



REPUBLIC OF KENYA
MINISTRY OF GENDER, CULTURE, THE ARTS AND HERITAGE
STATE DEPARTMENT FOR GENDER AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

CALL FOR INPUTS-SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Gender based violence is an umbrella term for any harmful act perpetrated against a person because of their gender. Most victims of gender-based violence are women and girls, although men and boys are also victims. The United Nation Office of the High commissioner for Human Rights defines it as *'a violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately.'*

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a pervasive global issue that affects individuals regardless of their age, background, race or gender. While GBV primarily victimizes women and girls, it is not an issue that solely pertains to one gender; it is a societal problem that demands a comprehensive and inclusive response. Acknowledging the multifaceted nature of GBV and the role of both men and women in its perpetuation and prevention is essential to creating a safer and more equitable world.

Forms of GBV in Kenya

The summary below presents examples of different forms of violence and their description.

- **Sexual Violence**-which includes, sexual assault, rape, attempted rape, defilement, incest and indecent act.
- **Physical Violence**-this involves attacking and harming the body which includes, assault, battering, killing and maiming.
- **Economic violence/abuse**-These is a form of violence related to income, support, employment and means of livelihood. Mostly it involves deprivation of basic needs, financial resources that one is entitled.

- It encompasses luring/enticement for sexual favour, dispossession, servitude, vandalism, neglect, denial of resources etc.
- **Emotional/Psychological violence**-These involves causing disturbances to ones minds and feelings which includes stalking, sexual harassment and confinement, intimidation and name calling.
- **Harmful traditional Practices**- These are rooted to traditions and customs ,it constitutes to a breach of fundamental right to life liberty, dignity. It includes FGM, Child marriage, Forced marriage, infanticide, wife inheritance, sacrification and honour killing
- **Technology-facilitated gender-based violence**- is any act that is committed or amplified using digital tools or technologies causing physical, sexual, psychological, social, political, or economic harm to women and girls because of their gender.

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence takes many forms, including sextortion (blackmail by threatening to publish sexual information, photos or videos); image-based abuse (sharing intimate photos without consent); publishing private personal information and cyberbullying.

All this compromises the victim's privacy and poses a threat to their safety.

Contributing/causes Factors to GBV

GBV often results from power hierarchies and structural inequalities created and sustained by belief systems, cultural norms, and socialization processes. However, there are factors that increases exposure to GBV. The outlined factors below cover contexts that directly or indirectly leads to GBV

- **Power relations;** the low status assigned to females and acceptance of aggression as a masculinity trait creates tolerance for acts such as spousal battering ,marital rape and denial of factors of production
- **Cultural, social, religious and legal norms;** Many forms of GBV are condoned under the excuse of culture e.g early and arranged marriages, FGM, killing of witches ,giving out sexually abused girls as free wives and scarification of children to appease gods .Inability to access legal justice

due to economic constraints, complicated procedures or hostility of the reporting system hence encouraging impunity

- **Age and Disability, Children;** the elderly and people with disabilities are relatively more vulnerable due to their physical situation, compromised mobility, dependency and limited ability to protect themselves.
- **Drugs and substance abuse;** consumption of narcotics is associated with an increased incidence of violence.
- **Impunity;** impunity (freedom from punishment or consequences) for perpetrators of violence.
- **Disasters, conflict and displacement;** Humanitarian situations, insecurity and conflict create a fertile environment for GBV. Conflict and a breakdown in law and order can result in the deterioration of safety and security increasing a conducive environment for violence, especially GBV.

Consequences of Gender Based Violence

GBV has serious far reaching consequences. GBV survivors are at high risk of severe and long lasting health problems and even loss of life. At the societal level, GBV can lead to social stigma, rejection, break up of families, homelessness, dispossession and destitution. Apart from GBV survivors' human rights being violated, they have to direct their resources towards medical, legal and psychological services. Family members of GBV survivors spend disproportionate time and resources securing relief for GBV survivors. At the National level, GBV affects Kenyan economy, as working hours are lost and financial resources are directed toward mitigating the cost of GBV.

Sexual and reproductive health consequences

GBV has grave sexual and reproductive health consequences. It includes the following;

- Unplanned pregnancies in children
- Induced and dangerous abortions
- Sexually Transmitted Infections including HIV

- Barrenness due to disease and injury
- Sexual dysfunction
- Injury to reproductive organs leading to lifelong multifunctional
- Early pregnancy
- Destabilization of menstrual cycle
- Depression
- Suicidal tendencies

Physical consequences

- Injury
- Bleeding
- Disability
- Permanent disfigurement
- Death
- Stunted physical growth (for children)
- Fistula

Economic consequences

The following are some of the economic consequences of GBV;

- Reduced economic opportunities and productivity due to illness, impairment, depression, etc
- Increased burden due to medical costs, unwanted children, abortions etc
- Diversion of resources for treatment and care
- Extra burden, especially for women, who bear the burden of care for family members with HIV/AIDS and very often assume the responsibility of children orphaned by AIDS.
- Severe strain on health services as they struggles to cope with illnesses resulting from violence and its consequences (e.g HIV/AIDS), which are essentially preventable.
- Reduced investments as savings are diverted to medical treatment
- Diversion of labour to care for the sick, hence a loss in productivity that leads to reduced food security and standards of living.

Emotional/psychological consequences

The following are examples of emotional consequences

- Fear, timidity, shame, and self-hate
- Trauma, depression, introversion, and suicidal tendencies
- Loss of self- esteem and confidence
- Teasing and humiliation by peers
- Internalization , tolerance, and acceptance of future violence
- Inability to trust others, especially in cases of intimate partner violence
- Emotional detachment
- Sleep disturbances
- Post-traumatic stress disorder

Social and cultural consequences

Examples of social and cultural consequences is highlighted below

- Alienation and rejection
- Loss of respect and dignity among peers , family and community
- Rejection, stigmatization and neglect of children resulting from rape or incest
- Identity crisis for children born out of sexual violation
- Emergence of new family set-ups e.g street families
- Child marriage in a bid to reclaim family's honour
- Loss of children right to education as a result of early marriage
- Exclusion of victims from important communal events such as burial rites
- Poor performance and increased dropping out of school
- Slow rate of development due to withdrawal syndrome and limited interaction with peers
- Development of deviant and criminal tendencies
- Stigma and discrimination for life
- Repeat violation due to perceived vulnerability
- Breakdown in heterosexual relationships, including marriage
- Restricted access to services
- Strained relationship

Consequences of gender-based violence in politics and leadership

Many women attain political standing due to kinship ties, as they have male family members who are involved in politics. These women tend to be from higher income, higher status families and thus may not be as focused on the issues faced by lower income families. When this approach is perpetuated women's rights to participation in political arena are violated and continue to be treated as minors and weak leaders.

- Restricted ambitions
- Loss of respect among peers
- Loss of good leaders
- Perpetuation of gender discrimination and gender stereotypes