



International Women's NEWS NOUVELLES Feministes Internationales

In publication since 1906

Journal of the International Alliance of Women

Gender based violence

Every day thousands of young girls around the world are married under age due to poverty, lack of safety, social norms, gender inequality, patriarchal structures, the fear of the stigma of straying from tradition.

Their wedding day is very often the start of a violent abusive relationship.

Let's try to stop this scourge as soon as we can.

Child marriage

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Front Cover

A child's profile: you can't tell the gender because it is only a child and that is really the issue. The barbed wire depicts how children are trapped from an early age, forced to live a life that others chose for them, their childhood violently taken away.

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Bafana has a long and accomplished track record in the NGO sector. He was senior gender technical advisor for EngenderHealth South Africa between 2012-2013. From 2001-2011 Bafana served as a Commissioner at the National Commission for Gender Equality where he was instrumental in assisting National and Provincial Departments of Government to plan and coordinate many activities related to men, gender and HIV/AIDS. A speaker at many national and international conferences on men, gender and HIV/AIDS, including UN CSW in 2007, 2008 and 2010 and the 2008 International AIDS Society conference in Mexico. Currently, he chairs the SANAC National Men's sector, a component of the South African National AIDS Council responsible for providing oversight on implementation of the National Strategic Plan on HIV, STIs and TB. He holds a Bachelor of Theology (Hon) and Masters in Theology from the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.



Elisabeth Markham moved from California in 1996 to Zimbabwe. Passionate about community development work and with the encouragement from friends, Elisabeth started *Ntengwe* for Community Development, a private voluntary organization in 1996 in the remote community of Binga district. With a background in anthropology and film-making, Elisabeth produced several documentaries and award winning films and she believes that engaging communities in the filmmaking process is critical for community development. Elisabeth expanded the work of her organization to Victoria Falls in 2008 and loves the promotion of community-based eco-tourism. Grateful for an amazing group of co-workers and environmentalists, Elisabeth makes sure that responsible eco-tourism is supported for the benefit of marginalized communities and the environment.



CONTRIBUTORS



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Naana Otoo-Oyortey MBE is the Executive Director of Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development (FORWARD), the lead organisation in the UK tackling female genital mutilation. She provides expert advice to the UK government on women and girls and the European Parliament on FGM and has over 30 years experience on gender and women's human rights and previously worked with the International Planned Parenthood Federation and Commonwealth Secretariat. Naana has pioneered work on child marriage and rights of African girls and young women in rural and urban poor communities. She holds an MPhil in Development Studies from Sussex University and was honoured for women's human rights by the Queen in 2009. Naana was also listed in The Power 1000 of London's most influential people in 2013 and 2014.



Adwoa Kwateng-Kluyitse is Head of Global Advocacy and Partnerships at FORWARD. She has previously worked as the Country Director for ActionAid Ghana. Adwoa has years of experience working with women fleeing domestic violence and safeguarding young adults leaving care and those who were involved with the criminal justice system. She has worked with local authority and academia as a teaching assistant and a lecturer in Ghana and the UK. She is passionate about women and children's rights and tackling female genital mutilation. Adwoa has a Bachelor's degree from the George Washington University (Washington DC) and a Master's in Clinical Psychology from the University of Ghana, Legon. She sits on the Board of ActionAid Greece.



Douglas Musiringofa BSc Community Development MSc Community Psychology; *PhD student studying Social Anthropology in South Africa*

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A community development practitioner facilitating development projects in Zimbabwe and Southern Africa, with vast experience involved with children, youth and women spanning over a decade. His main drive is to promote just communities where all people have equal opportunities and reach their full potential. He holds regional, national and provincial leadership roles which include Matabeleland North Provincial Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Network of Early Childhood Development Actors; Educational Psychologist; Board member of Educate Africa, Zimbabwe Community Psychology as well as Core founder of Douglas and Friends community initiative. He facilitated construction and support of over 30 school classroom blocks in the past three years reaching out to more than 5000 children to promote access to Early Childhood Education; championed the establishment of two Children and Youth Centres involving more than 1000 children and youth in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. A member of the Tracing Democracy in Denmark campaign and finalist in the Atlas Young African Community Leaders Program for 2013. His writings have appeared in national papers and the Community Child Protection Forum.



Eunice Musiime is currently the Executive Director of Akina Mama wa Afrika and immediate past Chairperson of the Association of Women Lawyers (FIDA-Uganda). Eunice is a Lawyer, feminist, and ardent policy analyst with over 15 years experience working to promote gender equality and social justice at national, regional and international level. Adept at strategic planning, project management and monitoring of programmes, Eunice is results driven and passionate about making a difference in the lives of vulnerable members of the population mainly women and girls. Eunice also has a solid track record of using research, analysis, and advocacy to successfully develop initiatives aimed at ensuring that women and men live a life of dignity, opportunity and liberty. Eunice holds a Bachelors Degree in Law and a Masters in Business Administration with several other professional trainings in the areas of human rights and good governance.



At the 25th session of the African Union Summit, themed “Year of Women Empowerment and Development toward the African Agenda 2063” and held in South Africa in June 2015, Zimbabwe along with other member states demanded for and committed to women’s economic empowerment, to women’s access to health, enhancing participation of women in governance, peace and security, enhancing women’s and girls’ access to science and technology.

However, the high prevalence of violence against women and girls in Zimbabwe is a major challenge to the advancement of women’s and girls’ human rights: 47% of women have experienced either physical or sexual violence at some point in their life; 1 in 3 girls experience sexual violence before they turn 18 and a majority of the girls are adolescent, aged between 14 and 17 years; less than 3% of these girls receive professional help.

Slow implementation of laws and policies, the absence of well resourced legal aid programmes, low legal literacy among women and communities, a weak referral system between the police, legal aid providers and justice delivery structures, and entrenched patriarchal values are among the key challenges to ending violence against women in the country.

Zimbabwe has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world, affecting up to 50% of young girls under the age of consent in rural areas. This is a criminal offence as Zimbabwe’s legislated standards are clear on the matter of age. However, the practice within traditional customary settings and due to economically poor homes and communities makes this a huge gendered challenge.

It is for that reason that our host organization in Zimbabwe organized a conference on violence against women and girls in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Our keynote speaker was the Honourable Jessie F. Majome, a feminist legislator in Zimbabwe’s Parliament, who spoke about her struggle to reform the law and policy for the equality of women in her country. She has been instrumental to the feminist constitutional reform of 2013. Jessie Majome succeeded to complement the largely disused Domestic Violence Act 2007 that even criminalizes child marriages. She signed a motion in Parliament for mandatory stiff sentences for rape (40 years in jail) and all gender based violence; DNA and well equipped investigations for gender based violence and the funding and implementation of the National gender based strategy of 2012-2015. The motion was supported by MPs from across the political divide.

Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda, ambassador of the African Union for Ending Child Marriage, introduced us to the subject of child marriage. This scourge is affecting many young girls in Africa. She then explained the reasons why progress is slow and what should be done. The issue of men and their implication in combating violence is very much debated in Africa.

Bafana Khumalo in his article from South Africa elaborates on the needs for progressive men to partner with the women’s sector in the fight to end GBV in their communities and why it is important to engage men. He described some interventions on the issue by Sonke Gender Justice, where he is director for strategic partnerships, such as community action teams, court monitoring and legal gun ownership.

Douglas Musiringofa’s article discusses the concept of masculinity as a social, biological, and psychological construct. According to Musiringofa, masculinity should not be the basis for understanding humanity but rather appreciation and understanding of human diversity and individuality.

Rita Mbatha describes the participation of her organisation in the campaign “16 days of activism against gender-based violence” and offers an overview of the efforts of the Zimbabwe government to eradicate gender-based violence, in particular child marriage.

Eunice Musiime offers an overview on what is happening in Africa on the very important issue of child marriage, the practice of which remains prevalent across all African countries as stated in the 2014 UNICEF Report on Ending Child Marriage. Eunice refers to the efforts of many governments to eradicate it which, due to cultural traditions and stereotypes, is declining slowly while progress is uneven. Political will to end child marriage seems higher than ever. In May 2014, the African Union launched the first campaign encouraging AU member states to develop strategies to raise awareness of and address the harmful impact of child marriage. However much remains to be done.

Naana Otoo Oyorotey and Adwoa Kwateng-Kluyitse in their article “Now girls know their rights” share insights and lessons from a three-year intervention in three districts in Mara region, which set out to mobilise multiple stakeholders to promote the rights of girls and young women, in particular concerning child marriage and FGM. The study used Participatory Ethnographic Evaluation Research, which tends to have a transformational effect on participants.

Elisabeth Markham spoke about her community development work and her organization Ntengwe which she established in 1996 in the remote community of the Binga district in Zimbabwe. In 2008 she expanded the work of her organization in Victoria Falls. Her self-help strategy for economic and social development emphasizes self-reliance and promotes the enjoyment of human rights for the most marginalised women. In her speech she focused on her strategies of the self-help group approach for microenterprise in rural areas in Victoria Falls, in the context of women’s empowerment and the prevention of domestic violence. This approach has created opportunities for the poor beyond their wildest dreams to participate in various income-earning activities.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S NEWS IN BRIEF

MICROFINANCE: Flexible and disciplined savings groups are common all over Africa

from Gudrun Haupter, Deutscher Frauenring, Project Committee for West Africa

In November 2016 Eva-Maria Bruchhaus wrote about historical and current aspects of "Tontines". She has worked on development issues in francophone West Africa and I know her from the time I met with IAW member organizations in Burkina Faso and visited their projects partly financed by Deutscher Frauenring. The full text deserves our attention and you can find it on <http://www.dandc.eu/node/2826>

"Tontines" are an example of economic, social and cultural solidarity. Solidarity is their great strength. Collective savings can be very successful. A group of market trader women from Abidjan, the economic capital of the Côte d'Ivoire, is an example. As a cooperative, supported by the international microcredit provider Oikocredit, they have built up a market with about 200 shops and 700 stalls.

At the core, savings communities are based on an old method of **economical cooperation that is called "tontine" in francophone West Africa**. Tontines are associations of relatives, neighbours, friends or work colleagues. Tontines are more common among West African women than among men, especially in rural areas. They mostly have clear and simple rules, which are observed with great discipline. It helps if microcredit funding is provided by someone living close-by. The recipients know the benefactor and the heads of the organization can keep an eye on the use of the credit.

On a modest scale this is the case in our FGM project in rural Burkina Faso – which also sensitizes the members of rural women's clubs to family planning. Our Austrian partner used funds he received from a Circle of Friends back home to allocate mini-credits to 63 women's clubs to be paid back with a yearly 5% interest. Most of them are illiterate and signed by finger-print. One member of each group received a very basic training in micro-credit managing. Initially the clubs decided that each of its members got the same tiny sum to help them start individually a mini-enterprise in the sectors of agriculture, small livestock or trading. Since then 15 clubs pooled their resources and are now able to negotiate conditions, particularly for the use of land. Micro-credits has clearly increased the women's standing and self-confidence.

ONGOING ACTION AGAINST FAMILY VIOLENCE IN AUSTRALIA

Women's Electoral Lobby has been campaigning during the past two years for secure, long-term funding for women's refuges and, in the National Budget this month, the Treasurer announced that the new Commonwealth/State funding arrangement - the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) - would include

funding for women's refuges, to begin in 2018/19 with the aim of improving the States' accountability with mutually agreed, measurable actions between the Commonwealth and the States.

The recent Victorian State budget committed to \$1.9bn for family violence programs. Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) will vigorously lobby Federal and State governments to match the Victorian Government's commitment in order to help improve equity of access to services for women and children escaping domestic violence.

As well, there are regular television advertising campaigns against family violence.

CSW61

IAW hosted a parallel event: **Sexism's effect on women in the workplace - Examples and solutions from around the world**.

The panel consisted of three women who work with women's and girls' organisations in different parts of the world.

Luci Chikowero represented Rozaria Memorial Trust Girls Clubs in Zimbabwe.

Cecilia M. Gastón represented the Violence Intervention Program an organization working to end domestic violence against Latina victims in New York.

Helena Gleesborg Hansen represented the "Stop Sexism" project under the Danish Women's Society.

Moderating the event was **Alexis Grenall**, a political consultant working on economic justice issues, who writes frequently about gender and power.

While each panelist expressed how they saw and experienced sexism in their individual organisation the debate quickly showed that the three organisations represented on the panel worked in very different areas. However, within the first few minutes it also became very clear that many of the issues the organisations were facing on an everyday basis were very much the same, in particular in regards to patriarchal structures limiting women and girls in their everyday lives and in regards to concrete sexist encounters with men.

Alexis Grenall was expert at getting the panel to describe in their own words the specific environment and setting of their own organisation, and at the same time showing that the sexist structures facing women in workplaces, formal and informal, are very similar in different parts of the world. The event was livestreamed and can now be seen here:

<https://www.facebook.com/VIPmujeresNY/videos/10155132393856880/>

<https://www.facebook.com/VIPmujeresNY/videos/10155132430216880/>

CSW61Agreed Conclusions:

<https://www.ngocsw.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Agreed-Conclusions.pdf>



There has been a lot of discussion in the CSW 61 this year among NGOs on shrinking civil society space, by that we mean increased restrictions to women's access to the work of CSW including by creating more legal and administrative obstacles to them. The US travel ban is just the latest in a series of obstacles. We also mean fewer possibilities for NGOs to have their voices heard, less influence exerted by them on what is being discussed in CSW, increased violations of the human rights of women activists, more generally of NGO representatives, and increased restrictions to civil society's work.

For example this year's CSW has seen attacks on NGO access to the negotiation process. According to the NGO/CSW Committee outside the negotiations on Wednesday 22nd of March, UN Secretary Staff removed NGOs from the building after 6 pm while negotiations continued late into the night. CSW Agreed Conclusions' negotiations were moved to the ECOSOC Chamber and Trusteeship Council Chamber twice that week. These rooms are on the second floor which is off-limits to NGOs. This has severely restricted NGO/ government informal discussions hampering their ability to support the progress of the negotiations.

IAW has signed together with many other organizations a letter to Ambassador Patriota, Chair of CSW 61, concerning NGOs access to the negotiations at CSW 61. In the letter they are saying that over the last twenty years they have seen significant change in the way they have been doing their work. Less than 15 years ago NGOs were able to observe the negotiations and approach delegations on the floor of the UN Conference Rooms. In recent years their collaboration has been subjected to increasing restrictions limiting their capacity to work with member states to deliver strong Agreed Conclusions that make a real difference to the policy and legal settings that are used to realize women's human rights.

Finally they asked the cooperation of Ambassador Patriota in ensuring that the remainder of the negotiations is scheduled in Conference Room 4 or other accessible rooms to facilitate the working relationships of member states and NGOs in the final days of the negotiations. It is after all part of the critical legacy of collaboration between member states and civil society at the CSW which has delivered many advances for women's human rights.

However it is not only in the UN that we face the shrinking space of civil society. In the last ten years human rights organizations, pro-democracy actors and wider civil society movements in many countries have been facing increased restrictions when trying to carry out their work. Governments make it more difficult to operate for civil society organizations who receive foreign support and funding. In many countries, human rights' NGOs are restricted when they attempt to hold public gatherings, express their views or set up new organizations. In addition to this, individual human rights' defenders are often subjugated to intimidation and harassment.

Space can start to shrink when governments see civil society as a threat. As a result they employ tactics to discredit and weaken them thereby shrinking the space in which they can work. This worrying trend is not limited to the authoritarian or dictatorial regimes. It is a global phenomenon that can also be observed in Europe including within the EU borders.

Finally during the CSW 61 Session, the LGBTIQ community has been attacked through a bus which circulated in NY and spread hate messages. The International Organization for the Family, the National Organization for Marriage and CitizenGo were behind the bus and its hate slogans. Two of these organizations have been selected by the state to represent the US government at the CSW 61. The above organizations are well known for being notoriously anti-LGBTIQ. The orange bus was covered in the message "It's Biology: Boys are boys... and always will be. Girls are girls... and always will be. You can't change sex. Respect all". OutRight Action International commented that broadcasting a message that erases and denies the reality that transgender and intersex children and youth exist is irresponsible, disrespectful and dangerous.

Under these circumstances a group of feminist organizations including IAW visited the Secretary General and invited him to attend the morning briefing of NGOs by UN Women. Soon-Young represented the IAW in the meeting in which he was handed

a letter signed by 900 women organizations including IAW. In the letter among other issues they also reminded him that the UN has benefited a lot from women's advocacy. Women raised awareness about domestic and other forms of violence, created the GEAR campaign that resulted in UN Women. The UN counts on women's organizations to achieve progress in SDGs, in SC Resolution 1325 and its following, the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development, etc. In turn for the above they asked that the UN strengthens its commitment and support to feminist and women's movements, to continue to have a strong multicultural voice at the UN. They invited him for an open dialogue with women during CSW 61 on their concerns and how to strengthen their partnership.

The UN Secretary General came to the briefing of NGOs on March 17th and discussed a lot of issues with them. What is very important is that SG Guterres acknowledges that there is a backlash today against many of the gains women made over recent decades. He said that we need to reverse this. There is also backlash against civil society in general and in many dimensions of human rights.

The explanation of this trend for SG Guterres lies in the following: as societies become more complex and as social media and governments feel less and less secure because they have less instruments of control, one of the attempts is to try to keep civil society under control. Limiting civil society space is a reaction to the feeling of governments that they are losing control of society. Mr Guterres said he is trying to make governments understand that links with civil society are a way to improve governance, not limit the power of governments.

SG Guterres is of the view that we need to have a campaign to make sure governments understand that working with civil society is the best way to rule a country and that they understand that the UN needs to apply the same procedures within its work, because what is true at the national level in relation to the quality of democracy is also true at the global level in relation to the governance of democratic institutions.

Mr Guterres said that gender parity at all levels, political, cultural, economic and social, is a central objective and must be based on women's empowerment. Gender parity will also be a central objective at the level of senior management as well as of the entire UN staff.

The Secretary General sought suggestions and opinions of the civil society representatives on how the UN can move forward on its commitments on gender equality. He opened the discussion by sharing life lessons on the issue, telling the gathering that during his time as Prime Minister of Portugal one of his most difficult battles had been putting family violence on the national agenda. Antonio Guterres referred to women and children refugees, which are the most vulnerable among refugees because we live in a male dominated world and a male dominated culture. To be able to receive protection refugee women and girls should be empowered.

The representative of Baha'i International spoke about the shrinking space of civil society and asked for a highly positioned officer, an under Secretary General, to take civil society in his/her mandate. The Secretary General was very positive about it. He also recognized that the LGBTIQ community should be fully acknowledged at all levels and that the realization of sexual and reproductive rights is a question of social welfare.

He also said that human societies are the least prepared to help the young and that he would try to do his best in that respect as well. After a representative from an Iranian women's organization described the situation of women in her country and said that stoning of women should not be possible in the 21st century, he said that he would look after women in that country.

The Secretary General said that gender mainstreaming should take place in all UN policies. Through gender mainstreaming, financing in different fields of the UN could apply to women as well. He also stressed that there should be zero tolerance to violence against women among UN staff, including peacekeepers. Human rights are crucial in achieving gender equality. Human rights should prevail everywhere in the world, but we can only act with the instruments we have. We cannot make miracles, he said.

Beyond the Law: Ending Child Marriage

by Eunice Musiime

Janet, an 11 year old girl was married to John, a 16 year old boy in 2015 and they were expecting a baby when a concerned nurse reported them to the police after Janet had gone for antenatal care. "Her parents said they cannot look after her so they told me to marry her so that I can provide for her with what she needs and I accepted", John tells her. Janet's story is similar to many girls in Uganda and girls in many other African countries who continue to be married off before the age of 18 years.

This is in spite of the fact that the Government of Uganda has put in place a number of national and international legal instruments to protect the fundamental right of children not to be married before the age of 18, including the national Constitution, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Child marriage is a significant cultural, political and public health issue on the African continent. It is defined as any legal or customary union involving a boy or girl below age 18. The UNICEF 2014 report on Ending Child Marriage: Progress and Prospects estimates approximately 39% of girls in sub-Saharan Africa are married before the age of 18. This ranges from high such as Niger (76%) or low like Algeria (3%). It is widespread in West and Central Africa (42%) as well as Eastern and Southern Africa (36%).

The causes of child marriage are common across Africa. Parents may marry off their daughter due to poverty or out of fear for their safety. Tradition and the stigma of straying from tradition perpetuate child marriage in many communities. Crucially, gender inequality and the low value placed on girls underlie the practice. This therefore means that a multi-sectoral approach to ending the practice is required.

Commitments and initiatives to address child marriage have grown considerably over recent years ranging from human rights instruments that establish the minimum age at 18 to adopting initiatives to create mass awareness on the continent. For instance, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Article 21) 1990 and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights of Women in Africa, also known as the Maputo Protocol 2003, contain progressive provisions on eradicating child marriages.

In June 2016 the Southern African Development Community (SADC) adopted a model law on eradicating child marriages and protecting children in marriage. This model legislation builds on best practices and serves as a yardstick and advocacy tool for legislators. It sets the minimum age of marriage at 18 years for children with no exception, in line with international and continental human rights standards.

Malawi is one of the countries in southern Africa that has recently stepped up its efforts to eradicate child marriages. The parliament of Malawi adopted the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Law that increased the minimum age of marriage from 16 to 18 years old. This has been hailed as a step forward for Malawi, where 50% of girls are married off before 18.

In Cameroon, the country's civil code permits the marriage of girls at 15 years upon parental permission and 18 years for boys. It is against this backdrop that Cameroon's new penal code was enacted as law in July 2016. Its Section 356 sanctions anyone who compels another to marry before 18 with imprisonment from 5-10 years and a fine. Cameroon is also one of the countries that has launched national awareness campaigns to end child marriages.

In May 2014, the African Union (AU) launched the first ever campaign focusing on accelerating change across the continent by encouraging AU member states to develop strategies to raise awareness of and address the harmful impact of child marriage. In June 2015, AU Heads of States adopted a Common Position on Child Marriage which urges governments to establish comprehensive action plans to end child marriage, including



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS / CHILD MARRIAGE IN AFRICA

setting and enforcing laws which set the minimum age of marriage at 18. Originally planned over two years, the campaign has now been extended to run until at least 2017. Over 18 countries have launched the campaign so far. The need to end child marriage is embedded in Agenda 2063, the African Union's 50-year vision for the development of the continent, which recognises child marriage as a major barrier to regional prosperity.

In rural areas of Senegal, Tostan's Community Empowerment programs empower women and adolescents with non-formal education in their local language. Through a three-year comprehensive curriculum about democracy, human rights and health, women and girls learn to apply human rights to their own cultural context and challenge harmful traditional practices such as child marriage. It also mobilises village leaders and community members to abandon child marriage and encourage relatives and friends to end the practices with them.

In Egypt, the Population Council's Ishraq program (2001-current) provides 12-to-15-year-old out-of-school girls with access to literacy and numeracy classes, as well as health and life skills. The program also provides financial education and sports programming, and engages community members through group education sessions about the consequences of and alternatives to child marriage.

Cognisant of the many programs and laws to address child marriage, it is slowly declining although progress is uneven and too slow. While the political will to eradicate child marriage seems higher than ever, much remains to be done to ensure that the growing momentum positively affects the lives of millions of girls at risk of child marriage across Africa.

It is vital that action be taken in continued advocacy, awareness-raising, legislative change and improvement in social factors such as gender relations, educational levels and poverty. Recommendations include:

Continued and sustained high level advocacy on ending child marriage as a primary focus for member states, because continued high level political will is more necessary now than ever before.

The African Union, as custodian of the campaign to end child marriage in Africa, should continue to advocate with partners to ensure that child marriage is kept high on the public policy agenda.

UN Agencies, donors and NGOs can play a significant role in continuing to support research, to advocate and to campaign for ending child marriage.

National governments should continue to establish and implement laws and policies backed by adequate resources to ensure effective implementation. Policies must be in place to protect women and girls' rights, including property rights, access to remedies, support for those wishing to leave a marriage, protection from violence, access to health services, etc.

Enhanced community engagements to address negative cultural norms and harmful practices that are driving the practice.

Prioritise the education of the girl child and create an enabling environment for girls to stay in school longer.

Strengthened civil registration systems which record births and marriages are also important.

The eradication of poverty and reduction of inequality in society will address one of the drivers.

“NOW GIRLS KNOW THEIR RIGHTS” CASE STUDY OF A GIRLS’ EMPOWERMENT INTERVENTION IN MARA REGION, TANZANIA

INTRODUCTION

Child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) are deeply entrenched social norms that, over the past decade, have taken prominence on the international development agenda. Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focuses on achieving gender equality and empowerment for all women and girls. It also recognizes the role of FGM, child marriage and domestic violence in perpetuating gender inequality. In many regions and communities across Tanzania, child marriage, FGM and domestic violence are still endemic practices. This paper shares insights and lessons from a three year intervention which set out to mobilize multiple stakeholders to promote the rights of girls and young women in Mara Region, Tanzania. This was a partnership project led by UK based charity Foundation for Women’s Health Research and Development (FORWARD) and two Tanzania based organisations, Children’s Dignity Forum (CDF) and Chama Cha Uzazi na Malezi Bora Tanzania (UMATI).

BACKGROUND: FGM AND CHILD MARRIAGE PREVALENCE

The 2013 UNICEF report ‘Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A statistical overview and exploration of the dynamics of change’, estimated the prevalence of FGM in Tanzania at 15% representing 7.9 million women and girls aged 15-49 years.ⁱ The Tanzania Demographic Health Survey (DHS) released in 2016 showed a huge statistical drop in prevalence. According to the report, while the national FGM prevalence has reduced to 10% among women 15-49 years, the decline has been slower in key regions including Dodoma, Manyara and Arusha. ⁱⁱ This significant decline is very positive and can be attributed directly to the law, legal enforcement, community awareness and media action by national and grassroots organisations. However, the situation of child marriage has not changed in many parts of Tanzania and seems to be getting worse. Child marriage is defined as a formal or informal marriage where one or both spouses is below the age of 18 years. In Tanzania child marriage predominantly affects girls. According to the DHS report, over 36% of women aged 25-49 years were married before 18. At the same time teenage pregnancy among 15-19 year olds has increased from 23 % to 27% between 2010 and 2016. ⁱⁱⁱ In many communities in Tanzania, FGM is a precursor to child marriage and closely linked to early sexual initiation, pregnancy and

motherhood, resulting in girls and young women experiencing negative maternal health and poor education outcomes. Many are also vulnerable to domestic abuse due to their lack of power within the household and marginalization. Their experiences can be compounded by multiple forms of abuse due to their age, rural location, and poor access to justice, resulting in adverse health as well as emotional, social and economic burdens which continue to negatively impact their gender equality and poverty status. Such practices, which are fuelled by social norms and structural barriers at national and local levels, are violations of the rights of girls and young women.

THE LEGAL CONTEXT AND THE ROLE OF POLICY

While the Tanzanian government has ratified a number of regional and international human rights treaties pertaining to gender equality and rights including child marriage, FGM and domestic violence, it has not fully met its obligations to effectively tackle these practices through laws, policies and law enforcement. The Constitution of Tanzania includes standards on human dignity, gender equality and forbids discrimination on the basis of sex while also guaranteeing full participation of women and men in social, economic and political life. Yet a number of existing laws discriminate against women and girls or contradict other laws. For example, the Law of Marriage Act (1971) allows girls to be married as young as 14 years with parental consent and the approval of the court. In response to numerous calls for the law to be changed, in 2016 a new law was introduced. The Education Act makes it unlawful and a punishable offence with up to 30 years imprisonment to marry a primary or secondary school girl or boy. ^{iv} Unfortunately, this fails to address the situation of many girls who are not in school and subsequently forced into marriage. The Tanzanian Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act (SOSPA) of 1998 guarantees equality for women and protects women and children from sexual and other forms of violence, including female genital mutilation. However, this is poorly enforced and has many inconsistencies in respect to child marriage. “SOSPA’s narrow definition of rape leaves married women and girls largely unprotected from sexual violence by their husbands. Under SOSPA, a girl is a female under 18 years while a woman is a female above 18 years...SOSPA defines rape as sexual intercourse



between a male of any age and (a) a girl or woman who is not his wife without her consent, or (b) a girl, with or without her consent, unless she is his wife who is aged 15 or older." This means that a child bride of 15 or older cannot be raped by her husband, irrespective of consent.v

THE PROJECT INTERVENTION

'Mobilizing actions to safeguard rights of girls in Tanzania' was a three year joint project implemented in Mara Region, the Northernmost region of Tanzania. 23 wards were targeted in three out of the six districts in the region. These districts are characterized by strong adherence to traditional values and allegiance to clan leadership. The dominant ethnic groups in these districts are the Kuryas, Luos and the Gitas.

The practice of FGM has changed over the years among the various clans who are at different stages of change and clan leaders are beginning to engage in discussions about abandoning the practice of FGM. In Mara Region, prevalence rates of child marriage are the third highest in Tanzania with 55% of women aged 20-24 marrying before they attained 18 years. vi

Among the Kurya, going through FGM signals that a girl is ready for marriage and provides the go-ahead for parents to initiate marriage transactions. Girls 'rest' for a month after FGM and, if they are not in school, they are then married off; not being married within two years is considered a sign of bad luck. Girls who do not undergo FGM are often ridiculed and in some cases forced by their in-laws to undergo FGM when they get married. vii

Most child marriages are arranged by parents and often without the consent of the girl. While most marriages are to men, Mara region has a tradition of child brides being married off to older women. (In a sense, with wealth and status older women can step into the privileged position of a man, and marry a young girl. However, the marriage does not necessarily imply they have sexual relations. The girl will live with her 'husband' and have children 'for' her, and work her farm etc. It must be noted that this practice is not unique to Tanzania, a similar practice happens amongst the Igbos of Nigeria.) The project set out to address multiple forms of abuse in Mara Region. A preliminary survey in Tanzania conducted both in and around Tanzania's economic and cultural capital, Dar es Salaam, and other coastal regions in 2007 revealed varying levels of child marriage. This survey was followed by an in-depth research on child marriage in Tarime district in Mara Region in

2008. The study used Participatory Ethnographic Evaluation Research (PEER) methodology, which adopts an anthropological approach based on using relationships of trust as critical to researching sensitive issues. The approach has a well-established track record of generating rich, narrative data on the social contexts in which people make decisions and negotiate behaviours. viii Given the project's aim of empowering girls and young women to speak out about their issues, PEER was chosen as it tends to have a transformational effect on participants. It enables peer researchers, who often become central to the programme's implementation, to develop self-confidence, critical thinking skills, and relationships with others who are also affected by similar issues. Research findings indicated that girls and young women had poor knowledge of their rights and entitlements, and a majority had experienced multiple forms of violence. The finding concurred with the prevailing notion that child marriage, sexual violence, early pregnancy, FGM and domestic violence were endemic violations in Mara region which severely affected girls and women. This influenced the choice of Mara Region as the project intervention site and the project approach which targeted affected girls.

The project was jointly executed by FORWARD, a UK based African women led organisation, and two Tanzania partners - CDF, a child rights organisation and UMATI which specialises in sexual and reproductive health and rights. The three year project from 2010-2014 was funded by Comic Relief UK and Sigrid Rausing Trust. The project focused on addressing multiple forms of violence that girls and young women face in rural communities with the rationale that they all stem from deeply held social norms underpinned by gender inequality and patriarchal structures, including the co-existence of customary and civil laws.

The overall aim of the project was to advance the realisation of the rights of vulnerable girls in rural communities in Tanzania, specifically their rights to education, freedom from violence, sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and access to economic opportunities. The core project outcomes were to protect girls through creating safe spaces for leadership development, providing supportive environments and strengthening the capacity of the local partners to deliver effective programmes and become more sustainable.

Individual girls and young women affected by child marriage, FGM, child motherhood and those at risk due to age and location were the primary targets.

NOW GIRLS KNOW THEIR RIGHTS

Strategies adopted included peer to peer support, leadership development and access to livelihood opportunities through income generation training and provision of seed money. At the relationship level, the focus was on ensuring that girls and young women had safe spaces to work together - through the girls' camps and clubs and young women's networks as well as the joint advocacy actions. Societal level action, focused on engaging community gatekeepers on social norms that fuel these practices, provision of support services and working with local and national policy makers to influence an enabling policy environment. Partnerships were established to provide access to safe houses for girls who sought refuge during the FGM season and national advocacy through the establishment of the Tanzania End Child Marriage Network. This targeted those who had direct responsibility for supporting and shaping lives of girls and young women, community leaders, local government officials, local and ward level officials, statutory professionals including police, health and education officials as well as local community organisations. The project adopted a rights based approach by enabling girls to have information, multiple skills, assets and confidence and agency to demand their rights.

PROJECT RESULTS

The project results were captured through on-going monitoring and end of project external evaluation with participatory evaluation with young women and girls. Insights on changes that the project had brought into their lives were shared, in particular, changes in their confidence and ability to engage with others. A strong sense of solidarity built up within the clubs and networks, spanning across clans and villages. A total of 33 clubs for girls aged 13-18 were established in the three districts with over 700 members, providing safe spaces and platforms for members to meet, access information, support each other, share personal experiences and exchange guidance and advice. Four networks for young women aged 15 to 25 were set up to help to coordinate and mentor the activities of the clubs in the districts, forming a supportive system for sharing information, experiences and services.

CHANGE IN CAPABILITY AND CONFIDENCE

The confidence of girls involved in the project increased significantly, enabling them to

demand their rights within their families and from community elders. Girls said they would not hesitate to report abuses to the relevant professionals. Girls reported that their collective voice was used to advocate for change and to mobilise members of their communities, including parents, teachers, traditional leaders and district officers, to take action.

CHANGE IN COMMUNITY ATTITUDES

Girls talked about changing attitudes within the wider community. Club members reported that their views were being listened to and were more respected.

INCREASED PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

A key ethos of the project was to mobilise multiple stakeholders to safeguard rights of girls. This required working in partnerships at all levels of the project. The project inception coincided with new interest by UNFPA to address FGM and child marriage. CDF developed partnerships with UNFPA and its collaborating partners including Tanzania Media Women's Association (TAMWA). Training for journalists was provided which resulted in improved reporting on FGM and child marriage and raising national awareness of the issues. The Tanzania End Child Marriage Network was set up to support learning and strengthen advocacy action within the legal framework on child marriage. To date there are over 35 members of this network including local, national and international organisations working in Tanzania. Religious institutions, particularly Islamic and Christian churches, became strategic partners in the project supporting the project advisory bodies and support services through the Massanga Centre. The project was instrumental in supporting Massanga Centre which served as a safe house for girls running away during the FGM season. At the project peak in 2015, over 600 girls and young women sought refuge from FGM in the Centre.

REDUCTION IN THE PREVALENCE RATES OF FGM

Engagement with respected community members and traditional leaders yielded results and new thinking on the need to advocate the abandonment of harmful traditional practices. In 2014, 30 elders from 13 clans committed to abandoning FGM, nearly double the number in the previous year.



GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT INTERVENTION

The project had a significant impact on FGM prevalence in Tarime, proven by data from Tarime District Council which showed a 59% reduction in the number of girls undergoing FGM in 8 clans. Three clans in the district indicated that they did not practise FGM in the 2014 FGM season. Other indicators of change in the community showed that the number of girls cut during the FGM season had reduced substantially from: 3417 in 2012 to 1402 in 2014. The Police had reported an increase in cases of GBV to the police gender desk and 109 reported cases of girls refusing child marriage in August, 2014. More importantly, there was a decrease in the number of girls reported to have dropped out of school and those from teenage pregnancy from 302 in 2011 to 195 in 2014 (Tarime District Reports, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Now girls know their rights - a quote from the evaluation from girls in Musoma which captures the change that girls have experienced from the project. It has significantly contributed to change in social norms regarding FGM and child marriage and there is now evidence of effective enforcement of laws and protective mechanisms. There is still much to be done in providing targeted support for child mothers, especially those who want to return to education as there are currently limited options for girls.

Most importantly, the partnership model has demonstrated the added value of working together with civil society and with government officials and community leaders; this is the only way to be most effective in mobilizing actions to safeguard the rights of girls and young women.

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Identity formation and identity development through individuality

The effects of masculinity on individuality, identity and health needs call for a comprehensive and holistic approach to come up with viable strategies for handling issues of concern.

Masculinity and its expression have been the basis of the most violent crimes in communities. There is a need for a radical shift in perspective in how males should interact and relate with females in intimate relationships and for the objectification of females to be denounced, thus building appreciation and understanding of human diversity and individuality.

The girl child should be empowered to determine her own destiny. At UNICA, in which girls come together through various programs known as SHE sessions to discuss issues affecting them in a patriarchal society. In most cases, prominent women lead discussions and present ways to reduce gender inequality. Girls are encouraged at grassroots level to engage in community projects and decision making in order to begin to influence gender sensitive decisions. They are also encouraged to take up leadership positions. The notion here is based on the concept: ***“Anything for us without us is not for us”***.

In our area of operation in Hwange District in Zimbabwe, a strong legal framework has been established to deal with issues to do with masculinity such as gender based/domestic violence where perpetrators receive strong and severe punishment for such offenses. This

has deterred would be offenders and provides opportunities for full participation and freedom for both sexes. Together with other policies such as equal employment opportunities, this has led to the emancipation of women. An example is encouragement to women through UNICA programs to actively engage in the process of developing wills in case of death of their husbands so that they may sustain themselves and their children without family interference. Inheritance rights are an active component in reducing male supremacy over women.

However, some women in remote areas where patriarchal norms and traditions are still the order of the day are not aware of their rights and are constantly abused by their husbands. There is need for consciousness raising to change the mentality and ways of thinking in these societies. Through our children and youth centres we encourage equal sharing of roles and duties among girls and boys without segregation.

Conceptualisation of masculinity

Masculinity has been a concept governed by the need for power, authority and domination. This underlying understanding of what constitutes male behaviour has been the root of role allocation and socialisation. Furthermore, the concept of masculinity has been supported and championed by assumptions about the wide divergence in certain behavioural and psychological traits during the development of males and females.

Social constructs of masculinity

The social development of males has been moulded by the need to develop an ego governed by self-defiance and self-contention. At an early age (according to Oakley (1972)), boys and girls undergo a process of gender socialisation. Being a man requires the restriction of emotional expression and the presentation of tough traits. This was evidenced at UNICA through psycho-social support activities in which most boys found it difficult to open up as well as express their sentiments to the facilitators. (Gottman, 2011). This manifests in adulthood in the form of violent and aggressive behaviour in which women are usually on the receiving end.

At UNICA, boys declined to partake in roles that their society ascribes to women such as cooking, dishwashing and even cleaning up after themselves. The African male dominated community has driven this socialisation to a level where it is difficult to separate decision making from being male (Roberts, 2004). Further, masculinity does not only come as a response to social demands but biology also plays a pivotal role. The notion of aggression and an adventurous nature makes working with male children at UNICA an easy task.

Psychological constructs of masculinity

The conventional construct of masculinity presents males as individuals that are very willing to participate in physical risk related behaviours and at times become violent in emotional situations (Courtenay, 2000). Boys that did not show the violent trait were observed as weak and unmanly like in character (Gottman, 2011). Thus, becoming a man in a patriarchal and masculine society comes with various facets of what society believes constitutes manhood. The aspect of becoming a man is psychological in nature and living within that context triggers psychological distress and a high level of discomfort in males.



United Children of Africa (UNICA)

<http://www.ucafrica.com/>

Children in Africa live in a world of unjust inequalities between the world's rich and poor regions, in HIV prevalence, human rights, economic development and access to healthcare. Many young people in Africa and around the world are deeply passionate about tackling these challenges, but often feel unable or unsure about how to make a difference. In 2016 alone, UNICA supported 5,401 children and youth in Zimbabwe through its programs.

UNICA harnesses young people's passion for social change and equips them with the skills, resources, and community support to fight HIV/AIDS among other challenges, to promote equality now and throughout their lives. Combating global challenges into the future requires strong leadership and innovative ideas from young people.

UNICA is a non-political and non-religious NGO governed by a Board of Trustees, made up of highly skilled members of the development community from all over the world. UNICA has built skills, capacities and a network of active supporters, and has gained a solid reputation in its programming.

INTRODUCTION

Levels of Gender Based Violence (GBV) remain very high in South Africa and require urgent attention. For too long the burden of dealing with this societal scourge has been on the shoulders of women. It is important for progressive men to partner with the women's sector in the fight to end GBV in our communities. Furthermore, GBV includes violence against children as well as violence against the LGBTI community.

There are many government agencies responsible for ensuring that GBV is addressed e.g. Police, the Justice System, Correctional Services, Departments of Education, Health and Social Development. As well, community organisations, the private sector, faith-based organisations, universities and all sectors in society have an important role to play in preventing and addressing GBV. GBV, like HIV, requires a multi-sector response to address prevention, care and support for survivors and victims, and rehabilitation for perpetrators. It's a challenge for all.

MEN'S VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The South African Medical Research Council (MRC) study in a representative sample in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu Natal reported:

- 44% of men self-reporting perpetrating domestic violence, 14% in the last year.
- 28% of men self-reporting having raped, 5% in the last year.
- Almost one-third of women reported that they were coerced into their first unwanted sexual encounter.
- High levels of violence against lesbian and bisexual women, especially in black communities.

THE COST OF GBV IN SOUTH AFRICA

A study by KPMG a few years ago indicated huge costs related to GBV cases estimated at between R28bn and R42bn representing 0.9%-1.35% of GDP in 2012/2013. KPMG argued that these figures excluded the costs of pain and suffering, lost tax revenues, hiring and training replacement staff, private health care and volunteers' time.

There is a grave need for a new approach to this challenge. This must prioritise prevention efforts. It requires targeted programmes on harmful gender norms and education on the value of gender equitable relations. Under this approach, states will invest far less than the costs estimated by KPMG, thus making more resources available for investment in other compelling social initiatives.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ENGAGE MEN AND BOYS?

Men are often the missing part in the gender discourse. Harmful notions of masculinity undermine women's, men's and children's health. Changing male gender norms will benefit everyone. Men have their own gendered vulnerabilities and specific health needs. Fostering positive views, relationships and behaviour from an early age is important and can contribute immensely to a positive transformation within society at large.

Today's public health challenges require men to be part of the solution in dealing with challenges such as sexually transmitted infections and HIV, gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health. There are international commitments by governments and agreements that recognise the need to engage men. But, more importantly, it is crucial to engage men because we know it works – the evidence base is growing.

PRINCIPLES FOR WORK WITH MEN AND BOYS

As male involvement is promoted, it is important to undertake this with caution and sensitivity in order to also promote women's and girls' rights. The endeavour must be accountable to and form alliances with women's rights organisations. It is vital that the engagement with men be from a positive and enabling perspective while also taking into account diversities among men, including sexual diversity. The whole approach must be anchored in the Human Rights framework and address gender relations. Finally, the work must be planned and executed on evidence based findings supported by existing UN mandates.

RATIONALE FOR WORKING WITH POLICYMAKERS, EMPLOYERS, TRADITIONAL AND FAITH LEADERS

Recognising that women in leadership are still affected by GBV and are often disempowered in other ways such as usually being outnumbered in key decision-making processes, it is important that women are well represented at all levels.

Generally, current gender roles and relations damage women's lives and restrict their access to fundamental Human Rights. Gender roles and social constructions of masculinity also damage men's lives across a broad range of public health indicators: HIV, violence, road safety, alcohol abuse, suicide etc. Recognition of men's investment in change reduces their potential resistance to gender transformation. Growing numbers of men are embracing change and can be supported to take more proactive steps.

UNDERSTANDING GBV

GBV is a scourge that is prevalent in many families, communities, societies and cultures across the globe. GBV affects mostly women and girls, but it does affect men and boys to a lesser extent. Those affected either experience violence directly and/or have to deal with the consequences of some form of gender based violence in their lifetime.

Research indicates that children who grow up exposed to violence at home tend to be violent themselves in later life. Girls growing up and seeing their mothers abused tend to tolerate abusive partners assuming this is what society expects from them.

INVESTING IN GBV INTERVENTIONS WILL HELP REDUCE HIV TRANSMISSION IN YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS

Investing in progressive GBV interventions will contribute to reduce the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV. Public health, human rights and legal rights bodies recognise that violence, and particularly sexual violence, is life threatening for women and children.

SOME INTERVENTIONS BY SONKE GENDER JUSTICE

Sonke's Community Education and Mobilisation (CEM) unit works closely with men and women from all walks of life and in many different communities across all of South Africa's nine provinces to address gender inequality, gender-based violence, and the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS. The CEM team implements a number of national campaigns intended to mobilise communities to take action to promote gender equality and deepen democracy.

About 50 **COMMUNITY ACTION TEAMS (CATS)** have been established which respond to urgent gender justice issues in all nine provinces. The CAT model is growing and every year more South Africans are being trained to become "gender activists" and CAT members. CATs bring people together regularly to learn and to resolve community problems linked to them.

COURT MONITORING

Cases of gender-based violence and discrimination are often referred to Sonke by community members. Sonke engages with the concerned community members, local stakeholders, the criminal justice system and the families of victims to ensure that justice is served swiftly and without any undue delays. This includes:

- Monitoring court proceedings.
- Creating community activism and awareness.
- Educating the community and the officials tasked with delivering services (courts, police officials and health institutions) about their responsibilities and duties set out in policy documents, legislation and regulations.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND DANGEROUS WEAPONS

While women make up just 10% of gun homicide victims in South Africa, firearms still play a significant role in violence, used to kill, rape, threaten and intimidate. Research into intimate partner violence in South Africa shows that women are most vulnerable to being shot in the home.

The message of this campaign is very simple: ***know the law, use the law, save a life.***

Research shows that legal gun ownership significantly increases the risk of intimate femicide-suicide (the killing of a female by her intimate partner followed by the suicide of the perpetrator within a week of the homicide). A significant proportion of perpetrators are employed in the police, army or private security industry, reflecting easier access to guns in these professions. As well, guns are often used in rapes according to Adele Kirsten, Director of Advocacy and Lobbying at Gun Free South Africa.

Women's Comfort Corner Foundation joined the rest of the world in commemorating 16 days of Activism against Gender Based Violence (GBV). Its specific objectives are to:

- Provide a forum for stakeholders working on GBV issues to dialogue and share new effective strategies to address GBV;
- Raise awareness on national response programmes to address GBV;
- Strengthen local work around service provision for GBV survivors; and
- Demonstrate solidarity with survivors of GBV.

The theme in 2016 was ***"From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World: Let us unite to end Gender Based Violence"***. This came at an opportune time when Zimbabwe launched the HE-For-SHE campaign on 28 October 2016. The HE-For She campaign is a solidarity movement to engage men and boys as advocates and agents of change for the achievement of gender equality and women's rights.

This was signed and launched by the Vice President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Honourable V.P. Mphoko, and is tangible evidence that men of Zimbabwe have committed themselves to fight GBV. The fight against Gender Based Violence and the evil, malicious and retrogressive practices of child marriage cannot bear the desired fruits if men and boys are left out of the national effort to achieve a gender-just society. Statistics in Zimbabwe indicate that in 99% of GBV cases, men and boys are perpetrators.

Men and boys must enter into a transformative mode where they shift their attitudes towards women and girls. Men must be champions of gender equality and act to the letter and spirit of our Constitution that obligates us to be equal partners in development.

Women's Comfort Corner Foundation is geared towards ending all forms of Gender Based Violence namely: Domestic Violence, Human Trafficking, Sexual Violence and Rape, Violence in public spaces and Child marriages.

These have serious consequences, including: Psychological, moral and spiritual trauma; Physical disability and or death; Increased divorce rates; Increased risk of HIV infection.

As we launched the 2016 - 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence, there was great concern with the rising cases and consequences of child marriages.

- According to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in 2016 alone, over **4500 minors (3955 girls and 264 boys)** dropped out of primary and secondary school due to child marriages country-wide.
- This scourge poses a serious developmental challenge with complex implications on maternal mortality and for girls and young women who experience obstetric fistula, morbidity, infant mortality, intergenerational poverty, divorces.
- Child marriage also affects girls' education. Child brides usually drop out of school and are denied the opportunity to complete their education, thus significantly reducing their ability to earn an income and lift their children out of poverty. Educated girls are more likely to understand and stand up for their rights and to enjoy a more fulfilling life.

Efforts must be intensified to eradicate Gender Based Violence, particularly child marriages, if the nation is to reap the demographic dividend that comes out of the increased contribution of the girl child.

- The Government of Zimbabwe, remains committed to ending GBV in the country.
- The Ministry of Women's Affairs has developed a National Action Plan to end child marriage in Zimbabwe.
- The Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs and the Attorney General's Office is working on legislation to provide for mandatory sentencing for rape and sexual abuse and the criminalisation of child marriages.
- The Inter-Ministerial Cabinet Committee on Rape and Sexual Abuse (that includes my Ministry, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare and Ministry of Health and Child Care) developed an action plan on ending rape and sexual abuse and carried out awareness campaign to end GBV.
- The Ministry of Women's Affairs is working with civil society to raise awareness on the importance of creating safe public spaces.
- The enactment of the Domestic Violence Act of 2007. The Act defines domestic violence broadly enough to cover most instances of gender based violence and criminalises the acts of domestic violence. The Act also provides for various forms of relief for survivors of domestic violence including protection from potential violence.
- The Ministry of Women's Affairs developed a National Gender Based Violence Strategy and a National Programme on GBV Prevention and Response (2016-2020) based on four pillars of GBV programming, namely, prevention, service provision, coordination, research and documentation.
- Provision of shelters for the survivors of gender based violence through the Ministry's three one-stop centres in Gweru, Gwanda and Rusape is being intensified and efforts are underway to establish one-stop centres in each of the remaining 7 provinces.
- The establishment of Victim Friendly Courts, designed to protect vulnerable witnesses.
- The Ministry of Women's Affairs launched the African Union campaign on ending child marriages.
- Continuously engage traditional and religious leaders to change attitudes and norms that perpetuate GBV and child marriages.

Women's Comfort Corner Foundation has rolled out the On-Line Training program which provides the opportunity for interested professionals, school teachers and school children to expand their knowledge of cutting edge developments in the **criminal justice and community response to sexual abuse**, with particular emphasis on those crimes committed against an adolescent by someone who is **known to the victim** (i.e. a non-stranger).

The On-Line Training Institute is primarily focused on the techniques for successful law enforcement investigation of non-stranger sexual assault. Training modules also address a broader range of content that is relevant to the criminal justice and coordinated community response to sexual assault. Throughout the training modules, we have incorporated recommendations for cases that are seen by many professionals as particularly challenging, including those involving victims with disabilities. This program will make a difference in the lives of children. The program is simple in design, powerful in results and profound in its impact.

Advocacy opportunities in the political arena Gender based violence against women is patriarchy's single biggest and most potent weapon and threat to gender equality. It alone can thwart women's aspirations to full personhood by terrorising them into cowering in inferior positions and situations. Politics on the other hand offers an unparalleled opportunity to dismantle the architecture of terror against women, and free them to exploit their full potential in society without fear.

Opportunities in the Political Arena My experience as a feminist legislator in Zimbabwe's Parliament is testimony to the strategic importance of populating the political and governance space with women for prosecuting feminist struggles, including that of protecting women from violence. My entry into the parliamentary arena was a conscious strategy to reform the law and policy for the equality of women. As a lawyer, woman and feminist it was acutely apparent that Zimbabwean law starting with the Constitution, needed to be changed to accord women full and equal citizenship with men. I noted how influential the male lawyers were in Parliament across the political divide and that women lawyers were absent thereby evincing opportunity for impact for feminist causes, by women lawyers. I ran for office and became the first woman lawyer in Zimbabwe to be elected to Parliament and the only woman lawyer two terms on. I feel therefore a heavy onus to prosecute the struggle for women's equality in the parliamentary arena.

Strategy in Politics I have decided therefore to wield the power of elected office that I have, for critical distinctively feminist causes. I am privileged to having been instrumental to the feminist constitutional reforms of 2013. The high prevalence of gender based violence in Zimbabwe accompanied by a poor official/formal regulatory response in investigations, apprehension, prosecution and sentencing of offenders disturbed me.

Feminist Impact in Politics I therefore decided, and succeeded to complement the largely disused Domestic Violence Act 2007 that even criminalises child marriages, and the ground breaking constitutional right to freedom from gender based violence.

I moved a motion in Parliament for mandatory stiff sentences for rape (40 years in jail) and all gender based violence; DNA and well equipped investigations for gender based violence and the funding and implementation of the National Gender Based Strategy of 2012-2015. The Ministers of Justice and Women Affairs agreed with my motion, as well as MPs from across the political divide. I drafted and handed to the Acting President Mnangagwa an amendment Bill to remove child marriage from our statute books so it accords with the Constitution's ban on child marriages. He supported most of the bill's proposals and undertook to incorporate them in his draft. I have also put related questions to the minister.

New Frontier All this has not come without victimisation and vilification but the gains make it all worthwhile. My experience is argument and with an eloquent campaign for the equal entry of feminist women into politics, we can make a difference. That is the next frontier after suffrage.



ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Tertiary: Master of Laws [LLM]-UNISA, Masters in Women's Law [MSWL]-UZ, Bachelor of Laws (Honours)[LLBS]- UZ, Post Graduate Diploma in Women's Law [DipWL]

PARLIAMENTARY CAREER (2013 to present)

Elected member of the National Assembly for Harare West Constituency (2008 - The first woman lawyer elected to Parliament)
Chairperson of the Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committee

Member of the Parliamentary Legal Committee

Founder and Chairperson of the Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) Zimbabwe Group

Member of the Local Government, Public and National Housing

Member of the PGA International Council

Founder and Secretary of the Catholic Legislators Network Zimbabwe

CAREER IN GENERAL

2004 to date: Founder and Principal at Jessie Majome & Co Legal Practitioners

2005-2011: Consultant to UNIFEM Sudan's gender justice in post-conflict reconstruction programme

During the 1990s: Programme Officer for Zimbabwe Women Lawyer's Association; Legal Officer for Zimbabwe Human Rights Association; Project Lawyer for Bulawayo Legal Projects Centre

POLITICAL CAREER

2006-2007: Member of National Executive Committee of MDC and Deputy Secretary for legal & Parliamentary Affairs

2000-2007: Vice Chairperson for Harare North District MDC Party; Councillor for Ward 1 Hwange; Chairperson of Hwange Local Board; National Spokesperson of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA); youngest female Commissioner in NCA.

WOMEN'S ORGANISATION CORNER

SELF HELP GROUPS IN MATETSI, TSHANGE, NEKABANDAMA AND NEKABANDE RURAL WARDS NEAR VICTORIA FALLS, ZIMBABWE, IMPLEMENTED BY NTENGWE FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Ntengwe for Community Development (Ntengwe) is a not for profit organization with over 20 years of experience responding to the needs of vulnerable communities and the environment. *Ntengwe* works for today's communities for a better tomorrow, focusing on development in the best interest of women, girls and children, in accordance with the National Gender Policy, International Treaties and with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *Ntengwe* supports the rights-based approach to development in all programs. The four pillars of service within the organization include **Rights, Health, Livelihoods and Environment**. **Health** initiatives support HIV and disability projects, ensuring that women are driving the processes that lead to change in support of disabled children in their communities. In this way, the capacities of women are strengthened and they are able to work towards

social justice and their own livelihoods with dignity.

Rights-based programs support human rights and development, addressing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and at the broadest level, *Ntengwe* believes that all programs contribute to the realization of human rights. *Ntengwe* supports a specific range of human rights activities such as Gender Rights, Property and Inheritance Rights, Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights, Economic Rights, Children's Rights, just to mention a few, focusing on ensuring an equitable distribution of power and resources within society as well as facilitating public participation in decision-making processes.

Livelihoods and food security activities assist over 1500 households, which translates to about 10,000 people, of which most are women and children. *Ntengwe* works towards creating an enabling environment, which supports the needs and aspirations of the people. The organization puts emphasis on building capabilities, developing multiple assets, developing value chains and engaging with all stakeholders to promote secure and resilient livelihood opportunities to the marginalized population, especially women. This is done through capacity building, fostering community links and promoting small businesses. *Ntengwe* puts special focus on entrepreneurial ventures, which are owned by women, through its livelihood programs promoting the Self Help Group approach.

Environment programs enable communities to



SELF HELP GROUPS IMPLEMENTED BY NTENGWE FOR

protect and manage wildlife habitat and create efficient built environments. The focus is on awareness of climate change as the greatest emerging threat to biodiversity – and the need to aggressively mitigate it without unnecessarily sacrificing wildlife and biodiversity habitat. To increase the resilience of vulnerable communities, high priority is given to grassroots women's groups by helping small-scale farmers adopt agricultural practices that buffer them from the harmful effects of climate change. For example, crop cycles are adjusted to changing weather patterns so that enough food is grown to feed their families even when the rains come late; crop diversification is implemented and drought resistant crops are planted. And through a 4-way initiative, *Ntengwe* has helped families avoid the crushing losses droughts can have on farmers by empowering them with a set of integrated risk management tools and strategies, namely improved resource management (risk reduction), insurance (risk transfer), microcredit (prudent risk taking), and increased savings (risk reserves).

Poverty and unemployment are among the major problems of developing countries. In Zimbabwe, according to the Human Development Report (2015), 28.6% of the population are living below the national poverty line and 80.4% are living on less than the original UN Development Goal of \$2 a day, while the Employment and Unemployment Survey Report (2013-2015) estimated overall unemployment at 85%. The situation in the rural areas, near Victoria Falls, a major tourist destination, is not just a development issue- it is also a gender issue, the feminization of poverty. The problem of violence against women and girls is exacerbated by widespread cultural norms that allow husbands to 'correct' their wives as long as such actions do not result in grievous harm. Cultural and social attitudes lie at the core of many barriers to women's economic empowerment by creating expectations around the 'natural' spheres of work for men and women and fostering gender discrimination. Stereotypes of men as the principal breadwinners, for example, often limit women's choices, such as to enter the workforce or to choose vocations that are typically pursued by men, thus increasing poverty among women and leaving them more vulnerable. Physical, emotional and sexual abuse of women, girls and children is a major problem, with severe negative outcomes for survivors. To date, no known studies have used data directly obtained from community-based samples of women, girls and children to investigate prevalence, incidence, locations and perpetrators of abuse. However, during the roll-

out of the property and inheritance rights project in 2013, *Ntengwe* gathered data on gender based violence. The results showed that between 80-90% of women and girls experience economical violation, 56.3% for lifetime experience physical, sexual and emotional abuse, 35.5% for lifetime emotional abuse and 9% for lifetime sexual abuse. 68.9% of women, girls and children reported any type of lifetime victimization and 27.1% reported lifetime multiple abuse victimization. Main perpetrators of abuse were reported: for physical abuse, these are primary caregivers and teachers; for emotional abuse, primary caregivers and relatives; for sexual abuse, girlfriend/boyfriends or other peers. Survivors are, however, reluctant to report gender based violence, due to cultural values and stigma.

Child marriage is very common in this harsh economic environment. Despite being prohibited by international law, it continues to rob thousands of girls under 18 of their childhood. Early marriage denies girls their right to make vital decisions about their sexual health and well-being. It forces them out of education and into a life of poor prospects, with increased risk of violence, abuse, ill health or early death.

In this context, *Ntengwe* introduced the Self-Help Group approach to rural women near Victoria Falls to develop opportunities, such as self-organization and the generation of community based income generating activities. This approach has emerged as a popular strategy for the facilitation of micro-enterprise development by *Ntengwe* for Community Development in the rural areas, and key for development as an expressions of rural women's needs and interest in their own participation and empowerment. The self-help strategy for economic and social development emphasizes self-reliance and promotes the enjoyment of human rights. It does this by first focusing on the poorest women and their children and then broadening the focus to entire families and communities. It is a bottom-up approach which builds on women's existing capabilities and strengths. It is an empowerment approach which prioritizes the building and strengthening of a people's Institution. It does this by investing in social capital and human capabilities to enable women to participate in economic and social decision-making processes at household level, community and macro level and to lift themselves out of poverty.

Since 2014 *Ntengwe* has established over 70 women self-help groups with 963 women members in rural areas in the region of Victoria Falls, which is the first level of a people's institution; they collectively



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

save agreed amounts of money and give loans to members to improve their economic situation. The Self-Help Group approach is not a micro-credit program controlled by a bank but uses savings by all group members. Savings and other incomes such as interest payments are kept within the Self-Help Group. The key principals are mutual trust, accountability, weekly participation and creativity. A group of up to 15-20 members meet on a weekly basis to save regularly and to take loans to start their own small businesses. They take decisions, decide common rules and monitor to see that those rules are followed. Apart from the economic aspect, the Self-Help Group approach also provides a social dimension which builds affinity, trust, participation and mutual responsibility. There is a special focus on both individual and community level problem solving; problems within private lives within their community are discussed and solutions developed in their meetings.

The entire process of the self-help movement has centred on people and their environments of imbalance in social, economic and political power. It is based on a humanist model of development – focused on men and women, and not just on the growth of materials. It has addressed the problem of rural poverty by building capacities through training rural women to plan, drive and sustain their own social and economic development. The chief virtues claimed for alternative development are those of ‘human rights’ and ‘human flourishing’ and, along with the economic efficiency of financial assistance going directly to the people, specific aims include building project activity upon intensive face-to-face interaction among stakeholders such as government departments, to support the Self-Help Group approach and to promote environmentally-friendly and sustainable development. This approach is based on trans-active planning, meaning orientation towards mutual learning between community leaders and local actors such as government departments and traditional leaders. This approach has led to self-governance directed at the promotion of individual and collective well-being of the community. For example, the Self-Help groups have now, after four years, moved to the second level, which is the Cluster Level Association (CLA) where 10 Self Help Groups make up one Cluster Level Association. Thus far, *Ntengwe* has established 4 CLAs. Each of these has clearly defined features with its own objectives and activities to address community needs. Women from the CLAs have built roads, supported schools with textbooks, built pre-schools for their children, organized environmental clean-up campaigns, tree

planting events, negotiated policy implementation and resilience toward climate change with government departments and key stakeholders, and addressed social problems such as gender-based violence. Through this process the women from the CLAs have created awareness and motivation toward behavioural change of individuals and communities, both in the relations between individuals as well as those between groups within the society. To date these women groups have managed to raise funds independently from well-wishers to support community initiatives; they discuss social issues and play an important role in awareness-raising in the community on social issues such as domestic violence, for example through street plays and debates. Through these efforts cases of domestic violence in the communities were reduced, and the perpetrators were brought to justice through formal and informal justice systems at the community level. In 2017 the Self-Help Group approach will move to the third level where 10 Cluster Level Associations will be formed into one Federation. The strength in numbers that the Federation will represent will make it possible to advocate for and influence policy change such as trade policies that affect the entrepreneurial development of group and community members. The Federation will be able to address injustice, create peace and stability in the community, bring greater force against violations of human rights and address poor quality services by government structures.

While *Ntengwe* for Community Development looks ahead through 2017, the role of the Self-Help Group approach suggests that it is a sustainable strategy for alternative development to fulfill the economic and social needs of a community organized by the people themselves. The approach shows that it is functioning well in organizing poor women into self-serviced economic forums. The formation of the Self-Help group approach has created opportunities for the poor beyond their wildest dreams to participate in various income earning activities and it has provided a platform for social justice.



A weekly Self-Help Group meeting



International Women's NEWS NOUVELLES Feministes Internationales

In publication since 1906

Journal of the International Alliance of Women

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S NEWS is an open Forum for information and opinion on matters of importance to women. It is published three times a year by the International Alliance of Women. Items for publication in English should be sent to the Editor: **Priscilla Todd**, email: iawiwn@womenalliance.org

Individual membership of IAW includes an annual subscription to International Women's News. Please send with your name and address: year of membership 20,-€ to

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