



The Sentinel

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The official newsletter of the Human & Social Development and Special Programmes of the SADC Parliamentary Forum.

SADC MPs confront Gender Based Violence





Message from the Secretary General

Dr Esau Chiviya

Welcome to yet another issue of *The Sentinel*, the newsletter of the Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) programme, which falls under the Human and Social Development and Special Programmes of the SADC Parliamentary Forum.

Gender Based Violence (GBV) is a serious challenge. Unless it is eradicated, universal access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), HIV and AIDS services and related products will remain pipe dreams; big pies in the sky. Additionally, many countries will not benefit from the demographic dividend that the world's young people present unless GBV is wiped off the face of the earth.

At SADC PF we are under no illusion that eradicating GBV is easy. However, we are firmly convinced that all steps – however small – are necessary to complete a journey. As is now common cause, we work with and through National Parliaments to address challenges that the SADC Region faces.

As I have said elsewhere, the SADC PF has begun mainstreaming gender-based violence (GBV) in its work to ensure that the region's Members of Parliament fully appreciate the problem and how it can be addressed. Indeed, we ensure that there is a presentation on GBV at every meeting or workshop that we hold with MPs so that we build their knowledge of the problem. These presentations expose MPs to the current and emerging GBV-related issues so that they find an entry point. Our belief is that like snipers, MPs can only shoot down a clearly identified target.

To enable our MPs to better appreciate GBV, from the 7th to the 8th of September, 2016, we convened a regional symposium to throw light on the links between GBV, SRHR, HIV and AIDS. Experts working on GBV and SRHR were on hand to build the knowledge base of our MPs and to build their capacity to respond to GBV.

That symposium reviewed the evidence on the link between GBV and SRHR, highlighted issues and gaps in the development and implementation of related laws, examined strategies for action against GBV by MPs, and made recommendations on how MPs could actively combat GBV.

Experts addressed our MPs on many issues, including the underlying causes of GBV and its impact on SRHR; GBV in prisons; the trafficking of persons; the economic impact of GBV; available legal structures; and how men and boys can become change agents in the fight against GBV.

MPs play critical roles of representation, advocacy, lawmaking and the passing of national budgets. To the extent possible, we bring MPs face to face with people who experience some of the problems that the region's MPs are addressing. At the GBV, SRHR, HIV and AIDS symposium in Botswana, we invited three survivors of GBV to share their experiences with the MPs. Some of the MPs had never met survivors of GBV, and so they found what they heard quite harrowing. We think this was a wake-up call.

We will continue to connect MPs with organisations that can provide the latest counterfactual evidence. There is need to regard women's rights as human rights. We are committed to helping MPs to play active roles and collaborate with like-minded non-state actors at grassroots level, and to share best practices. SADC PF is providing a platform for the region's lawmakers, regardless of gender or political persuasion, to address common challenges.

We are grateful to mainstream media which covered that symposium. This edition of *The Sentinel* provides more coverage. Enjoy reading!

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The Sentinel

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Judge says Gender Based Violence violates the Constitution

OUTSPOKEN: Judge Professor Key Dingake (PhD).

By Moses Magadza

Gaborone - Although most, if not all constitutions entrench the right to dignity and security of a person, gender based violence (GBV) remains a major transgression, Professor Key Dingake (PhD), a prominent Judge, has said.

Professor Dingake, who is a judge of the High Court of Botswana, was addressing Members of Parliament attending a symposium on addressing the links between Gender Based Violence and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the SADC Region in Gaborone, Botswana.

Gender based violence undermines the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims, mainly women and girls and is often fanned by gender inequalities and stereotypes, which Dingake said, no self-respecting constitutional democracy should accommodate or permit with impunity.

“Gender based violence and inequality are the worst forms of human rights violations, increasingly cited as an important determinant of women’s HIV risk,” said Judge Dingake.

He added: “In this era, no one can dispute the fact that violence hinders the fulfilment of women’s and girls’ human rights, lowers their status in society, and can even cost them their lives.”

Despite numerous developments, violence against women remains endemic within families, other intimate relationships, workplaces, educational institutions and public spaces, with women and girls suffering most. Victims

of gender based violence suffer from physical and emotional violence, financial and economic deprivation, unwanted sexual comments or advances, among some forms of the trauma.

“Men and boys are also targets of gender-based violence. The truth of the matter, however, is that violence continues to be borne, disproportionately, by women and girls,” Judge Dingake said.

The lack of accountability for violations experienced by women is the rule rather than the exception in many countries, mainly because States have not yet fully accepted gender-based violence as a human rights issue. Inadequate State responses; insufficient effort to tackle the problem in a systematic, comprehensive and sustained manner; minimum time and resources devoted to violence against women; inadequate attention devoted to the investigation of patterns, causes and consequences of violence and low levels of prosecutions and convictions in cases of gender-based violence are also some of the sticky issues which urgently need to be addressed in many countries across the region.

“While most issues that affect women and girls are provided for in our legal and policy frameworks, enormous challenges hinder effective implementation of same. Weak implementation of existing laws has been attributed to poor dissemination of the laws by the duty bearers, low capacity to implement, limited resources and general lack of good will and commitment. MPs therefore have a duty to nations as they are the leaders in human rights issues on the continent.”

Gender inequality on its own is said to cost Af-

rica \$95 billion a year according to some UN reports and this makes it imperative that every country must take stock of its mechanisms and systems for prevention and responses. Concrete steps, which include the domestication and implementation of international conventions such as CEDAW as well as the institutionalisation of systems and measures to provide quality services that consider women’s needs and interests, should be urgently adopted across the region.

“International Human Rights Laws, particularly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), provide protection against sexual and gender-based violence. As Members of Parliament in your countries, you have it within your power to act and legislate in a manner that will ensure that the health and wellbeing of our men, women and children are guaranteed and protected through these laws”.

Multi-sectoral collaborations are needed across the region to combat violence against women because of the broad and multi-faceted nature of the problem. It encompasses physical and emotional violence, financial and economic deprivation, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting.

Judge Dingake appealed to the delegates to lobby with governments in the region towards the development of holistic interventions that are context-specific aimed at securing the wellbeing of all people.

“Taking appropriate and time-bound resolutions at this conference will communicate the clear message to our people in the region that it is not business as usual. Ultimately we should agree on strategies that we can adopt or adapt and implement as we strive towards a society that is free of gender based violence,” Judge Dingake said.

Call to engage men as change agents in eradicating GBV

Staff Writer

Gaborone - Advancing and implementing strategies which promote positive masculinities is instrumental in combating Gender Based Violence (GBV) in both private and public spheres, it has been said.

Addressing Members of Parliament during a SADC PF Roundtable on addressing the links between GBV and SRHR in the SADC Region, Itumeleng Komanyane, the International Programmes Manager at Sonke Gender Justice, said changing male gender norms and perception of masculinity would be the winning card in the fight against GBV.

Komanyane indicated that GBV prevention and mitigation initiatives must not forget that it is mainly because of deeply entrenched social and cultural dynamics such as the notion of masculinity, that lead to discriminatory and often behaviors against women. Social constructs of masculinity award privileges of power and dominance of men over women, and this in turn is translated to use of violence to assert power.

“The dominant form of masculinity in a society is what is often used to define the “ideal man”. Sadly, this negative perception of masculinity is enforced and condoned by culture and religion and often results in men’s justification of gender based violence as acceptable,” said Komanyane. Negative male dominance often plays out in gender-related attitudes such as negative attitudes towards women, physical violence toward female partners, limited participation in care work or care giving of children, decreased condom use and also increased number of sexual partners. Male dominance is also evident in leadership, whereby women representation in key decision making processes remains worryingly low.

In some instances, institutions such as the church accept the legal equality of women but continue to assert male dominance as the only true biblical perspective.

For many years women have been alone in the fight against GBV mainly because society still harbours a lot of men who are defensive of this notion of masculinity. They therefore do not welcome suggestion to changes in gender relations and often reassert their traditional power over women. This traditional power not only restricts women’s access to fundamental health

rights, but also damages men’s lives across a broad range of public health indicators such as HIV. As a result, men are starting Ante Retroviral Treatment (ART) with more advanced HIV disease, while more men than women are likely to interrupt HIV treatment.

Komanyane therefore pointed out that men are the missing essential part to the gender equation, critical to facilitating positive social change and re-examining the traditional interpretations of what it means to be a man in society.

“Fostering positive views, relationships and behaviour among men from an early age is important to GBV prevention and critical to intervene in other public health challenges. This is will help men to understand and embrace the importance of mutual decisions around sexual and reproductive health issues.”

Thankfully, these ideas about masculinity are not fixed, but constantly changing, according to social contexts. Through fostering laws and policies which are inclusive, non-discriminatory and which enable the full involvement of men and women, MPs can facilitate the capacity of communities to willingly accept positive masculinities as a way of combating violence. This would allow for the social deconstruction of masculinity and accommodating the diversities among men to care and to be non-violent.

Systems, structures and policies can therefore be implemented through MPs to support the changing expectations of what it means to be a man in our society.

The existence of commitments and agreements such as the Human Rights Charter and the African Charter to lobby on a way forward to engage men is a starting basis for this action as almost all the countries in the region are signatories to these. These important human rights treaties indicate the importance of extending equal opportunities, rights and conditions to all people. These treaties also amplify standards of basic human rights, which encompass individual’s rights to enjoying satisfying sexual lives, free from undue coercion, violence or discrimination.

Other ways to engage men is to support communities to embrace positive masculinity trends, including rethinking men’s roles in the equitable sharing in care giving, child rearing and home-



ADVOCATE: Itumeleng Komanyane, International Programmes Manager at Sonke Gender Justice,

making, treating boys/sons and girls/daughters equally and recognising that both men and women should feel comfortable to express emotions in positive and non-violent ways.

“Supporting legal and social environments and interventions for men to see the value in respecting and supporting women and girls as equal members of society in all walks of life is achievable,” said Komanyane. “Society needs to find mechanisms and structures which appreciate new and different ways of expressing masculinity, free of stereotypes, coercion or violence and in ways that are safe, pleasurable and mutually desired,”

Engaging men from a positive and enabling perspective would begin by encouraging them to take proactive steps in care for their own health and the health of their sexual partners. A critical step for this to manifest is through increasing men’s and boys’ demand and utilisation of HIV and SRH services as a way to address their own gendered vulnerabilities and own specific health needs.

There is also a growing number of men embracing change and this pool of male allies committed to the promotion of gender justice and advocacy against violence can be built to mobilize fellow men for nonviolence social change and gender equality within communities.

“Recognising men’s investment in change reduces men’s potential resistance to gender transformation,” said Komanyane.

Expert says GBV too costly to ignore

Staff Writer

Gaborone - Pervasive Gender-based violence (GBV) across the region has undisputed social harm on its survivors, including physical injury, deaths, emotional and social trauma, an expert has said.

Ms Seynabou Tall, the Technical Gender Adviser at United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) said on its own, violence against women is enough to justify policy interventions. However, an in-depth look into the cost of violence is a necessary basis for strengthened lobbying and for additional prevention and response initiatives.

By measuring economic costs and consequences of violence, policy makers can be better informed over the prioritisation of resource allocation across various social, environmental and economic priorities, as well as within addressing GBV.

She explained this to Members of Parliament attending the 'SADC Parliaments Roundtable on Addressing the Links between GBV between Gender Based Violence and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in SADC Region.'

"Measuring the costs of violence demonstrates how violence drains resources from many affected groups, not just the perpetrators and survivors, but also presents significant costs to families, communities and the private sector, all levels of government, and civil society," said Ms Tall.

Presenting a KPMG study entitled 'Too Costly to Be Ignored,' Ms Tall indicated that Gender-based violence (GBV), and in particular violence against women, is an expensive public health problem. While the cost of human and psychological pain endured by the victims may be difficult to calculate, costs related to services, and the economic losses due to lost output, decreased productivity and lower earnings resulting from violence are high and can span several generations.

Women suffering from domestic violence have

significantly lower propensities to turn up for work on time, to work productively while at work or to stay in the job. On the other hand, a significant burden and costs are incurred by Governments through expenditures on services to respond and to support survivors and perpetrators of violence. This in turn reduces resources for other national priorities, results in lower economic growth and a reduced standard of living across the board.

The KPMG study, which was conducted in South Africa in 2015, was shared with delegates as an example of a regional study focusing on quantifying the costs of various forms of violence against women.

One of the objectives of the study was to show the estimated costs associated with violence against women and their children and also to show the anticipated cost of inaction by governments or by communities. The study also aimed to spell out the potential gains that could be achieved if incidences of violence were reduced as a result of implementing national, coordinated action.

Comprehensive studies, which have mainly been undertaken outside the region, estimate the cost of violence to be between 1-2% of GDP, (Gross Domestic Product). As an example, the cost of GBV in South Africa for the period 2012/2013 was between R 28.3 billion to R 42.3 billion or 0.9% and 1.3% of GDP.

"It is important to bear in mind that the monetary value attributed to violence cannot quantify the full extent of its impact on the victim, but awareness of the costs of violence against women to society strengthens arguments for the intervention of government, social institutions and businesses into private acts of violence," said Ms Tall.

There is added value in GBV cost studies, chief among these is to build society's awareness that



WARNING: Ms Seynabou Tall, the Technical Gender Adviser at United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

even though abuse may be private, the consequences are far reaching and impact across society. Demonstrating the economic scale of GBV also helps inform Government prioritisation of relevant policies to prevent and respond to the problem.

As a way to encourage private sector involvement in combating GBV, Ms Tall explained that GBV cost studies can serve to explain the consequences of GBV through lost time and productivity. This would motivate businesses to play a meaningful part in preventing and responding to abuse in the workplace and among their workforce.

Ms Tall urged delegates to strategise on strengthening data collection and record keeping and to factor in costs such as related to GBV legislation in consideration of the costs of services, and the economic losses due to GBV.

Zimbabwean MP Majome fights GBV



ACTIVIST: Zimbabwe Member of Parliament for Harare West, Hon. Jessie-Fungayi Majome

Gaborone – Zimbabwe Member of Parliament for Harare West, Hon. Jessie-Fungayi Majome is using her position as a legislator and her personal experiences as a survivor of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) to advocate for an end to this rampant scourge.

Her major call is for the imposition of stiffer penalties for perpetrators of violence as a way to deter the escalation of GBV in the country.

Majome who is a lawyer by profession, told the delegates attending a SADC Parliamentary Forum Roundtable on ‘Addressing the Links between Gender Based Violence and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in SADC Region’, that the high increase in GBV in Zimbabwe was disturbing. On the other hand, this increase in cases has not been adequately matched by law reforms to deter would be offenders

“It is for this reason that I have moved a Parliamentary motion on mandatory stiff sentences for GBV offenders. I am encouraged that this motion has since enjoyed support from across the political divide,” said Majome.

That motion was prompted by the high rate of gender based violence in Zimbabwe against women and girls.

Statistics on gender based violence cases reported in two suburbs from her constituency indicate unacceptable increases of GBV. Cases reported in Avondale and Mabelreign suburbs

of Harare rose from 106 in 2013 to 127 in 2014, a 20% increase within one year.

During the same period, rape cases increased by 78% from nine to sixteen.

The motion, which was tabled by Majome, therefore sought to address concerns which include the low rate of apprehension, conviction and sentencing of perpetrators of GBV. Another issue that the motion sought to address is the lack of crime forensic experts in Zimbabwe, as well as the lack of forensic rape investigation kits, essential in the building of a case against offenders.

“This motion on mandatory stiff sentences for GBV convicts got responses from two ministers, including from Vice President, Hon. Emerson Mnangagwa, who is also Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs,” explained Majome.

In his support for the motion, Hon. Vice President Mnangagwa stated that mandatory sentencing had worked well in other jurisdictions as it served as a deterrent and reduced the time courts needed to decide on an appropriate sentence.

Vice President Mnangagwa also highlighted the importance of prescribing mandatory sentences against crimes that affect people and violate their rights, such as the crime of rape.

Former Minister of Women’s Affairs, Gender and Community Development, Hon. Oppah Muchinguri also supported the motion by welcoming a recent 230 year sentence for a serial rapist and armed robber and also a 40 year sentence given to Zimbabwean polygamous Pastor Gumbura, who was convicted for the rape of two members from his congregation.

Majome indicated that there was generally a lukewarm attitude of the Zimbabwean policy towards GBV, with offenders receiving just six to seven years in prison. Her push is for a stiffer upper limit for GBV crimes. She further argues that a 30 year prison sentence is appropriate for those convicted of statutory rape and other forms of GBV.

In order to supplement the proposed stiffer penalties, Majome is lobbying Government to invest more into procurement and engagement of adequate scientific forensic services and continually equip all police stations with forensic investigation rape kits.

The Zimbabwe Government was also urged to resolve and immediately implement with stakeholders’ involvement, the Zimbabwe National Gender Based Violence Strategy: 2012-2015. This strategy has four key result areas which are Prevention, Service Provision, Research, Documentation, Evaluation and Coordination which are critical for GBV prevention and mitigation.

In addition to using the legislative privilege to push this agenda against GBV through Parliament, Majome has been actively engaging members of her constituency on social media and through community based interactive sessions to raise awareness on GBV.

Through her Facebook and Twitter pages, which have enjoyed high traffic, Majome insists on her desire for all Zimbabweans to have zero tolerance to GBV. As an example, Majome shared with delegates on her vocal denouncement of popular musician, Jah Prayzah, whose music video features a raunchy dancer dressed in a school uniform. This she said, would influence Jah Prayzah’s fans and followers into seeing school girls as sex objects.

“Artists have a crucial role to play in culturing audiences and must ensure that they protect our children from child abuse instead if subconsciously encouraging it,” Majome said in the post that received more than 100 comments and likes on Facebook.

Increasing Access to Quality Essential Services for women and girls

Staff Writer

Gaborone - The United Nations Joint Programme on increasing access to quality essential services to stop violence against women (VAW) is striving to fill the gap between international commitments and country-level activities to prevention and response to gender based violence, an official has said.

The four-year programme which started in 2013 and will end in 2017 brings together host Governments, Civil Society Organisations and UN development agencies to support the attainment of gender related development goals.

During a SADC Parliamentary Forum Roundtable on Addressing the Links between GBV between Gender Based Violence and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in SADC Region, delegates were sensitised on the role of the Joint Programme in supporting countries' international commitments to gender specific treaties such as the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, CEDAW, African Union Agenda 2063, Maputo Protocol, Beijing Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Through the joint programme, there is a unified and holistic response to violence against women through integration and harmonisation of shared responsibilities among UN Agencies, Governments and CSO. The joint programme on ensures increased access to essential services to address the phenomenon and recognises it as a violation of human rights and as an economic issue.

Ms Magdaline Madibela of UN Women said this approach to joint programming has been seen as an important way for partners to reach consensus on standards and guidelines for delivering quality essential services, increase access of services for women and girls build capacity

of service providers in respect to GBV.

Gender based violence (GBV), whether direct or indirect, has debilitating effects on women's sex and reproductive health rights (SRHR). Lacks and or violations of these services, needs and rights result in unwanted pregnancies, restricted access to family planning information and contraceptives, unsafe abortion or injuries sustained during a legal abortion after an unwanted pregnancy.

Often, women suffer from complications from frequent, high-risk pregnancies and lack of follow-up care. Other negative consequences are contracting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV persistent gynaecological problems and psychological problems.

Ms Madibela explained that joint programming tackles the continuum of violence using four pillars which are – health, police and justice, social services and coordination. Through these pillars, crucial issues such as child and forced

marriages, fistula and female genital mutilation (FGM) could be addressed.

Under health, survivors of GBV will be identified, first line support is given and care rendered to injuries and urgent medical treatment is also given as well as examining sexually assaulted victims and carrying out mental assessment.

Under Police and Justice, the police should be proactive rather than reactive and to ensure that victims are safe and protected, ensure perpetrator accountability and reparations and handle justice sector coordination. The protection or social services arm will ensure that crisis information is collected and counselling is offered to GBV victims, and that they are offered safe accommodation. It is also vital that a women-centred support service is offered as well as children's services for any child affected by violence cases. Of importance also is community information sharing, education and community outreach and economic empowerment programmes for recovery and autonomy.

For successful implementation, the programme is uses a rights based approach, which advances gender equality and women's empowerment, in a culturally, age appropriate and sensitive manner. Other principles driving the agenda are using a survivor centered approaches, and ensuring and advocating for perpetrator accountability. The safety of the victims is another priority.

Future action and progress in the area of gender is framed by the Sustainable Development and the new development agenda, the joint programme is therefore instrumental in supporting efforts to achievement of gender specific goals, including SDG 5 - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Ms Madibela said the UNFPA fully supports UN women's call for a goal on gender equality and women's empowerment in the post-2015 development agenda. It is also working to ensure that this includes special attention to the vulnerabilities of adolescent girls, SGBV, child marriage, female genital mutilation and other harmful practices.



CHAMPION: Ms Magdaline Madibela, UN Women

Fighting Trafficking in persons within the SADC Region

Staff Writer

Gaborone - The number of people moving across national borders in the SADC Region has continued to grow. While these excursions are often fraught with dangers and uncertainties, a mix of social, political, environmental and economic factors have influenced migrants' decision to relocate and find better opportunities.

In a contribution to the SADC Parliamentary Forum Roundtable on Addressing the Links between GBV and SRHR in the region, Ms. Jacinta Hofnie, the Programme Officer dealing with Human Trafficking at the SADC Secretariat, highlighted that causes of human trafficking in the region were rooted in economic and social disparities within and between states.

"Poverty, unemployment, lack of income-generating opportunities, HIV and AIDS, natural disasters and political challenges have been the main push factors influencing a person's movement," Ms. Hofnie said.

She further explained that the availability and introduction of coercive opportunities and incentives in other countries, including demand for cheap and docile labour, demand for labour in the agriculture, fishing, mining and domestic sectors, and demand in the commercial sex industry are listed as some of the pull factors for human trafficking in the region.

Sadly all these factors are gendered and disproportionately influence the victimisation of women and girls. Women migrants oftentimes fall prey to atrocious exploitations and discriminations which result in emotional trauma, depression, suicidal tendencies, physical health disorders and sexual reproductive disorders including HIV infection and unwanted pregnancies.

"Women and girls constitute some of the groups most vulnerable to human trafficking, mainly because of sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and in some instances forced labour," Ms. Hofnie said.

According to research findings from the region, human trafficking prevails in the form of both Smuggling of Migrants and Trafficking in Persons cases. In other countries, such as Mauri-



DESPERATE: A man (left) hides in the bumper of vehicle while a woman is concealed in a car seat as human traffickers attempt to evade authorities. Photos: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk> and www.businessinsider.com

tius, child trafficking is also an identified vice. Smuggling of migrants entails the procurement of the illegal entry of a person into another country. The smuggler is awarded financially for this undertaking.

On the other hand, victims of Trafficking in Persons, also referred to as human trafficking, do not consent to the movement. Instead, their movement has been induced through threat, use of force, coercion, abduction, deception or the abuse of a person's position of vulnerability. In these instances, their consent is made irrelevant by the exploitation they experience at the hands of traffickers, Ms. Hofnie explained to the delegates.

She further explained that traffickers reportedly withhold the victims' salaries to recover the victims' travel and other expenses, while identity and travel documents of victims are sometimes confiscated by the traffickers. In isolated cases, traffickers also use drugs to manipulate and control their victims, while female victims are known in some cases to have been forcibly impregnated by their traffickers and their children used as bait to control them.

"The relationship between traffickers and victims of TIP involves on-going exploitation of victims to generate profits for the traffickers," said Ms. Hofnie.

It is these human rights violations and exploita-

tions which MPs were encouraged to consider as they craft, repeal or amend laws on trafficking in persons.

Ms. Hofnie acknowledged that all countries in the region have ratified international legislation on trafficking and are therefore obliged to monitor and report. It is therefore incumbent on MPs to play an oversight role of their respective government's performance in combating trafficking in persons through these legislations.

This can be done through sourcing relevant research and data on the scope of trafficking in persons and working with partners on effective practices to combat the crime. Members of Parliament can also monitor and evaluate the implementation of national strategic frameworks and action plans on trafficking in persons, with a keen mind to influence appropriate funds allocations to combating trafficking in persons and also assisting survivors.

She urged MPs to form enabling alliances with the media, who are able to focus and deeply interrogate trafficking in persons when it occurs. She cited an example of how the Zimbabwean media had played an important role in crying foul over the "enslavement," of some women in Kuwait. The media also followed through the case and gave detailed accounts of the judicial trials of the alleged traffickers and also articulated on the release and safe return of the women from bondage in Kuwait.

SADC MPs raise the ante against GBV

Staff Writer

Gaborone - Parliamentarians from seven countries have committed to rising to the occasion and ensure that weak law enforcement mechanisms are addressed in efforts to curb rising cases of Gender Based Violence, (GBV).

The MPs made the commitment at the end of a symposium held under the theme 'Addressing the Links between Gender Based Violence and Reproductive Health and Rights in the SADC Region'.

Unequal gender norms that reinforce and justify violence, poor implementation of laws to prevent violence and child marriage as well as women and girls' lack of access to services and employment, are some of the noted drivers for GBV in the region.

A report on 'Prevalence Rates of intimate partner violence', which was concluded by World Health Organization (WHO) in 2010 and shared with the delegates, notes that 45% of women from the African region have experienced physical and or sexual violence by an intimate partner, while 11% of women have been exposed to violence by non-intimate partners. These regional statistics are significantly higher than the global averages of 30% and 7% respectively.

According to recommendations from the deliberations held after two days of informative presentations, intense group discussions and dialogue, delegates agreed that Gender Based violence (GBV) is a grave violation of human and legal rights, and a prime barrier to reproductive health that prevents women, men and families from achieving their full potential.

The delegates noted with concern that these disturbingly high incidences of GBV could have far reaching and devastating impacts, including unwanted pregnancies, abortion, disability, death, stress, suicide, mental and reproductive health problems, STIs and HIV, depression, poor performance in school, trauma, anti-social behaviours, alcohol and drug abuse, violence, and imprisonment.

After being exposed to the evidence around the causes and effects of GBV, MPs collectively agreed on the urgency to accelerate progress towards ensuring strong safeguards against abuse of women, girls and men. Members of Parliament also recognised the need to implement protective legal and social environments



AS ONE: Delegates pose for a group photograph at a regional symposium on the links between GBV, SRHR, HIV and AIDS.

against gender inequality, human rights violation, stigma and discrimination which perpetuate violence. They also conceded on the need to hasten the redress and proper application of gender based violence related laws.

"Parliamentarians should actively participate in raising awareness on the link between GBV, SRHR and HIV and women's economic empowerment, and push for policies and programmes that would lead towards a multi-sectoral approach to dealing with these issues," noted the delegates in a communique.

During group discussion sessions, one of the prominent commitments made by MPs was taking a lead in lobbying and adopting an all-inclusive GBV legislation. This is in recognition of a gap between existing laws on GBV and enforcement thereof. Eleven out of the fifteen countries in SADC have put in place domestic violence and sexual assault legislation, but enforcement remains a challenge mainly because of limitations in political commitment, capacity and monetary commitments towards implementation of laws.

In the discussions, which focused on reflecting on the gaps, challenges and opportunities for action on the Constitutional, Legal and Policy Environment in SADC Member States, delegates noted the need for enforcement of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to operationalise the provisions of legislation and also intensified sensitisation of communities on the existing laws.

Indications from discussions on the political environment that impacts on GBV and SRHR are that if the political environment legitimises

power inequalities through the discriminatory application of laws, this would translate into high GBV cases. For example, because the political space is still a male dominated sphere, GBV and SRHR issues are often relegated to the side lines on the national agenda as male MPs remain fearful of pushing the unconventional themes such as abortion, stiff sentences for rape and sex work.

"If we want to remain popular in patriarchal communities we just have to ignore GBV & SRHR and hence perpetuate the oppressions," highlighted some of the delegates. There was therefore a call to amplify the participation of women into decision making positions and also to support their non-violent participation as electorates.

Other key recommendations for action by MPs include;

- Recognising ways to ensure non-discrimination of key populations.
- Community level sensitisation on GBV, including at institutions of learning.
- Identification and engagement of Civil Society Organisations (CSO) to work with identified GBV champions through evidence generation, advocacy, implementation and monitoring.
- Bridging the gap between existing laws and enforcement in all countries.
- Extending social protection programmes to informal sectors where women are most present.
- Enhancing MP's oversight for monitoring and implementation of domesticated Sustainable Development Goals, in particular, SDG 3, 5, 10, 16.

The Parliamentarians were drawn from Botswana, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland and Zimbabwe.



SHOCKED: Members of Parliament react as they come face to face with the chilling facts about gender based violence during a regional symposium in Botswana. Photo: Moses Magadza.

Members of Parliament learn about Gender Based Violence

Staff Writer

Gaborone - Gender based violence constitutes a global pandemic of alarming proportions and carries long-term consequences on families, communities, women's health and rights, including Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), an expert has said.

Addressing delegates attending a SADC Parliaments Roundtable on Addressing the Links between GBV and SRHR in the region, Ms. Seynabou Tall from UNFPA, said GBV is a widespread public health and gender inequality which constitutes a global pandemic of alarming proportions.

The two day roundtable was convened to build the capacity of Members of Parliament (MPs) from seven SADC countries to promote, intervene and advocate for comprehensive and essential sexual and reproductive health, HIV and AIDS services and impact on relevant current policy environment in their countries

Noting that MPs play critical roles of advocacy and law making, it was therefore important to bring the situation into context, primarily indicating that while GBV is perpetrated against women and men, girls and boys, women are disproportionately more affected.

It is more women and girls who bear the brunt of pain, disability, death, sadness or stress as a consequence of GBV. Further, GBV has a negative bearing on the reproductive health of women, with consequences of unwanted pregnancies, abortion, STIs or HIV.

According to a UN Women State of Women's Report (2011) GBV impacts negatively on ma-

ternal health, with 41% of women experiencing violence more likely to have pre-term birth and 16% more likely to have low birth weight.

In addition, women experiencing violence are 1.7 times more likely to endure miscarriages or abortions. These women are 1.5 times more likely to acquire HIV and other sexually transmitted infections such as syphilis.

While GBV takes many forms of physical, psychological and , intimate partner violence is the most common form of violence against women," said Tall. Other various forms of GBV include physical, sexual and emotional abuse, forced and early marriages, trafficking, female genital mutilation, honour killings and sexual violence.

She added that this situation is not exclusive to developing countries but also within countries from high income regions such as Europe where intimate partner violence is at 25.4%. In the South East Asia Region, prevalence of the same phenomenon is 37%, which is 2% higher than the global average of 35%.

Denying women access to SRH information and services, including FP, is another form of violence and a further violation of their rights. Statistics from within the region, which were also shared with delegates at the round table, point to an escalation of intimate partner violence, usually in the form of emotional violence, which unfortunately, is usually not addressed in police statistics.

Regardless of the nature of violence, GBV is a human rights violation and a disregard for human dignity. It is therefore imperative for action to be muted to prevent and respond to its escalation.

Individual, relational, community, and societal factors are often at play to influence GBV perpetration. Having an understanding of these multi-level factors would help MPs to identify and effectively prevent GBV in their countries.

At individual level, these drivers include a low level of education, high levels of alcohol abuse, background of violence in childhood. Unequal gender norms that reinforce and justify violence as well as weak community sanctions for perpetrators, are key drivers at community level.

The Ideology of male sexual entitlement as well as the poor implementation of laws on violence heavily influence GBV across societies.

"Some of the key interventions to responding and preventing gender based violence, should therefore pay attention to transform the paradigm of masculinity through engaging men and boys for gender equality," said Tall.

Tall mentioned that while services and policies have been implemented in countries across the region, to prevent and respond to GBV, these have fallen short of meeting the need because of being underfunded, understaffed or being of an inferior quality. As a result, even within countries where it is outlawed, GBV still tops the list of civil crimes.

"Even in high-income countries, the availability, quality and access to such services can be insufficient or limited in scope or coverage. Denying women and girls access to the basic sexual and reproductive health information and services including family planning is another form of violence and further violation of human rights," said Tall.

Focus on Gender-Based Violence in Prisons

Staff Writer

Gaborone - Governments within Southern African Development Community (SADC), should consider enacting laws upholding inmates' conjugal rights to reduce Gender Based Violence (GBV) in the facilities and also as a way of protecting the sexual rights of inmates during their incarceration and also upon their release.

A legal provision for inmates to have intimate contact with their partners, would help preserve the marital bond between the couple and help to support the re-integration of prisoners into society, according to Dr. Godfrey Malembeka, the Executive Director of Prison Care and Counselling Association of Zambia (PRISCCA).

He made this submission in his presentation at the Roundtable on Addressing the Links between Gender Based Violence and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the SADC Region.

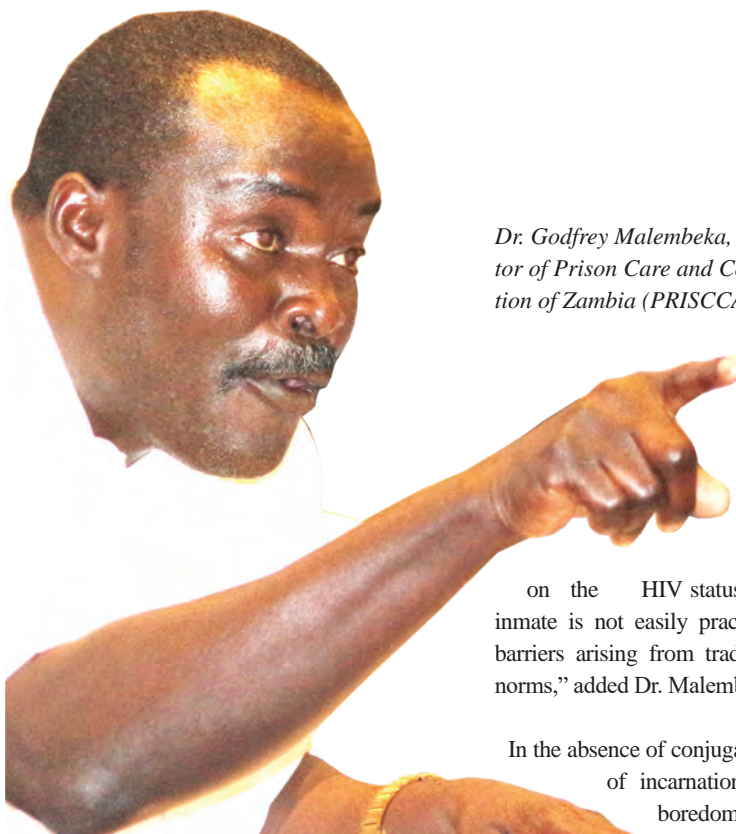
Dr. Malembeka said upon release, most female prisoners find themselves without family to go to as their husbands or partners would have moved on to find alternative sexual or marital partners.

"The majority of married incarcerated female inmates end up being divorced as their husbands either feel embarrassed, stigmatized, ostracised, too lonely or impatient to wait long enough for their partners to re-join them when they have left prison," he said.

To add to the misery of losing husbands upon her release, female prisoners also risk losing household property, land, homes, estates or other business opportunities. In Zambia for example, guidelines for re-integration into civil service after incarceration are not explicit and therefore former prisoners often find themselves without employment opportunities upon release.

Allowing female prisoners the opportunity to engage in sexual contact with their partners would help their re-integration into society and might lessen the likelihood of released prisoners living a life of more crimes as a way to sustain themselves.

"In an effort to survive and bridge the financial gap, most of these women get involved in unprotected promiscuous sexual behaviours with multiple partners. Others, resort to seek solace in correctional facilities as the only place where they can have a shelter above their heads and where they are assured of regular meal provisions and at least a daily shower."



Dr. Godfrey Malembeka, the Executive Director of Prison Care and Counselling Association of Zambia (PRISCCA).

Permissive conjugal visits in prisons would also help avert other sexual and reproductive health challenges, including HIV infections and Gender Based Violence. As indicated by Dr. Malembeka, unexpected pregnancies, unsafe abortions, exposure to HIV and sexually transmitted infections, cervical cancer and hepatitis B [HBV] result among former prisoners who resort to engaging in multiple sexual relationships in search of financial freedom.

"Men and women in the outside communities also anxiously wait for incarcerated persons whom they so much come to trust once discharged in good health on assumptions they have 'artificial virginity' as they never experienced sex during the long years or months they were in correctional facilities," said Dr. Malembeka in explaining other sexual and reproductive health abuses that arise in the absence of conjugal rights visits.

He was however quick to highlight that despite these assumptions of an ex-prisoners' health status, HIV prevalence among inmates in Zambian correctional facilities stood at 27.4%, almost twice higher than the general community which was at 13%.

Poor diet and compromising living conditions also render prisoners vulnerable to chronic communicable and non-communicable infections.

"Partner notification on the HIV status of an infected former inmate is not easily practicable due to various barriers arising from traditional and customary norms," added Dr. Malembeka.

In the absence of conjugal visits during the time of incarceration and because of the boredom that arises from being in confinement, female inmates often resort to lesbianism, while others have adopted unnatural sexual contacts to satisfy their sexual desires.

In many instances, such relationships are involuntary, and therefore abusive and potentially facilitate the spread of HIV and STIs as provision of sexual and reproductive health commodities such as condoms in prisons is currently prohibited in most SADC countries.

Dr. Malembeka therefore suggests a holistic and multi sectoral approach to scale up efforts against gender based violence, including that which is experienced by female prisoners and ex-prisoners.

"The expected benefits will be vast and will cater for reduction on HIV, STIs and TB in the general community; improved prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV infections [PMTCT] and healthcare. It would also help in avoidance of risky sexual behaviour conducts while informed family planning is also promoted, strengthened and enhanced."

Laws to empower women through land ownership and other socio-economic empowerment opportunities are also important considerations for response to GBV and the sexual violence which is faced by inmates inside and outside of prison. This would significantly contribute to a healthy and very productive society.

CAMERA EYE

