Page 5

Taita Taveta County embarks on saving girls from sexual violation

Page 7

Transsexuals remain at constant risk of violence

Page 11

Statistics from GVRCS indicate high levels of sexual violence

Page 13

Ray of hope in GBV campaign as more players join the war

Page 15

FGM victims asks for leniency from the President



Front page picture: A man pictured while reporting an incident at a Migori Police Station. Like Tourist and anti corruption unit, there is need to have a Gender crimes unit as well in all Police stations in the country.
PHOTO: TUSEMEZANE CORRESPONDENT

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INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE



AFRICAN WOMAN AND CHILD FEATURE



First Lady Margaret Kenyatta flagging off the 16 Days of Activism against GBV caravan that traversed most parts of the country. PHOTO: AWC CORRESPONDENT

Eradicating GBV our responsibility, President Kenyatta

BY JANE GODIA

President Uhuru Kenyatta took Kenyans to task as he challenged each and every one to take responsibility in the war against Gender Based Violence (GBV), insecurity and terrorism.

Speaking at the launch of 16 days of Activism against GBV, the President said the launch reinforces the Government's commitment to create a better place for women and girls.

"I am launching this campaign to ensure we have gender parity and our women claim their dignity," the Head of State said.

Kenyatta's speech came just a few days after a number of women were stripped in the streets of Nairobi and Mombasa because of the way they dressed.

Indeed, on the eve of the launch, a three-year-old girl was defiled by her uncles for more than five hours apparently to pay for the sins of her mother who had been chased away from the home in Karatina in Nyeri County in Central Kenya.

Despite his heavy schedule, the President made history by being the first Kenyan Head of State to launch the 16 Days of Activism Against GBV.

His presence also coincided with the

launch of the HeForShe Campaign which was launched by United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon on September 20, 2014.

In his speech, Ban had said: "Over the years, men have supported the women's movement. But for the most part, it was just that: a women's movement — when in fact gender equality is the responsibility of all people."

Ban stressed that states also have an obligation to address violence against women, and that the public must also change their attitudes.

The world's leading statesman said: "One in three women is a victim of violence — but this is a men's issue. Men are responsible for most of the threats and violence against women. Often, these men are close to the victims — fathers, husbands, boyfriends or supervisors."

According to Ban: "We need to say to men and boys: Do not raise your hands in violence—raise your voices to stop it—and to support human rights for all. I sign the HeForShe Commitment on behalf of the United Nations with hopes of great success."

This was highlighted by Kenyatta when he said: "We will not be 100 per cent safe as a nation unless we accept responsibility for ourselves and our actions.

We need to change our mind-sets to enable us deal with the problems that we have."

The HeForShe Campaign is a UN Women global initiative to engage men and boys as advocates and agents of change for the achievement of gender equality and women's rights.

The President appended his signature to indicate that he supported the campaign as he was given a standing ovation by the hundreds of dignitaries and men and women from all walks of life that support the anti-GBV campaigns.

Earlier in her speech, the UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngeuka said: "We need boys and men working with us. HeForShe is a global solidarity movement to end gender inequality by 2030. The goal is to engage men and boys as advocates and agents of change in an effort to achieve equality. When women are empowered the whole of humanity also benefits."

The HeForShe is a one year campaign that will mark the start of a year-long, high energy advocacy campaign that will culminate in a grand finale in September 2015.

During the colourful event at University of Nairobi's graduation square, graced by Anne Waiguru, cabinet Secretary for Devolution, the President

also launched the National Policy on Gender Based Violence Response and Protection.

In her speech, Waiguru, under whose docket the Gender Directorate lies, said there were many initiatives being implemented by the Government to dismantle inequalities that exist.

The Cabinet Secretary noted that the National Policy on GBV went through a consultative process and included stakeholders from both the national and County governments.

"The implementation of the policy assures every man, woman, boy and girl that they stand protected from gender based violence," Waiguru said.

Saying that she was speaking from her heart, Waiguru told the guests to the event covered live by some of the television stations that the HeForShe campaign assure boys and girls that they were all equally valued. But she reminded them that the main challenge for the campaign was how to promote women's rights and empowerment.

The President's speech echoed initiatives like the Peace Initiative Kenya which envisions a nation free of all forms of gender based violence.

The project is being carried out in the counties of Mombasa, Kwale, Kisumu, Taita-Taveta, Migori, Kisii, Uasin Gishu, Nandi and Trans Nzoia

The Peace Initiative Kenya Project (PIK) works closely with the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), Directorate of Gender and other stakeholders to support the Government in creating an enabling environment for coordination of GBV prevention and service provision.

Some of PIK activities include training County government officials and stakeholders on GBV; engagement in GBV working groups at nationally and County level; and providing legal and psycho-social counselling to survivors of GBV.

It is through such efforts that laws and policies can be implemented and reinforced, if the war against gender based violence is to be won.

According to Nardo Bekele-Thomas, United Nations Resident Coordinator and Representative of UNDP in Kenya, there is need to set standards to match morals and values.

"There is need to create the right conditions for addressing GBV," said Bekele-Thomas, adding that: "Laws and policies do not mean anything unless they are reinforced."

Her sentiments were echoed by Garissa Town MP, Aden Duale, who doubles as the Leader of the Majority in the National Assembly.

Following the launch of the National Policy on Gender Based Violence by President Kenyatta, cases of wife beating are now expected to reduce.
PHOTO: GEORGE NGESE



In Kisumu County wife beating treated as normal

We live in a society where the community still believes wife beating is normal, but this only takes the County back in terms of economic development, Obiero says

BY AWUOR OGUTU

Violence against women remains the most widespread and socially tolerated human rights violations, cutting across borders, race, class, ethnicity and religion.

According to United Nations Women's agency (UN Women) sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence in public spaces — on the streets, in public transport, parks, schools and work places as well as other public spaces — is an everyday reality for women and girls around the world and it's a violation of their rights. Few laws or policies are in place to prevent and address this issue.

Despite efforts of the national government to prevent and end Gender Based Violence (GBV) by ratifying international conventions and declarations, violence against women in Nyanza region remains rampant.

The Kenya Demographic Health Survey (KDHS) 2008-2009 report provides a comprehensive national data on prevalence of GBV showing that it has a significant presence throughout the life cycle of women and girls.

The KDHS notes that during

childhood, 32 per cent of females and 18 per cent of males experience sexual violence. Sixty per cent of females report age of first abuse at six to 12, 24 per cent between 13 to 19 while 25 per cent of those between ages 12-24 lost virginity through force.

Overall, the KDHS report indicates 83 per cent of women and girls report one or more episodes of physical abuse.

According to KDHS 2008-2009, the likelihood of experiencing physical violence increases with the age of women, from only 11 per cent of those ages 15-19 to 29 per cent of those ages 40-49.

More recent 2013 data from Gender Violence Recovery Centre that was specific to GBV in families largely confirms KDHS 2009 findings but shows higher levels of prevalence overall and significantly so in Nairobi, giving the impression that GBV is on the rise in families. More recent police data on sexual violence also shows a rise in the number of sexual offences from 3525 in 2007 to 4703 in 2011.

Nyanza has been rated high in GBV at 54.1 per cent. Nyanza has the Counties of Migori, Nyamira, Kisumu, Siaya, Homabay and Kisii. Although the report does not break down the Counties, the

former county is leading in the country.

In 2006, FIDA Kenya did a baseline survey of violence in Nyanza and at the Coast. The questionnaire to the survey revealed that the most important problems faced by women are lack of adequate laws to protect them against domestic violence and sexual abuse, as well as prejudices through customary practices like FGM and early marriages.

However, during this year, 2006, the Sexual Offences Act was passed. The KDHS survey came two years after the law and it is still noted that even with the law, physical and sexual abuse against women and girls has not gone down.

It is noted that most women from Nyanza are nurtured to be submissive to an extent that even when they are abused, they do not report the abusers to the authorities.

According to Kisumu County Director for Gender and Social Development Jane Obiero, GBV is prevalent in Kisumu.

She notes that the situation has been brought about by clinging on to traditions and cultural beliefs that are outdated.

"We live in a society where the community still believes wife beating is normal but this only takes the County

back in terms of economic growth," Obiero says.

She observes that in most cases the State perpetuates or tolerates violence against women either through action or non-action by prioritising custom or tradition over the respect of fundamental freedoms and rights belonging to women.

"Kenya is especially guilty of having a system that is replete with cases of abuse of women's rights," says Obiero.

According to Obiero, Kisumu County Government should take deliberate steps to educate the public on GBV.

"This will go a long way in giving women a chance to be confident and participate in improving the economy," she notes.

Obiero remarks came as Peace Initiative Kenya (PIK) Project is being implemented in Kisumu among other eight counties of Kisii, Migori, Trans Nzoia, Uasin Gishu, Nandi, Mombasa, Taita Taveta and Kwale.

The PIK Project is funded by USAID and aims at improving national and county-level GBV service delivery systems and policy implementation.

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.

According to Obiero, the public and instruments of authority must come together in a bid to stop GBV and work towards the country's economic growth.

She notes that it is the obligation of states to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms of all citizens, and they must exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and punish acts of violence against women and children.

The State also has a duty to protect victims of any form of violence, a responsibility for which it ought to be held to account.

The Penal Code prohibits all acts of violence in its provisions. However, it does not sufficiently address GBV which is prevalent within the Kenyan society.

GBV, for instance, is only inferred by virtue of interpreting the vice as an assault as provided for under section 250 and 251. There is no specific offence such as wife or husband battery.

The PIK project's vision is to ensure a nation free of all forms of GBV. Its mission is to improve national and county-level gender GBV service delivery systems and policy implementation.

Taita Taveta County embarks on saving girls from sexual violation



Taita Taveta Governor John Mruttu and Women Representative Joyce Lay have both expressed concerns over sexual violence in the county. PICTURE: BENSON MWANGA

BY BENSON MWANGA

As campaigns to “Save our Queens” intensify in the country, the increase in sexual offenses and related crimes continue to be reported in alarming rates in Taita-Taveta County.

The County has been named among the worst five Counties in terms of Gender Based Violence (GBV) among girls, a trend that has adversely affected the girl child education in the region.

Most of these factors are galvanized in deep rooted cultural and traditional practices that promote discrimination against girls, besides tolerating outright violence against girls that makes it impossible for them to access education and enjoy dignified lives.

A report from the Department of Children’s Services in the County indicates an increase in the number of children being sexually abused and dropping out of school.

It indicate a worrying trend of early pregnancies, child neglect and maintenance, that need urgent attention.

The report shows that a total of 79 minors had been defiled this year compared to 53 in 2012.

“A total of 53 girls were defiled in 2012 and in 2013/2014, defilement became worse with a total defilement

cases reported and handled in court increasing to 79,” said the report.

“It is important to note that these statistics relate only to defilement cases that were reported and taken to court. Most of these cases are never reported anywhere implying that the problem of defilement and generally violence against girls is bigger than presented by these statistics,” said the County Executive Committee (CEC) member in-charge of Administration and Devolution, Linet Mavu.

Mavu said that the Ministry of Education report indicate that a total of 46 girls were victims of child pregnancies with 26 of them dropping out from school.

Defile

The report noted that besides defilement and child pregnancies, the girls have also faced multiple forms of violence like child prostitution, female genital mutilation, forced marriages and lack of access to education.

“The worst form of violence that is now gaining currency is incest where male parents defile their daughters,” said the report.

Mavu said the statistics presented paint the picture of the county that urgently need to embark on a sustained rigorous campaign to protect girls from violence if they are to be nurtured to become useful citizens of the County

in future.

She said attention needs to be increased on the risks that sex offenders pose to the safety of the community.

She said that relevant stakeholders need to raise the community’s awareness about the violence against girls. It is important that these efforts are coordinated and consolidated into one big campaign.

“By raising awareness about the prevailing situation, mechanisms will be put in place by all concerned to reverse this trend. We need to promote and create a safer and more secure community for the children,” added Mavu

Another report from the police reveals high incidents of sexual related offenses in Mwatate Sub-County. Over the last seven months a total of 23 cases under the Sexual Offenses Act 2006 were reported at Mwatate Police Station.

However, the report said quantifying sexual assault is a major challenge, since the large numbers of these crimes are not reported to the police for action.

“The nature of sexual offenses reported varies greatly, with defilement being the majority,” said the police report.

The police data in Mwatate indicate that there were 11 defilement cases, one attempted defilement, two rape, one attempted rape, four incest, one sodomy

and two indecent acts.

“Though some cases are still pending before court, most of them have been concluded with those convicted serving various sentences in the penal institutions,” said the report.

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women lays a very clear framework for protecting women from all forms of discrimination including violence against women and girls to ensure that women and girls lead dignified lives safe from violence like their male counterparts.

According to the Constitution of Kenya 2010 Article 28 and 53 says “Every child has a right to be protected from abuse, neglect, harmful cultural practices, all forms of violence, inhuman treatment and punishment, and hazardous or exploitive labour.

There should be a clear policy and legislative framework for protecting girls from violence. It is the practice especially in the County that has been a big challenge,” said Mavu.

The “save our Queens” campaign comes at a time when women MPs are pushing for review of the Sexual Offenses and Children’s Act to make it more punitive to offenders of sexual abuse.

Deterrent

County Women Representative Joyce Lay said more than 80 women MPs are lobbying for the Act to be reviewed to ensure that deterrent sentences are meted against those found sexually abusing children.

Addressing more than 500 boda boda operators in Taita District, the MP disclosed that they want to introduce castration among other stiffer penalties to be meted against those violating child rights as a deterrent measure to address the vice.

Speaking in Wundanyi town recently, Lay noted that despite the introduction of the Children’s Act in 2006, cases of rape, defilement, incest and sodomy continue to increase in the county and the nation at large.

“We are revisiting the Act and a Bill and will be tabled in parliament soon for discussion and enactment. We want to propose deterrent sentences against those found to be sexually exploiting minors and castration is one of the measures we think will help deter rampant child abuse cases,” said the ODM legislator.

Lay’s remarks come at a time when the government is still grappling with rampant cases of violation of child and their rights.

Many cases of sexual exploitation among young girls including gender based violence continue to be reported with worrying frequency.



A man beating his wife along the streets in Kisumu. PHOTO: AWC CORRESPONDENT

Wife beating forces woman to flee her matrimonial home

BY DIANA MAHANGA

The World Health Organization (WHO) report on violence and health notes that, “one of the most common forms of violence against women is perpetuated by their spouses”.

This type of violence is frequently invisible since it happens behind closed doors where cultural norms do not treat it as a crime, but rather as a “private” family matter, or a normal part of life.

Violence against women is a vice that continues unabated in Kuria and has largely been associated with alcoholism and early marriage.

The vice is sustained by a culture of silence and ignorance of the fact that it can lead to serious health implications.

Pauline Nyamohanga, 38 was married for over 20 years with six children before she decided to flee from her matrimonial home after her husband Daniel Nyagonchera threatened to kill her.

Nyamohanga says that her husband had not only neglected the family but had become an alcoholic.

“I was the sole bread winner but this did not stop him from beating me,” she

recounts.

Nyamohanga says that at one time she managed to procure a loan from the Kenya Women Finance Trust (KWFT) to open a hotel which served to supplement her earnings. She was trying hard to balance between domestic chores and running the business.

“The work was indeed hectic and by the end of the day I used to be completely exhausted,” she explains.

She says that in spite of this, her husband would demand for his conjugal rights but whenever she turned him down she was both physically and verbally abused.

“Most of the time he accused me of infidelity,” Nyamohanga affirms.

Nyamohanga recalls an incident where he stormed into the hotel and tried to stab her. They struggled but he overpowered her and stabbed her on the hand.

He then surrendered himself to the police station but was released since she did not file charges against him.

Nyamohanga says that at one time she was forced to seek refuge at her parents’ home but as culture demands; she was taken back to her husband’s home to salvage the cattle paid as bride price.

The children were not spared either as in several occasions he went home drunk and chased away everyone and in most cases they had to sleep in the cold.

The money she got from the hotel was only enough to pay for the loan and feed the family. But the husband would demand to be given money to buy the local brew (chang’aa).

She says that every time she procured loans, she had to share the money with him hoping that her generosity would reform him but all this was in vain.

“He continued to accuse me falsely of infidelity and I had to abandon the hotel business and started brewing chang’aa at home. This however, did not work. One day he locked me in the house and beat me up. Armed with a machete, he threatened to kill me,” she narrates.

Whenever she complained to her parents about her abusive husband she was told to stay at her matrimonial home where she belongs.

“I used to persevere for the sake of children. Where could I have gone with six children?” she poses

She says that one day her husband beat her with a blunt object and injured her badly. She still bears the scar.

More offices opened at the grassroots to tackle domestic violence

BY PETER KHAN

Domestic violence against women and children tops the list of complaints handled by Kenya National Human Rights Commission (KNHRC) in Western Kenya.

The Commission’s Western Kenya regional head, Antonina Okuta says the office devolved into the Counties, in January this year, and since received more reports on rights violation at home than anywhere else.

She said the Commission has consequently commenced awareness drive to encourage victims of rights violation to lodge complaints at their offices which have been devolved to community levels.

Redress

“The bulk of complaints reaching us are on violation at home; we are therefore calling on victims to come to us for redress,” she said at a media briefing at their Western Kenya office in Kisumu.

The official appealed to the public to take advantage of their offices in the Counties to seek assistance and to help in the anti-GBV campaigns.

In the past, victims had to travel to their headquarters in Nairobi, which made it difficult to effectively address the plight of the many people who came with GBV cases from remote parts of the country.

The Commission’s mandate overlaps with that of the Commission on Administrative Justice, it deals with complaints bordering on human rights violation.

Resolve

The complaints which range from violation by police, devolved structures, employers and family members, are investigated by KNHRC for redress and to deter future repetition.

“Unlike Commission on the Administration of Justice which handles through complaints on public maladministration and resolves them mostly through enquiries, the Commission is specific on investigation of violation of human rights; some of which stem out of public maladministration,” says Okuta.

Transsexuals remain at constant risk of violence

BY OMONDI GWENGI

Samson Onyango is trying to come to terms with the discrimination and intolerance that he has to endure.

Brushing off tears from his eyes, he gives a weak smile, trying to hide the pain in his voice.

For years, Mitto, as he is popularly called by his friends, has been the butt of jokes and mockery because of his gender identity. And every waking moment is a nightmare to the 26-year-old because he has been constantly a subject of ridicule.

While in class seven at Ulowa Primary School in Siaya County, he was constantly abused and intimidated by both teachers and fellow pupils.

“Given that I was putting on boys’ uniform, the teachers insisted that I put the girls’ uniform because I looked more of a girl,” he tells Tusemezane, adding that he could not stand the discrimination and hence dropped out of school.

He says that when he went to play with boys, they would tell him to join his fellow ‘girls’.

He recalls: “I loved school but the mistreatment that I faced forced me to drop out. It was indeed painful and I cried for more than a week.”

Unable to contain the hardships, Mitto decided to leave home and relocate to Bondo town where he got a job at a restaurant. However, discrimination and intimidation still followed him.

“Some people would follow me to the bathroom to see whether I am a man or woman. Some would also call me ‘chali damme’,” regrets the fourth born in a family of 13.

He says that men have been trying to strip him with others even attempting to sodomize him. He now lives in fear and has even reported the matter to the police.

“I cannot walk freely because some people have even physically abused me,” he says adding that despite reporting the matter to the police, nothing much has been done to save him from the cruel hands of evil men.

In an interview with Fredrick Otieno Sinawa, a teacher at Bridge International Academy in Usenge where Mitto works as a caretaker, they have learnt to put up with him.

“When I joined this school eight months ago, I was sincerely undecided on how to identify him but we have now learnt to cope up with him,” says Sinawa.



Samson Onyango talking to Tusemezane reporter.
PHOTO: OMONDI GWENGI

He describes Mitto as a hardworking and dedicated youth who is able to perform any duty assigned to him.

Having undergone all these challenges because of his gender disorder, Mitto has now embarked on a campaign to sensitize the community on how to live with persons with transsexuals.

“I know there are many people out

there with this condition and they have refused to come out in public for fear of discrimination and the stigma that comes with it. My campaign is basically to inform the community that transsexuals should not be seen as outcasts,” he says adding that they should be accorded the same rights and respect.

Violence against women and girls in Kenya: Facts and Figures

49% of Kenyan women reported experiencing violence in their lifetime; one in four had experienced violence in the previous 12 months.

83% of women and girls reported one or more episodes of physical abuse

in childhood; 46% reported one or more episodes of sexual abuse in childhood.

Over **60%** of these women and children did not report the event to anyone. Only 12% who had been physically or sexually abused reported

to someone in authority such as a village elder or the police.

In Kenya, **25%** of 12-24 year olds lost their virginity by force.

Nairobi Women’s Hospital receives an average of 18 cases of rape and incest each day.

A majority of the victims of violence are girls; 60% of women who have experienced violence reported age at first abuse between 6-12 years: 24 percent between 13-19 years.

GBV map website:

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

Kenyans need a Gender Crimes U

"A lot of money is being given to the security docket but that is inadequate. More funding needs to be allocated from the national kitty for the security docket to enhance protection of women and girls," KEWOPA Chairperson- *Cecily Mbarire*

BY JANE GODIA

On the day that President Kenyatta launched the 16 days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence, it was in the backdrop of many events related to violence against women and girls.

This happened just a few days after a woman was raped by a police officer; another woman was stripped in the streets in broad daylight by rowdy men, who included a police officer; and a three-year-old schoolgirl was raped by her uncles in an alleged move to punish her mother.

There was also a terrorist attack in Mandera County, in North Eastern Kenya, where 28 people were massacred in the deep of the night simply because they could not recite the Koran and did not share the same religious values with their killers.

Gender Based Violence remains one of the most perverse forms of violence that has left Gender Violence Recovery Centres with startling statistics in relation to physical, psychological and sexual violence.

Gender Based Violence is described as violence that is directed against a person or persons on the basis of gender. It constitutes a breach of the fundamental right to life, liberty, security, and dignity, equality between women and men, non-discrimination and physical and mental integrity.

Ironically, immediately after the President launched the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence, the HeForShe Campaign and the National Policy for Prevention and Response to GBV, the Kenya Police



First Lady Margret Kenyatta flagging off the GBV caravan in Nairobi. PHOTO AWC O

Service led by Inspector General David Kimaiyo, in a reactive manner, decided to launch the Anti-Stripping Squad that will hunt down men who dare to strip women in public.

The controversial Anti-Stripping

Squad, which will be based in Nairobi, has more than a dozen officers and is focusing specifically on increasing cases of attacks on women.

What the Kenya Police Service does not understand is that stripping of women is not restricted to Nairobi. Women have been stripped in towns across the country simply because of the way they were dressed. However, even as the police launched the squad, vocal and frequent calls by anti GBV activists to have a Gender Crimes Unit that has a budget and infrastructure have fallen on deaf ears.

The Peace Initiative Kenya (PIK) Project is at the forefront of campaigning to have the Kenya Police Service establish a Gender Crimes Unit. The PIK Project notes that many perpetrators of violence have gone scot-free either because the police did not apprehend them or the officers presented weak evidence in court.

According to the PIK Project, part of the explanations offered for this situation is that the police lack adequate



Residents of Nairobi takes part in a walk to help raise awareness on Gender Based Violence. PHOTO GEORGE NGESA

Unit, not an Anti-Stripping Squad



ORRESPONDENT



Preiseident Kenyatta signing a commitment to help end GBV in Kenya . PHOTO AWC CORRSPONDENT



President Kenyatta and other degnitaries during the launch of 16 Days of activism. PHOTO GEORGE NGESA

resources and expertise to undertake better investigations.

Speaking at the launch of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, Cecily Mbarire, Member of Parliament for Runyenjes and chairperson Kenya Parliamentary Women Association (KEWOPA) noted that one feels a lot of anger when they watch women being stripped in public.

“There are laws that have been passed but are not being implemented including the Sexual Offences Act,” Mbarire, who was among women legislators who lobbied their male counterparts to pass the law in 2007, led by Njoki Ndungu, said.

According to the Kewopa chairperson, a lot of money is being given to the security docket but that is inadequate. She appealed for more funding to be allocated in the national budget for the security docket for the protection of women and girls.

“Everybody is pointing hands at the President on issues of insecurity. The police force needs to be sensitive to issues touching on women,” Mbarire said adding that: “Gender desks are not well managed and we need to improve them

so that women can comfortably report gender based violence.”

The seasoned legislator expressed confidence that there was light at the end of the tunnel in the anti- GBV campaigns, thanks to personal involvement and support by the Head of State.

The PIK Project acknowledges the crucial role the police play in ensuring justice for victims and survivors of GBV throughout the country.

It notes that experience has shown that structured units within the police service attract budget lines and infrastructure that makes them effective in fighting crime.

Such units include the Banking Fraud Unit, Anti-Stock Theft Unit as well as the Flying Squad Unit. These units are all effective because they have been given specific budget lines with an accounting officer to boot.

According to the mission and vision of PIK, GBV can only end with the establishment and maintenance of structures for social service delivery and directing specific financial resources towards GBV prevention and service provision. This responds well to the needs

for which a Gender Crimes Unit can be set up.

The PIK Project, which brings together International Rescue Committee (IRC), African Woman and Child Feature Service, Sauti ya Wanawake Pwani, Rural Women Peace Link and Healthcare Assistance Kenya, have launched a petition calling on the Government to establish a Gender Crimes Unit that will help in handling gender crimes, including sexual and domestic violence.

That is why PIK is calling upon Kenyans to sign the petition calling for the establishment of a Gender Crimes Unit within the Kenya Police Service. The online petition can be found on www.awcfs.org.

The establishment of this Unit, it is noted, will go a long way in ensuring that adequate resources are allocated to pursue perpetrators of violence and that credible investigations are carried out and justice for survivors of GBV is guaranteed.



A girls was defiled by her step father and has been unable to get justice. Many survivors of GBV face constant barriers in accessing services. PHOTO : TUSEMEZANE CORRESPONDENT

Transport costs a barrier to justice for GBV survivors

BY TUSEMAZANE
CORRESPONDENT

It is 1.30 pm and a group of children are rushing back to school from lunch. Screams are heard from a nearby bush. Shortly, a man emerges from the direction of the screams and walks past the pupils before dashing into a maize plantation.

The suspicious children go to the bush to check what was going on and to their disbelief it is their classmate Regina* wailing in pain on the ground.

She has just been defiled. The children report the matter to the school management and she is taken to hospital for treatment.

It does not take long before police apprehend and arrest the culprit as investigations commence to facilitate

the prosecution of the suspect.

The suspect is arraigned in court charged with the offence and the magistrate sets the date for the hearing of the case.

Come the date of the hearing, Regina and her relatives are missing in court and the magistrate sets another date hopeful that the complainant will appear to provide evidence against the accused.

For the second time, the case fails to proceed and after inquiries, it emerges that Regina's family is unable to raise fare to attend court.

Records at the Kitale Law Court indicate that many defilement and rape cases are pending because the victims are unable to raise the cost of pursuing justice.

The Judicial Department in Trans Nzoia County acknowledges that pursuit of justice for children from poor families collapses due to lack of funding to cater for their welfare.

"However, the reason for this is ignorance as courts often facilitate those who do not have fare to attend sessions," says an official from the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

One time a magistrate in Trans Nzoia said she had been forced to raise money for lunch and transport for a child who had turned up for the hearing of her defilement case. "She had walked for over 20 kilometres,"

said the magistrate.

According to the magistrate, many children abandon cases before hearings due to lack of money to cater for transport from their homes.

It was also noted that most lawyers decline to be engaged by the law court to provide pro-bono services for those who are unable to raise their fee. This information has prompted calls for the Government to set aside a children's fund to be given out as stipend to lawyers representing them.

"Many lawyers refuse to be engaged in pro-bono service because there is no motivation fee. This denies children justice," notes Justice Martha Koome, a judge in the family division of the Judiciary.

The establishment of a rescue centre within the County headquarters would be ideal as most children attending court would then be temporarily accommodated here. The Prohibition Against Domestic Violence Bill which is expected to go through the Third reading in the National Assembly advocates for all counties to put in place safe houses and rescue centres for victims of sexual and gender based violence.

In a previous report, the Kitale Catholic Church Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC) noted that at least five cases of sexual abuse are reported daily in Trans-Nzoia County.

Many of such cases are not reported to the authorities due to poverty and ignorance among the people in the area. This then limits chances of reducing HIV infections as the children, especially, are not able to get the necessary medication given within 72 hours that helps protect against the virus.

A report prepared by the CJPC reveals that 1,500 sex abuse cases were reported since last year with a number remaining undisclosed.

Economic, social and cultural related problems are blamed for the high number of sex violence cases in the region.

According to the report, there were 784 defilement, 376 rape and 187 sexual assault cases detected and reported to the police.

Financial constraints in most families induce the menace with women being exploited sexually by men due to poverty.

Brewing dens are the worst hit areas where children under the age of ten are subjected to sex abuses.

Pursuance of justice by the survivors is hampered by the high cost of legal representation and poverty.

Statistics at the four Kitale Prisons indicates that majority of the inmates are sex abuse offenders.

It is such statistics that the Peace Initiative Kenya project is trying to reduce with a vision of a nation that is free of gender based violence.



"Many lawyers refuse to be engaged in pro-bono service because there is no motivation fee. This denies children justice."

Justice Martha Koome, a judge in the family division of the Judiciary.

Statistics from GVRCs indicate high levels of sexual violence

BY JANE GODIA

Jennifer and Esther (not their real names) were out taking a bath by the river when a man waylaid them. The perpetrator had been hiding in a sugar plantation as the girls took their bath in the open sky.

As he attempted to hold them, the girls screamed, struggled and one of them overpowered him.

However, although the two sisters tried to shake off the assailant, he slashed one of them with a panga (machete), injuring her badly.

While the other girl was in pain, the assailant went further and raped her sister. The girls managed to scream loudly and were rescued albeit a little too late.

This case forms one of the many cases of Gender Based Violence with reports from Gender Violence Recovery Centres indicating statistics that are depressing.

As we mark the 16 days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence, violence against women and men, boys and girls is almost being normalised.

It is noteworthy that the violation to women and girls is disproportionate compared to men and boys.

Statistics from the Gender Violence Recovery Centre (GVRC) at the Nairobi Women's Hospital show that between April 2013 and March 2014, about 2,762 cases of sexual and physical violence were recorded from its four branches.

Of these 2,276 were sexual violence cases while 486 were of physical violence. According to the GVRC, of the sexual violence 110 were male, 1,091 were female adults. However, 96 children were male and 979 female. Out of the physical violence cases 22 were male adults and 390 female.

Among the children who suffered physical violence, 38 were male while 36 were female.

At the Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Hospital in Kisumu, the Gender Violence Recovery Centre was launched on October 10, 2013.

The services offered there include comprehensive post-rape and defilement care services for adults and children. The clients received include gender based violence survivors, (adults and children); occupational accidents like needle pricks and blood splash); non-occupational cases (condoms breaking/bursting), human bites, cuts, and traffic accidents.



Despite messages such as above, sexual violence is still rampant in most parts of the country.
PHOTO: GEORGE NGESA

Other clients include perpetrators of sexual violence and family members of GBV survivors.

Since the centre was opened until September 2014, 206 cases of sexual GBV have been received. Out of that number, 197 were female and nine were male.

Apparently, out of the recorded cases majority of the female victims were girls aged between zero to 18 years. It is shocking that 19 children between ages zero to four years were received at the centre; 30 aged between five and nine; 54 aged between 10 and 14 and 37 aged between 15 and 17 years.

In September alone, 24 cases of sexual violence were being prosecuted in court. Out of these only three women were aged 21, 28 and 36 with the rest being girls of between four and 15 years.

According to Margaret Omondi, Director Women's Concerns in Kisumu, the statistics of child defilement in the County are overwhelming.

Omondi who also coordinates activities for Coalition on Violence Against Women in Kisumu says that it is unfortunate that in almost all the cases of defilement and rape the perpetrator is

known to the survivor.

"The perpetrators of sexual gender based violence here are well known to the survivors because they are either relatives or neighbours," says Omondi. She adds: "It is in rare cases that the perpetrator is a stranger."

A startling example is the case of a four-year-old girl who was kidnapped by a neighbour and taken to a neighbouring town from Kisumu city where he molested her for three days before she was found.

"The perpetrator kidnapped the child and took her to Muhoroni where he defiled her," says Omondi who is also a paralegal officer at the Gender Violence Recovery Centre at the Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Teaching and Referral Hospital.

According to the official, other than relatives and neighbours, the other group that are known for perpetrating violence in the County are the boda boda (motor cycle) operators.

Apparently, Kisumu is one of the Counties where the Peace Initiative Kenya (PIK) project is working as it envisions a Nation with zero rates of GBV.

The PIK project strategy is to support

and lobby County governments for the establishment and maintenance of structures for social service delivery such as GBV service committees and directing specific financial resources towards GBV prevention and service provision.

The Project targets women and men as partners in GBV prevention, and stakeholders in leadership positions as change agents in the fight against GBV. The Project works with other allies like the spouses of County leaders such as County Executives, religious leaders, Members of Parliament and others as advocates for the project goals.

However, even with the overwhelming statistics, the Gender Violence Recovery Centre is limited in its operations as it cannot be open for 24 hours due to limited staff and budget.

The centre also faces challenges of forensic evidence collection. Kisumu County, like the other eight Counties — Trans Nzoia, Nandi, Uasin Gishu, Taita Taveta, Migori, Kisii, Mombasa and Kwale — where PIK is working all lack safe houses for survivors.

GBV perpetrators no longer safe as community FM stations join the campaign

BY ODHIAMBO ORLALE

Two community FM radio stations have joined the Gender Based Violence (GBV) campaigns with the aim of creating awareness and also sending a caution to perpetrators.

Pamoja FM which relays its news in Nairobi's Kibera informal settlement with over 500,000 population and Radio Nam Lolwe in Kisumu have a deliberate policy to highlight all GBV cases reported to them and to follow them to their logical conclusion.

According to Aurelia Ngina, who doubles as an anchor and reporter for Pamoja FM, a bilingual station, English and Kiswahili, cases of GBV are on the rise in Kibera, with defilement, rape, incest and sodomy cases reported every other day or week.

In Kisumu, Allan Obiero says he has also been covering GBV stories in the lakeside city and its environs with domestic violence leading followed by rape and defilement.

Radio Nam Lolwe is a vernacular FM station which has a national reach starting from Kisumu County, and spreading to neighbouring Western, Rift Valley regions as well as Nairobi and Mombasa cities.

Obiero has been a reporter there for the past six years and covering many other story beats and GBV for the station listeners.

Says the Nam Lowe reporter: "I have been getting most of my tips from GBV activists, Community Based Organisations and even Non Governmental Organisations like FIDA Kenya, Maendeleo Ya Wanawake and Kenya Female Advisory Organisation (Kefeado) among others."

The police are also a major source of information and have been giving him tips whenever there is a GBV case reported to them by the public. In most cases, the survivor is referred to Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Teaching and Referral Hospital, which has a Gender Violence Recovery Center.

However Obiero laments that since the Ksh 16 million centre was launched last year in a colourful ceremony, not much has been heard of it.



A radio studio at Pamoja FM in Nairobi. FM stations have joined the war against GBV in Kenya. PHOTO: GEORGE NGESA

In a separate interview, the Pamoja FM reporter says that the most reported cases to them by their news sources are of defilement of girls by their care-givers and very close relatives like fathers, uncles, brothers and cousins.

Says Ngina: "Most cases are reported to us by short text messages (SMS) and phone calls, while others are reported by the relatives of the survivor personally by visiting our FM station offices in Olympic Estate."

There are 10 major villages which make up Kibera slums, they are Kianda,

Gatwekira, Mashimoni, Makina, Kisumu Ndogo, Lindi, Silanga, Kichinjio, Soweto East and West and Kambi Muru.

Other cases that are common in the area are of abortion, but these are not given much prominence by the media, especially the mainstream ones like the Nation, Standard, the People Daily and the Citizen.

Ngina recalls a recent incident of a 10-year-old schoolgirl who was defiled as she was playing with her friends next to her parents' house in Makina village, a stone throw from Kibera Law Courts,

on a hot Saturday afternoon.

She was a pupil at Olympic Primary School, which is a public institution with over 400 pupils, located about three Kilometres from her home.

According to eyewitnesses at the scene, a man sprung from nowhere and ambushed the girl and defiled her. The screams by her friends and neighbours saved her life as a big crowd rushed to the scene and rescued her.

Says Ngina: "The matter was reported to the area chief and police who later alerted us and we went to cover the news story. The following day the survivor was brought to our studio and we interviewed her and her mother."

The pupil was later taken for medical check up and counseling at Nairobi Women's Hospital where she was treated and discharged. By the time of the interview at Pamoja FM the following day, she was still traumatised from the ordeal.

The two were accompanied by Jane Anyango the coordinator of Kibera For Peace Network, who used the forum to highlight the challenges they were facing in addressing GBV cases and also the few success cases.

By then the suspect had been arrested by the crowd who were buying for his blood and frog-matched to the Kibera District Commissioners office and later to the Kilimani police station where he was booked in and later charged in court with defilement.

A colleague of Ngina, Felix Asoha, says Pamoja FM has a close working relationship with the civil society, police and provincial administration so whenever any case of GBV is reported to them they highlight it as soon as possible. Among the contacts at the DC's office is Inspector Wanjala who has been very cooperative.

However the problem is with some of the GBV survivor's parents and close relatives who later refuse to give updates of the case for fear of being embarrassed in the society.

Says Asoha: "As things stand now, I don't know how that case is going on as the girl's father has been very uncooperative. This is common in many GBV cases that we report."

Indeed, the culture of silence around GBV cases in Kibera is not unique as similar experiences have been raised by journalists across the country. Most survivor's parents and guardians prefer to hush the matter and resolve it behind closed doors leaving the perpetrators to walk away scot free.

However the media has ensured that the few cases that land on their desks are given prominent coverage to act as a civic education tool to fight GBV.

I have been getting most of my tips from GBV activists, Community Based Organisations and even Non Governmental Organisations like FIDA Kenya, Maendeleo Ya Wanawake and Kenya Female Advisory Organisation (Kefeado) among others."

Allan Obiero a Radio Nam Lowe reporter



Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Devolution and Planning Anne Waiguru addressing delegates at the special ICGLR Conference in Kigali, Rwanda recently. PHOTO: DIANA BOCHABERI

Ray of hope in GBV campaign as more players join the war

BY DIANA BOCHABERI

The International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) has taken many strides towards combating Gender Based Violence within the region.

As an inter-governmental organization, ICGLR through a coordinated effort is mandated to work closely with governments of the 12 member-states and other relevant stakeholders to tackle GBV within the Great Lakes region.

With a history of continuous conflict brought on by confluence of factors, the Heads of States and governments, as the top decision-making organ of ICGLR, agreed to pull their collective resources to protect their citizens.

The damage that GBV causes to

an individual and the community as a whole makes it a cross-cutting issue. Thus, ICGLR member-states integrated and ratified several regional instruments aimed at preventing, ending impunity and providing assistance to victims of GBV.

The prevalence of GBV in the Great Lakes Region prompted establishment and adoption of the ICGLR protocol on the prevention and suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children (2006), the recognition of the Goma Declaration on Eradicating Sexual Violence and Ending Impunity (2008), Kampala Declaration of the Fourth Ordinary Summit and Special Session on Sexual and Gender Based Violence (2011) and other ICGLR protocols, pacts and treaties.

Member states have also ratified and are party to several international

instruments, conventions, resolutions and declaration set up to combat GBV during armed conflict as well as during peace times.

Other mechanism includes gender policy, institutional framework, legislation, programmatic and administrative measures, and have been implemented at a national and local level by the ICGLR member-states.

They have also embarked on countless programmes, projects and initiatives towards combating GBV at the regional, national and local levels.

This includes campaigns, legislation and policy such as, HeforShe campaign, Zero Tolerance now campaign, 16 days of activism campaign, Sexual Offense Act, anti-GBV Acts and gender mainstreaming policy framework.

The programmes and projects such as, one-stop comprehensive care programme, Great Lakes Emergency SGBV and Women's Health project, fight against exploitation, abuse and sexual violence and assistance to victims programme,

regional initiative for the prevention and the curbing of war crimes, crimes against humanity, crime against genocide, and for the fight against impunity in the Great Lakes region, gender action plan, and victim support unit.

However despite these concerted efforts and numerous mechanisms put in place, incidents of GBV continue to prevail and have become constant subject in the Great Lakes region.

The organisation is facing various challenges that include some member-states who are yet to implement several components of the ICGLR framework. Altogether, avoid duplicating and overlapping regional efforts as member states are affiliated to one or more organisation tackling GBV within the region.

Initiatives are sometimes given unrealistic timeframe without the consideration of resources. For instance, the Kampala Declaration (2011) was given a timeframe of two years, and so far, the two years have lapsed with little progress.

Indeed, greater involvement is required, realistic goals set and meticulous coordinating mechanism are needed to overcome the challenges ICGLR is facing while combating GBV within the Great Lakes region.

Collective responsibility is required to tackle challenges facing initiatives to combat GBV in the Great Lakes region. Strengthening the national coordination mechanism of ICGLR member states will make it easier for them to implement policies, initiatives, programmes and projects.

Advocacy and awareness through campaigns such the HeforShe is needed to involve the community as a whole. More Involvement of the relevant stakeholders is needed in order to create mechanisms to combat GBV. Reforms to the justice systems will strengthen, increase dependability and consistency with the concerned parties.

The Writer is a Programme Officer at ICGLR-Youth Forum

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Single women remain targets of sexual violence

BY HENRY OWINO

When the term Gender Based Violence (GBV) is mentioned, many people associate it with women battery, rape, and denying girls right to education.

However, the truth of the matter is that GBV has no boundary; it cuts across male and female genders in different forms.

Nevertheless, women are generally more affected than men in all levels and forms whether married or single. Single parents especially female; widows, divorced, separated and spinsters experience GBV almost daily either at homes, workplaces or residential estates. It is even worse if they stay in a rental house.

Sheila Ogola is a single lady living in Ayany estate in Kibera and works in one of the commercial banks as an accountant in the same area. She admits that GBV takes many forms but for her own experience, she says sexual harassment is the major challenge many single ladies undergo.

Although she states people think GBV cases is only for those who are married where husbands beat up their wives and vice versa, it happens silently with singles.

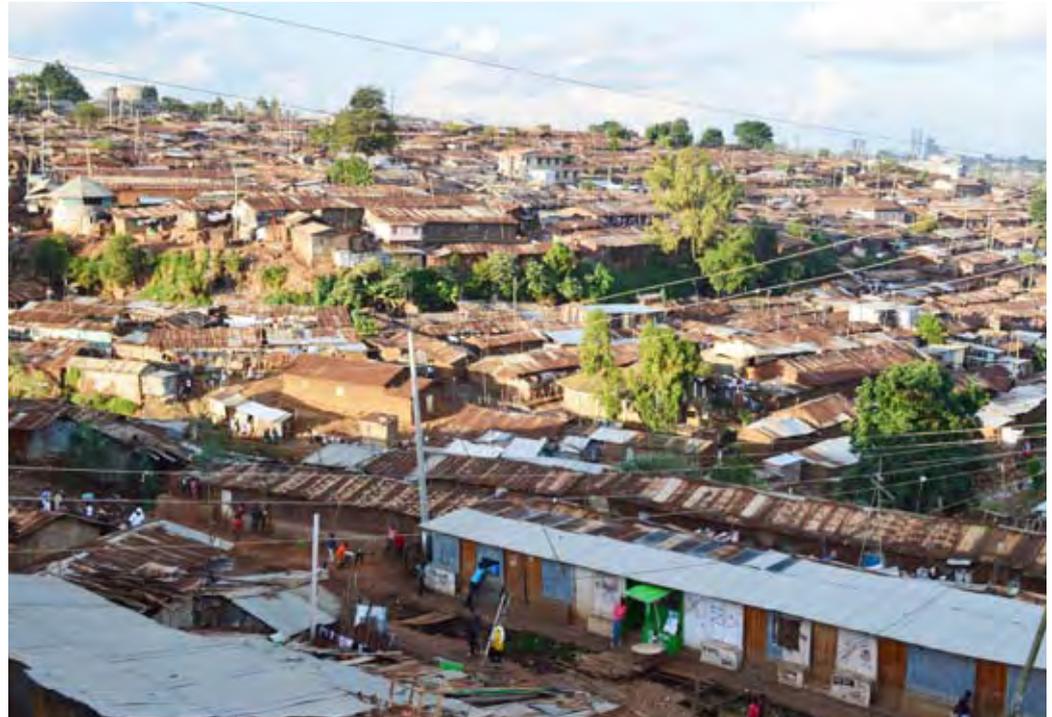
Ogola expresses her concerns of what female singles especially those who have never been married undergo. She states that cases of single ladies being sexually harassed by men either at workplace or residential estate are common nowadays.

She says how men pat their hips camouflaging to be appreciating the beauty yet even hugging them suggestively longer with an intension of peeping through the breasts.

"I wonder why a man should hug me longer than a minute and again hold me tight any time we meet on the corridors, tea and lunch breaks. This is not fair and I term it sexual harassment whether he is my boss," Ogola complains.

On the other hand, she admits married women as well could be experiencing domestic violence, singles undergo double. Ogola disclosed that before settling in Kibera, she had to change her residence more than three times due to sexual harassment from her male neighbours.

She clarifies that men could pop in her



Kibera informal settlement in the outskirts of Nairobi. Single women are regularly harassed by married women. PHOTO: GEORGE NGESA

house without any invitation pretending of offering assistance or borrowing some items. This discouraged Ogola as she felt the men were infringing on her privacy and nuisance to her.

Others could knock at her door late in the night claiming to be checking on her wellbeing, visits she persistently turned down. She recalls that in one of the estates, a landlord came to her house at 10:30pm wearing a pair of shorts demanding that she pays electricity bill.

This did not augur well for Ogola as a female tenant, and again she complained it did not happen once or twice but on several occasions with different agenda tricks. She says male neighbours are worse and it seems to her that they compete on who will sleep with her first.

"For example knocking on the door late in the night, writing seductive text messages and touching me on the hips, are a total violence, breaching one's privacy and women should not tolerate this," she urges.

Ogola says that female neighbours whom she could seek assistance from, called her names; prostitute who milks men's or husband's money, HIV carrier,

Nairobi commercial sex worker among other unmentionable names.

"I would ask myself if being a female and single qualifies any man to touch me and for women to call me insulting names," Ogola poses.

She says that some men take advantage of single ladies, thinking they are cheap and ready for sex anytime.

She reveals that even at the workplace things are not different as bosses beg for sexual favours in order for female employees to get promotion, overtime allowance, educational trips, off, leave to attend to emergencies. Others also brand ladies names as sex object for men hence lowering their self-esteem.

"There is no bad form of GBV as a sexual assault to a single lady living alone and worse still staying in a rental house where married men stay alone," Ogola notes.

There are single ladies who have been raped or murdered by their boyfriends for turning down their sexual demands. Others are single because they were married but divorced due to personal differences with their spouses most of which are related to sex.

"Married men of my father's age are not ashamed of sending me sexual text messages, knocking at my door late in the night including other forms of sexual harassments," Ogola reiterates.

"These men should give us a break. I have convinced my boss that I am engaged to another man but still he is not satisfied," she exposes.

Ogola believes that the increasing number of single families is as a result of domestic violence and so one spouse opts to stay separately or file for a divorce.

For instance, In Kibera, there are so many such families. This can be confirmed with residents as no single day passes without the area Assistant Chiefs and Chiefs settling domestic disputes.

This scenario has contributed negatively to characters and attitudes of most children of Kibera. They grow up knowing that women are to be beaten up when they get married. Today it is a vicious cycle in Kibera leading to ever rising cases of GBV in the location.

There are so many singles families in Kibera and Langata constituencies' a population close to one million.



Mzee Simon Mapangala (R) separated by female warden Mokeira Lumumba (C) during an interview with his wife Rosao Ajando Mapangala during the interview. PHOTO: MILLER OMEGA

FGM victims asks for leniency from the President

BY MILLER OMEGA

At 87 years, Simon Mapangala from Kuria community in Migori County does not understand why at his age he is serving four years in prison after breaking the punitive Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act, number 32 of 2011.

Mapangala has already serving his sentence alongside his 51 year old wife, Rosao Ajando Mapangala after their teenage daughter went with her colleagues to be circumcised against their will.

The couple has celebrity status at Migori GK Prisons as they are often allowed to visit each other during public holidays, albeit with strict supervision from warders who according to law prevent any close contact.

Seated only few inches from his wife and separated by a female prison warden, Mapangala insists that even though the teenager insisted on going for circumcision the judge still found them guilty.

"She was a minor and when she appeared before Kehancha Law Courts she was asked thrice if we had pushed her to circumcision and she denied. The judge still ended up imprisoning us," he says ruefully.

The couple said their 15 years old daughter, who will be in class seven next year, went for circumcision against their will.

"As a family we have been against

the vice and her elder sisters didn't go for the cut, but she was adamant and went without our consent," Rosao says.

With memories of his ordeal still clear in his mind, the old man says trouble started for them when their daughter got complications from her wounds.

"It was December 2012 during circumcision period when we were arrested at Kehancha District Hospital by police officers when we went to discharge our daughter," he narrates.

The couple, with child's mother coming from the Luhya community which doesn't circumcise their daughters, insist the vice is retrogressive, they have been against it and only fell victim of the new punitive law.

"We couldn't just leave our daughter alone in the hospital when she was sick. It's sad that we were charged for aiding and abetting the process," Mrs. Mapangala says.

The two are the victim of the cross

cutting new law that carries a penalty of imprisonment for a term not less than three years, or to a fine of not less than Ksh200,000, or both.

Female circumcisers, those aiding or abetting FGM, use of premises to perform FGM, possession of tools or equipment used in FGM, failure to report cases or use of derogatory language against women who are not circumcised carry the same punishment.

According to Cess Mugo, Project Manager for Education Center for Advancement of Women (ECAW), an organisation championing the war against FGM in Kuria, the couple fell victim of ignorance of the law.

"Most people and locals are very oblivious of the new law and only come face to face with its full wrath when before the court of law," Mugo explains.

She says the couple were jailed for not reporting the matter to the authority, use of their premises to complete the process or possessed tools or equipment used for

circumcision which even include wrappers worn by circumcised girls.

"Until 2012 before the law was passed and started coming into effect most people from Kuria Community thought it was a ride in the park. The new law has brought reality of jail term to them," Mugo says.

On the other hand Peter Gwengi, Director of Lake Victoria Initiative Network (LAVIN) says the new laws have driven the vice underground with most girls crossing the border into Tanzania for the cut.

"Most girls and circumcisers have been forced to flee into the neighbouring country where the law is lax. To avoid being arrested, local administration here is under pressure to clear the vice from their areas," Gwengi says.

He calls for both Kenya and Tanzania officials, civil society organizations and leaders from Kuria community cutting across the border to work together to end the vice which has negatively impacted on development.

"Shortly after December circumcision ceremony, the region is faced with high cases of cattle rustling as men look for cattle to pay bride wealth to marry off young girls. Schools also indicate high cases of sexual assault, teen pregnancies and drop out due to marriages by second term," he says.

Speaking to Tusemezane, the couple says they spend sleepless nights in the prison thinking of their family back home.

Mapangala had three wives and is survived by two including Rosao with a total of 16 children and several grandchildren.

"How are my children? Are they going to school and did they sleep hungry again? Are they safe or already driven away from my homestead by my clan? These are questions that torment me," he questions.

He pleads for leniency from the Head of State, President Uhuru Kenyatta for at least one of them to be allowed to go home and look after their family.

Mapangala says the Kuria community is in the right course to end the vice which will be sped up through behaviour change approach to younger generation.

"When I was young the Kikuyu community was practising the vice but it has since disappeared. The Kisii community has also showed progress and Kuria will follow soon," he says.

Mapangala insists FGM has been behind poverty and high child marriage in the Kuria community and rob children of their childhood.

"My daughters who refused to undergo the cut are more educated and married later than their other



"Most people and locals are very oblivious of the new law and only come face to face with its full wrath when before the

court of law,"

Ms. Cess Mugo, the Project Manager for Education Center for Advancement of Women (ECAW)

