I AM SORRY

I KNOW A MAN, I KNOW A WOMAN

WHISPERS OF RESILIENCE

KINYA N. GITONGA

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kinya is MSC Clinical psychologist. She is a mental health advocate. Founder to Sound Mental Health and an editor. She is also an author of the following books;

*THE HOW'S OF ANGER***:** This is a guide to controlling your emotions. It equips one with practical strategies and techniques for dealing with anger in a healthy and constructive manner.

THRIVE: It is a book that enlightens readers on how to prioritize individual mental health, especially when faced with challenges and even after overcoming them. Wondering how to be happy again? Thrive will guide you.

STRONG FROM WITHIN: This book explores the strength found in faith and resilience, offering an understanding of how inner peace and spiritual grounding can empower individuals to overcome life's challenges. We also explore intersection between mental health and religion.

AFRICAN DAUGHTERS: A compelling narrative celebrating the resilience, strength, and achievements of African women, while addressing the cultural and social dynamics that shape their journeys.

©Copyright 2025

All rights reserved. No part of this book publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any way, by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or any other means without prior permission of the copyright owner, except for inclusion of quotations in a review.

CONTACT

Phone: +254 796 037994

Email: kinyanina51@gmail.com

Printed & Published in Nairobi, Kenya

Format & Design by Le Patro Designs

Phone: +254 708 065328

Email: lepatrodesigns@gmail.com

Table Of Contents

UNDERSTANDING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE 4
Defining GBV 9
Types Of Gender Based Violence 10
Lived Experiences 22
Indicators of Domestic Abuse 29
UNRAVELING THE CYCLE 31
Profile of a Domestic Abuser 31
Cycle of Domestic Violence 33
BEHIND CLOSED DOORS 40
Roots and Causes 42
Sexism 49
THE AFTERMATH 58
REAKING THE SILENCE 67
Social Stigma 68
Barriers 69
SEEKING REFUGE 91
Walking Away 100
UNSEEN WOUNDS 106
WHISPHERS OF RESILIENCE 115

A FUTURE BEYOND GBV 128
A Glimpse into the Future 133
Letter From the Author 139

EPIGRAPH

In shadows cast by silence, I know a woman's tale,
A whispered symphony of strength, behind a veiled travail.
In the quiet of her eyes, a history untold,
A saga etched in scars, a story to unfold.

I know a woman, resilient and strong,
In the tapestry of her being, echoes a silent song.
Bearing the weight of a world that often misunderstands,
Yet within her spirit, a flame that withstands.

I know a man, burdened by the chains,
Of expectations and stereotypes, where toxicity reigns.
In the quiet corners of his soul, a struggle unseen,
Caught in the web of norms, where shadows intervene.

Together they dance, in a delicate duet,
A tango of existence, where destinies are set.
Yet beneath the surface, a tempest swirls,
Of words unspoken, in a universe of pearls.
In the echo of their laughter, a haunting truth,
The fragility of love, a quest for verity and sooth.

For in the interplay of genders, a tapestry is spun,
Woven with threads of respect, where battles can be won.

I know a woman, I know a man,
Entwined in a narrative, where understanding began.
In the cradle of empathy, let prejudice rescind,
For every heart deserves a haven, where love can mend.

Let this verse be a hymn, breaking silence's embrace,
A call to arms against injustice, in every time and space.
For in unity, we find strength, against the night's cruel ban,
In the shared refrain of courage, saying: "I know a woman, I know a man.
I know a man; I know a woman who stood up against GBV.

WHY VIOLENCE?

My work is a part of empowering the whole community. When there is violence, the community's soul is injured. As a community, we need to ask, "Are you safe at home? Are you OK? Is there anyone you fear?"

Because it is not OK if you live in fear, it is not OK that this is happening, and this can change. That is my ideal world.

~ Kinya N. Gitonga

INTRODUCTION

GBV is a problem in every country and in the whole world as a whole. There are billions of individuals both males and female who have experienced violence and such is seen as a normal occurrence by many yet it is not. It is one of the most prevalent human rights violations. It knows no social, economic, class or cultural confinement. It occurs in families, schools, workplaces, social structures and communities across the world. Women and girls, and to a lesser degree men and boys, either directly experience or face the impact of some form of gender-based violence.

Gender based violence involves a wide variety of agents from intimate partners and family members, to strangers and institutional actors such as teachers, pastors, office managers and police. Despite its pervasiveness, gender-based violence (GBV) is still the least talked about violation of mainly women's human rights. It remains largely unreported or in reported instances, retracted and settled.

Since the Beijing World Conference on women in 1995, the issue of gender-based violence has gained greater visibility. Governments have played their part in developing policy and legislation to mitigate against its occurrence. Non-state actors have filled a critical gap in providing victim psychosocial support and public sensitization. The health system has designed custom programs and interventions targeted at the vulnerabilities and peculiarities of the phenomena. These efforts have played a significant role in reforming this morally unacceptable vice. The efforts, though laudable, have yet to yield significant gains and foster the envisioned culture of respect for the rights of men and women, boys and girls.

GBV is a deeply rooted issue that transcends geographical boundaries and cultural context. It encompasses a range of harmful behaviors including physical, sexual and psychological abuse, which will be discussed later in the book. These forms of abuse affect individuals based on their gender. It not only causes harm but also perpetuates a cycle of inequality, reinforcing harmful power dynamics and impending social progress.

As at 2022, The Center for Right Education and Awareness (CREAW-Kenya) has been said to receive over 3, 762 cases of GBV; men and women. Majority of survivors seen are 90% males and 70% females. There is disagreement on what fraction of women and men have experienced GBV, partly because different definitions of GBV are used. According to GVRC reports, in Kenya, about 3, 000 survivors of GBV report at GVRC-NWH yearly. Men are the main perpetrators of violence. This does not put out the fact that women are also perpetrators. It is reported that 1 in 3 females experience a GBV episode in their early ages just before attaining the age of 18. 1 in 5 Kenyan males too experience at least one episode of GBV before attaining the age of 18 {Kenya VAC 2010}

It is not merely a women's issue; it is a societal concern that affects the wellbeing and potential of entire communities.

CHAPTER ONE

THE QUIET STRUGGLE

UNDERSTANDING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

We cannot understand GBV without understanding Gender. Gender is identification to be a man or woman and it is associated with a social role or a set of behavioral and cultural traits.

Gender is also social differences between males and females that are learned though deeply rooted in every culture, they are changeable overtime. They determine roles, responsibilities, opportunities, privileges, expectations and limitations for females or males in any culture.

Sex is physiological attributes that identify a person as a male or female i.e.

- Genital organs
- Type of predominant hormones
- These are natural and cannot change.

Gender is made up of:

I. Gender role: adoption of masculine or feminine behavioural traits that are deemed appropriate or characteristic of a particular sex. For example,

- *Fetching firewood*
- *Fetching water*
- *Preparing food / cooking*
- *Washing*
- *Providing shelter*.

Roles given to men and women are classified into three classes namely:

- Productive role.
- Activities to produce goods and services for sale and exchange.
- Women's productive role continues to grow
- Reproductive role.
- Child bearing and caring, care for family members.
- This is still majorly the burden that is placed upon women.
- Community role.
- Voluntary work.
- More and more depend on women's contribution in the community.

II. Gender identity: a person's private, subjective sense of their own sex.
III. Sexual orientation/preference: erotic desire for people of the same or different sex.

GENDER SOCIALIZATION

Gender socialisation is the process through which we are taught to conform to social norms about being a man or woman.

Socialisation is done in society through:

Institution	**Agent**
Home	Parents, siblings
School	Teachers, peers
Places of worship	Religious leaders Religious practices
Media	Use of words, pictures
Society	Friends, peers

Gender therefore refers to the social relations between men and women and the socially assigned roles, status and functions to men and women, girls and boys by the society.

Gender and development are reflected through:

i. *Division of labour* – Referred to as gender roles where boys and girls, men and women are allocated different duties / roles.

The society establishes their own mechanism through socialisation process to ensure that the roles are learnt and reinforced.

ii. *Allocation of responsibilities* – This is clearly defined and reinforced through the socialising process. For instance, men are perceived as breadwinners, while women are homemakers.

Allocation of opportunities, that is,

- A boy goes to school in case of less family funds
- Ownership of property is assumed to be male
- Access and control of resources for men, as members of the family (sons) as heads (husband). For girls and wives, no opportunities, worse in inheritance and control of family resources.

iii. *Social construction* of gender is the way the society brings up boys and girls with the 'do' and 'don'ts' to ensure that they are the perfect men and women of tomorrow's society.

The process of social construction of gender is responsible for all gender inequalities that exist today in the development arena. It explains the oppression of women by male-dominated ideologies right from the household (oppression and discrimination) to the public sectors (underpayment and undervalued jobs). This in turn affects their lives.

Gender is you male or female. What is expected of you as male or female?

Which is it?

- Most building workers are female.
- Little girls are gentle and boys are tough.
- Boys when beaten need to hear that men don't cry.
- Girls need to pray with dolls and boy's cars.

Defining GBV

Gender based violence is any act that results in physical, sexual or psychological harm/suffering whether occurring in private or public perpetrated against a person based on their socially ascribed gender differences; simply because they are male or female.

GBV is perpetrated against a person will, without his or her consent because of his or her gender. Research reports that most acts are directed to women and girls because they are female, have less power in relationships with men. *GBV is sometimes random but often, particularly when the perpetrator knows the victim, repeated and systematic.*

IS GBV A PROBLEM FROM BIRTH TO DEATH?

Research puts the global number of "missing" females; those who should be living but are not because of discriminatory practices such as sex-selective abortions, female infanticide, and fatal neglect of girl children at between 50 million and 100 million.

Of the estimated two million children being exploited in prostitution and pornography worldwide, 80% to 90% are girls in most countries.

Of the over half-million human beings trafficked across borders each year, an estimated 80% are women and girls and 20% are males.

A projected 82 million girls around the world who are now between the ages of 10 and 17 will be married before their 18th birthdays: Complication from early pregnancy and childbearing are the leading cause of death for 15–19-year-olds worldwide.

Studies has been conclusive that violence against women by their intimate partners poses among the greatest threat to women's health and welfare. Women are nine times more likely than men to leave their jobs because of sexual harassment.

Types Of Gender Based Violence

GBV is an umbrella term for a range of interpersonal violence including, but not limited to, sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, and sexual exploitation. Domestic violence and sexual assault are thought of as subset behaviors of GBV.

Gender based violence manifests in various forms such as physical, sexual or psychological abuse. For example:

- Hitting/Battering/Beatings.
- Domestic conflict.
- Verbal abuse/Abusive language.
- Rape.
- Economic abuse/deprivation (financial restrictions).
- Psychological humiliation.
- Deprivation of resources (e.g., land, swindling widow's property).
- Early marriages for girls below 18 years of age.
- Defilement.
- Forced marriages.
- Frustration.
- Sexual Assault.
- Other forms of GBV (accusation of witchcraft, infidelity, mistreatment of widows, denial of freedom of expression, overworking women, child labor).
- Forceful initiation of girls.
- Killings/murders of GBV victims.
- Restrictions or denial of freedom of movement.
- Discrimination (e.g., at workplace, by in-laws).
- Sexual deprivation.
- Marital Rape.

- Trafficking of women and children.
- Isolation from friends by husband.
- Forceful initiation of boys.

In details, I will discuss the most common forms of GBV.

a. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

It is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors, including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion, that adults or adolescents use to gain power and control over their intimate partners. A major concern is Intimate partner violence. An intimate partner can be a boyfriend or girlfriend, dating partner, sexual partner, or spouse.

Domestic Violence is not limited to someone with whom the survivor has been sexually intimate or living in the same household; it may be a non-household member or caregiver. Domestic violence is lethal, common, and affects people of all cultures, religions, ages, sexual orientations, educational backgrounds, and income levels. Domestic violence is a crime, and it happens in many different ways**.** *Domestic violence is one of the most under reported crimes throughout the world.*

Even when reported, many survivors find themselves forced to spend hours, days and even months trying to navigate fragmented social, governmental, and law enforcement agency services. Each systemic process to seek assistance to break the cycle of violence subjects the survivor to reliving their trauma while trying to keep themselves and their loved ones.

Domestic violence could be threatened or actual physical harm.

b. INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

The form of violence that we most often associate with the concept gender-based violence is intimate partner, in particular men's violence against women. Intimate partner violence is a global phenomenon and the form of violence we have most statistics on, even though numbers are still unreliable or unavailable in many contexts. International surveys show that at least a third of women in intimate relationships have experienced violence from their partner. Intimate partner violence is often systematic and contains parallel physical, sexual and psychological violence.

It may take many different forms, be conducted by different perpetrators throughout the lifetime, and have severe direct and indirect health consequences.

Additionally, children who witness violence are indirect victims, and are likely to be exposed to direct violence. Thanks to pressure from the feminist and women's movement worldwide, many countries have passed laws and policies to address men's physical violence towards their partners. *Even when intimate partner violence is legally condemned, many still see it as a private matter and women are often held responsible for the violence inflicted upon them*.

Reference to the privacy of the home, in both law and practice, contributes not only to impunity for violence against women at the hands of family members, but also to impunity for violence against domestic workers. This creates a stigma, which often deters women and girls.

Common forms of intimate partner violence include;

- Physical
- Verbal
- Emotional (psychological)
- Economic

- Sexual abuse
- Physical abuse

It refers to the intentional use of force that causes bodily harm or injury to another person. This form of abuse may include hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, or any other actions that cause physical pain or injury.

As we delve into the distressing findings of my research on men beating women, a disconcerting narrative emerges one that perpetuates violence under cultural acceptance and control.

From the lens of traditional beliefs, the unsettling notion that "*wife beating is meant to tame a wife"* prevails. Some individuals, particularly within the context of African cultures, uphold the belief that women, much like babies, require periodic physical discipline to maintain order. This mindset reflects a deeply entrenched cultural norm, where the act of violence is perceived as a legitimate means of asserting dominance and control.

In my exploration of the community of Kibera and Meru, a prominent theme surfaces the perceived superiority of men over women. Rooted in the role of breadwinners, men in this community wield financial control, rendering women economically dependent.

This power dynamic contributes to the prevalence of unreported abuse, as women fear losing their financial lifelines. The vicious cycle of dependence on male providers becomes a barrier to breaking the chains of gender-based violence.

Further complicating the issue is the social pressure faced by men who feel compelled to resort to violence to maintain societal respect. The belief *that "if you don't beat your woman, she will look down upon you"* underscores the toxic masculinity perpetuated within these communities. Men who abstain from violence risk social ridicule, creating a climate where abusive behavior is not only condoned but also often encouraged.

Embedded in this acceptance of violence is the intergenerational transmission of abusive practices. The assertion that *'wife beating has been there since the days of our forefathers'* implies a cyclical perpetuation of violence, where individuals feel compelled to endure abusive relationships as an unfortunate cultural inheritance.

c. VERBAL ABUSE

Verbal involves the use of words or language to harm, threaten, or manipulate another person emotionally or psychologically. This can include insults, name-calling, yelling, belittling, or using language that is meant to degrade or control the victim. Verbal abuse can have a profound impact on a person's mental and emotional well-being.

d. EMOTIONAL ABUSE

It is using a survivor’s emotions or manipulating their mental state in order to control them is referred to as emotional or psychological abuse. The abuser tries to tear down a survivor’s self-esteem through mind games, insults, humiliation, or attempting to convince the survivor he or she is mentally unstable or to blame for the abuse. This can also be known as verbal abuse.

e. FINANCIAL ABUSE

This is when an abuser uses finances to exert power and control over a survivor.

This may include stealing the survivor's money, making a survivor beg for money, giving a survivor an allowance, opening credit cards in the survivor's name in order to ruin the survivor's credit, preventing the survivor from accessing bank accounts or not allowing to get a job.

f. ISOLATION

Have you heard of cases where a married man or woman is prohibited from meeting and engaging with their friends, family or relatives? Have you heard cases where an individual is not allowed to have time out with their peers unless their partner consents to it?

These are cases that lead to information that the partners have also tapped their communication devices to ensure they are aware of whom the individual is communicating to at times even without their partner's consent. Some might quickly conclude that the said individual is insecure or maybe they were cheated on but all the same, isolation and stalking are wrong as individuals have a right to freedom.

g. SEXUAL ASSAULT (SA)

Any sexual contact or behavior occurs without explicit consent of the individual is sexual assault. Some forms of sexual assault include attempted rape, fondling or unwanted sexual touching, forcing an individual to perform sexual acts, such as oral sex or penetrating the perpetrator's body, and penetration of the survivor's body, also known as rape.

h. SEXUAL VIOLENCE BY NON-PARTNERS

Sexual violence by non-partners includes for example sexual assault, sexual harassment, rape and gang rape. WHO statistics show that globally 7% of women have been exposed to sexual violence outside a relationship.

However, statistics are unreliable and numbers vary, and in some contexts, sexual violence by non-partners is far more prevalent. Gang rape is a violent crime in which various men use sexualized acts to intentionally harm and hurt mostly women and girls, but also men and boys are victims.

These acts are expressions of misogynistic, xenophobic, racist, homophonic norms that produce and reproduce socialization processes that victimize and devalue women and femininity, and high levels of economic poverty, unemployment, social exclusion and marginalization seem to increase the violence.

i. HONORING VIOLENCE OR VIOLENCE IN THE NAME OF HONOUR

These concepts refer to violence against family members (usually women and girls) conducted with reference to the shame and dishonor a person is supposed to have brought to their family and/or community.

This may include kin in a wide sense, but also religious, ethnic, national, political or regional affiliation. Honor violence may include physical, sexualized and psychological violence as well as other forms of control such as forced marriages or coerced marriages of women with the men who raped them. Not only 'actual' behavior, but also how the community perceives a woman, or in some cases a man's, behavior can be interpreted as shameful.

Lost virginity, adultery or rumors of the same are perceived as an irreparable dishonor on the family/community, which in extreme cases lead to decisions to murder – an 'honor killing'.

j. EARLY/CHILD MARRIAGE

It is a formal or informal union before the age of 18. Ealey marriage is a form of GBV as it robs girls of their right to childhood, health, education and security.

In the 2014 "State of the World Population", UNFPA notes that every day 39 000 girls become child brides, or about 140 million in a decade. Consequences of early/child marriages can include: domestic violence and rape, undesired pregnancies, illegal abortions, inadequate or lacking pregnancy follow-up and antenatal care leading to high-risk delivery and heightened risk of the death of very young expecting mothers.

Early/child marriage often occurs in contexts of poverty, and is increasingly an issue amongst conflict affected *communities although girls are the most affected by early/child marriage, it is a reality for boys as well.*

Lived Experiences

NOWHERE TO RUN

There was a figure at the door. It was a woman's figure. She did not even knock at the door. She got in furiously almost knocking down Ruth who had gotten up from her seat to see who it was at her door.

"Joyce, why do you enter like a thief?"

Joyce unwrapped the *leso* that was holding her baby on her back and gave it to Ruth, her mother.

Mom: "*Joy, can you please sit down! Are you crying? Wipe those tears right now, stupid girl. What are you crying about?"*

"Did you even have breakfast before you left?"

Joyce: *"With death chasing us down?"*

George (her father) entered the room upon hearing the commotion.

Father: *"Joyce, what has brought to back here? And why are your children here too?"*

Mother: *"What do you mean, George? This is her home too."*

Father*: "She can't leave her own home and come here. Who's making breakfast for your husband if you are here this early?"*

Mother: *"Is that all you care about?"*

Father: "*Do not speak to me like that Ruth (Mother). You know it is your foolish daughter's stupid behavior that got her kicked out. All this talking to you is making me hungry. When I'm back from the cowshed make sure breakfast is ready"*

George left the house and immediately after uttering those words. Ruth looked at her daughter's eyes and saw her cry.

Mother: *"What is it this time dear?"*

Joyce wiped her tears quickly but more stinging tears flowed down her face. She went into her mother's room. Joy, the daughter of Joyce just sat still staring at her grandmother. She also wanted to cry but was struggling so hard to keep her tears from showing. She was just a child but had seen more than she should. She would grow up without a proper father figure in her life. Ruth was torn apart; whom does she deal with first, her husband, her daughter or her granddaughter?

She decided to make breakfast before dealing with the other two. Her husband would not understand if she did anything other than breakfast first.

She went to her bedroom to fetch some matches and found Joyce changing into fresh clothes. She stopped in her track upon seeing something. When Joyce realized her mother's presence, she acted fast but it was too late.

Mother: "*Joyce! Did your husband do that?"*

Joyce: *"No, I fell off a tree and the branches did that."*

Mother: *"And did you go to hospital after that?"*

Joyce: "Mother stop making a fuss. The tree wasn't that high."

Mother: *"I am going to make breakfast for your father…"*

Joyce: *"You mean all of us, right?"*

Mother: *"Yes. Definitely. Then you are going to tell me everything. I am your mother. You don't hide things from me."*

Ruth made breakfast and served her family.

George complained about her daughter, Joyce, how she was foolish and how she could not stay in her marriage without having to worry her mother.

Father: "*You chose that man for yourself; we didn't force you. If you cannot manage your marriage, stop keeping on coming to your mother for help. Have this in mind, we will not return his dowry to him if by any chance this nonsense of yours escalates*."

Joyce could not say anything to his father. How could she? This man's words had been final since she was young. She even wondered how he did not choose a suitor for him.

Mother: "*So we just wait for her to be killed then*?"

Father: "*I am the head of this home. What I say goes. Don't think your filthy words will change my mind*." He said angrily.

After that, breakfast was taken in silence. George finished his tea and went away.

Mother: "*Why did he whip you like that*?"

Joyce: "*One day I had gone to the market and came home late. His mother had received guests and Joy ate so much meat stew that some guest missed.*

Nevertheless, eggs were taken from my chicken pen and prepared for them. He came home and when he was told about that, he started caning Joy. I arrived home and found him beating Joy mercilessly. I confronted him and said that there was no harm in Joy eating at her mother's house, after all she was her grandmother." She narrated. Fresh tears broke from her eyes. She sobbed for a while.

Joyce: "*She caned her so badly. Even though she is not her blood child, did he have to cane her that way? He said that my daughter was making him feel ashamed in the eyes of the guests because they will think that he does not feed his family well. I told him that he really did not feed his family well. He then dragged me into our house and whipped me."*

Mother: *"I am so sorry dear. Have you tried being a little bit submissive?"*

Joyce: *"What do you mean, submissive, mother? Don't you think I have tried that? I am done being submissive. Mother, I will surely die, my husband will kill me. I am not going back mother, not again."*

Mother: *"But your father will not let you live here Joyce."*

Joyce: *“Do you even know why I came today? I am pregnant but he wants me to do all the chores. I wake up early, make breakfast, work in the garden, wash the clothes, do dishes, clean the house, tend the animals…mother, I am his wife and I’m carrying our baby but he won’t hear any of my pleas. Instead, he beats me up if I fail to do something and threatens to send me back to my parents.”*

Joyce knew her mother would not understand her. She had lived under the rule of her husband for years and even if she would start to understand, she may fail to accept. It will be too hard for her so denial would be the best way for her. She did not know why she thought she would understand.

At night, she went to sleep early to avoid her father’s nuisance. They did not meet but she sent her mother to tell her to leave the following day to avoid more trouble. Ruth had tried to protest but she received a slap across her face. The following day she woke up very early before everyone else. She slowly crawled out of bed, prepared herself and left. She did not even take her children with her.

Joyce: “*I’ll leave my father’s home, but I won’t go back to my husband, that imbecile. I hate him.*

I will go and seek shelter somewhere else. My own home cannot shelter me anymore. I have nowhere to run. My father might be cruel but will not dare hurt my children, mother will keep them safe.

To be continued...

Violence is a common method used to dominate management of power relations. By addressing GBV, we dismantle the foundation of an unjust system that sustains itself through power imbalance.

Statistics

In Kenya, between 39% to 47% of Kenyan women experience GBV in their lifetime, among the highest rates in the world.

GBV towards pregnant women is estimated to be 13.5%. A higher prevalence is never talked about, until it is screened for during clinic visits in hospitals.

Let us not forget that men also experience GBV. GVRC reports that 5% men and 3% boys report GBV at their centers. 38% of ever-married women have experienced sexual violence as compared to 4% of ever-married men.

41% of ever-married women have experienced physical or sexual violence while 11% of ever-married men have experienced either a form of violence from their partner.

Indicators of Domestic Abuse

Often, victims will seek counselling for peripheral issues without indicating the violence itself as the problem. Addressing the issues may, or may not be the intended purpose for seeking help. It is therefore helpful for the counsellor to be alert to signs that indicate abuse. Many of these indicators are not necessarily proof of abuse but they indicate that further inquiry may be required.

With appropriate probing, a counsellor might be able to identify violence as the presenting issues. At times, what pushes individuals to seek for therapy is just one area of need, but with a professional, there are able to tell and pick indicators that there is more than that.

Indicators of domestic violence include:

- Person may suffer from repeated injuries, or injured that are difficult to explain or account for.

- Women may feel isolated with no access to people (secluded and instructed not to call anyone including relatives or friends), no money, car, job and in extreme cases, children do not attend school.
- Women may frequently refer to their husband's temper or anger.
- Woman may be afraid of speaking or disagreeing with husbands in his presence.
- Husband my bully or verbally abuse her in public.
- Husband may be jealous and/or accuses wife of sexual infidelity.
- At times, involved individuals may deny experiencing violence. At times, the woman wants to cover up and down the blame.

Some actually say:

- *'It has never happened again'* who said it won't happen again and again?
- *'He is never like that.'*
- *'Maybe I did something that made them batter me'*

CHAPTER TWO

UNRAVELING THE CYCLE

The cycle of abuse remains a pervasive and deeply concerning pattern that affects individuals across diverse backgrounds. This destructive cycle, often passed down through generations, has far-reaching consequences on victims and perpetuators alike. In our exploration of the topic, we will delve into the layers of abuse, seeking to understand its key stages in the cycle, and ultimately empower individuals and communities to break free from its clutches.

Profile of a Domestic Abuser

It is possible, through careful observation, to make a profile of a person that is likely to be violent. Let us understand that people can change even in marriage. *However, at times, learn to pay attention to red flags also present during dating stage*. The following are not entirely dictated that this is an abusive individual, but in certain circumstances, they are really indicators or pointers to abusive individuals.

These include the following:

- Psychologically insecure individual.
- 20-45 years. Aggressive behaviour is distinguished from claims of growing up.
- Introvert: Appears depressed, tired and/ indifferent.
- Unnecessarily argumentative and does not admit to, or give in to logic / rational thinking.
- Enjoys watching violent: Violent actions / movies / programmes and partakes in such actions.
- Influence of occult, cultism and music.
- Fascination for weapons. These include sticks and knives.
- Violent tendencies, for example, fighting, breaking items or throwing things.
- General hatred of other people, including relatives, teachers, children and others. Some of the people have a negative attitude / perception with the community /society.
- Usually unable to express themselves well and clearly over small / petty issues.
- Often depressed and withdrawn.
- Poor family background, for example; excessive stress at home.

- Easily irritable, aggressive, hot tempered and hypersensitive to criticism
- Often rebellious, disobedient, non-conformists, uncooperative and does not like abiding by rules and regulations.
- People of all social and ethnic groups are involved in domestic violence. It is important to note that people have different personalities, and the fact that one person has any one of the above characteristics may not necessarily mean that they engage in domestic violence. Therefore, a combination of several aspects identified in the profile may help build such a character.

Cycle of Domestic Violence

Abusers use different types / kinds of behaviour to get and keep control over their partners. *Battering is never an incident but a way of controlling for power, sheer manipulation. Battering is an international act used to get control over the other person*.

The cycle is illustrated in the figure below as follows:

- *Normalising violence*. The cycle begins/starts with an incident when any one type of abuse of emotional, physical or economic abuse occurs.

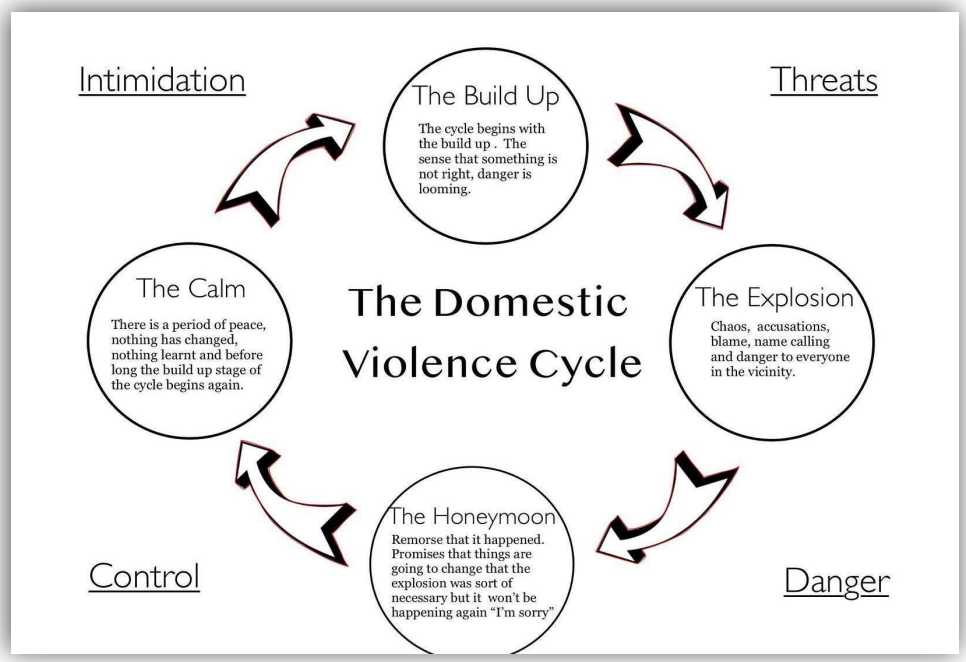
Tension starts to build up and minor incident/s begins. There is breakdown of communication, tension rises and the situation becomes increasingly unbearable.

- *Reconciliation*. A period of reconciliation follows when the abuser apologized for the abuse, and promises it will never happen again. S/he blames the victim for provoking the event: “Remember the way you answered me that is what provoked me”. The victim is blamed for the abuse and at times, the abuser denies that the abuse took place or claims that it was not as bad as the victim claims. The abuser may go to the extent of buying a gift/present for the victim or taking them out, or on holiday to show how apologetic / sorry they are.
- *Calming the waters*. A period of calm follows and the incident may be ‘forgotten’. During this period, no abuse takes place.

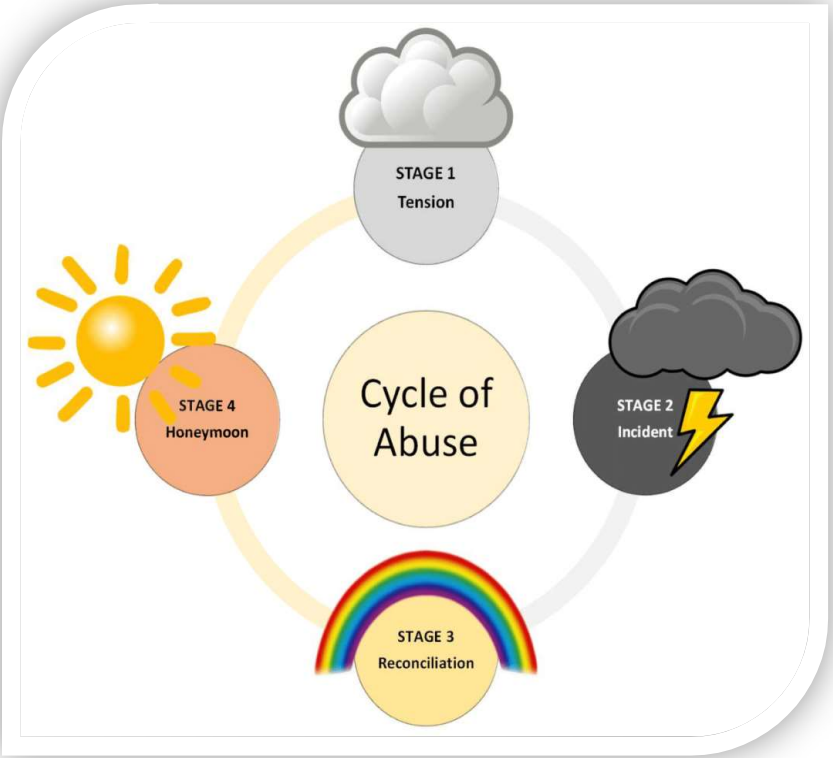
Some promises made during the reconciliation are met and there is (some) hope on the part of the victim that the abuse is over. Then before long, the cycle starts all over again.

The cycle can happen several times in an abused relationship, and it can last from a few hours, month/s, to several years, to a complete lifetime.

The cycle of Domestic Violence



The Cycle of Intimate Partner Violence



NORMALIZING VIOLENCE

Being raised in a violent home can have profound and lasting effects on individuals, influencing how they navigate relationships and potentially perpetuate patterns of abuse.

Childhood experiences shape individuals' attitudes, behaviors, and expectations within intimate relationship. The impact may differ between boys and girls, but both can be significantly affected. Here is an exploration of how this upbringing may contribute to perpetuating or experiencing the cycle of abuse:

- Witnessing violence
- Perpetrators (both boys and girls):

Children raised in a violent environment may come to see aggressive behavior as a normal way to resolve conflicts. If they have witnessed violence as a means of asserting control, they may replicate these patterns in their own relationships. This is seen where an individual wants to be heard in relationships, their voice is the only one that counts. If they are not heard, it resorts to violence.

Victims (both boys and girls): Children growing up in violent households may normalize abusive behavior, believing it is an acceptable aspect of relationships. Individuals who grow up witnessing violence may, in turn, replicate these patterns in their own relationships. For example, boys may adopt aggressive behaviors, while girls may come to accept and tolerate such behavior as part of their role.

This normalization can lead them to tolerate or even seek out abusive partners in adulthood. For example: *Most males in my community Meru who grew up witnessing their fathers beat their mother, are more likely to do the same when they get married. Girls who grew up seeing their mother experience violence and still put up with it also settle to the same, as this is what they know and regard as normal.*

ROLE MODELING

Boys: Boys may model their behavior after abusive male figures in the household, perpetuating the cycle of violence. They might internalize the idea that dominance and aggression are masculine traits, leading them to replicate these behaviors in their own *relationships.*

Girls: Girls learn to accept abusive behavior as part of their role in relationships. Witnessing their mothers enduring abuse may lead them to believe that submission and tolerance are expected, potentially perpetuating the cycle. This can lead to a learned acceptance of mistreatment, contributing to a cycle where girls may tolerate or expect violence in their own relationships

Impact on Emotional Regulation

Perpetrators *(both boys and girls):* Growing up in a violent home can hinder the development of healthy emotional regulation. Individuals may struggle to manage anger, frustration, or stress, resorting to violent or abusive behaviors as a way to cope.

Victims *(both boys and girls):* Children who experience violence may develop poor self-esteem and struggle with anxiety and trust issues.

These challenges can affect their ability to form healthy relationships and make them vulnerable to abusive dynamics as they feel it is normal or deserved.

Power Imbalance and Control

Perpetrators*:* Witnessing power imbalances in childhood may lead individuals to seek control in their own relationships. This need for control can manifest in various forms of abuse, where the perpetrator asserts dominance to maintain power.

Victims*:* Children who witnessed power imbalances may, as adults, find themselves in relationships characterized by control and manipulation.

CHAPTER 3:

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

Gender-based violence (GBV) can have various underlying causes, and it often stems from deeply rooted social, cultural, and economic factors. Here are some common reasons for GBV:

1. ***Power Imbalance****:* GBV is frequently linked to power imbalances between genders. Societal norms and stereotypes may contribute to a perception of one gender being superior to another, leading to the misuse of power and control.

2. ***Social Norms and Patriarchy****:* Traditional gender roles and patriarchal structures can perpetuate inequalities, reinforcing the belief that one gender has superiority over the other. These norms may contribute to justifying and tolerating violence.

3. ***Cultural Practices****:* Some cultural practices may normalize or even encourage forms of violence.

Practices such as forced marriages, female genital mutilation, and dowry-related violence can contribute to the prevalence of GBV.

4. ***Economic Inequality****:* Economic disparities between genders can lead to power imbalances and contribute to violence. Financial dependence or economic stressors may exacerbate tensions and trigger abusive behaviors.

5. ***Lack of Education****:* Limited access to education, especially for women, can perpetuate traditional gender roles and contribute to a lack of awareness about healthy relationships and alternatives to violence.

6. ***Discrimination and Stigma****:* Discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity can contribute to an environment where violence is tolerated. Stigmatization of survivors may discourage reporting and seeking help.

7. ***Weak Legal Protections****:* Inadequate legal frameworks, enforcement, and protection for victims can create an environment where perpetrators feel impunity, and survivors may be hesitant to report incidents.

8. ***Media Influence:*** Media portrayal of gender roles and relationships can reinforce stereotypes and contribute to the normalization of certain behaviors, potentially perpetuating violence.

9. ***Conflict and Crisis:*** In situations of conflict or crisis, GBV rates often escalate. The breakdown of social structures, displacement, and the prevalence of weapons can contribute to an environment conducive to violence.

10. ***Psychological Factors:*** Individual factors, such as mental health issues, substance abuse, or a history of trauma, may contribute to violent behavior. These factors, when combined with broader social issues, can increase the risk of GBV.

Roots and Causes

- Suspicion of marital unfaithfulness
- Infidelity (defence mechanism)
- Male ego (male dominant ego, chauvinism)
- Power control
- Male aggression
- Unfulfilled sexual needs

- Cultural stereotyping factors (violence is discipline for a woman)
- Poor family upbringing
- Social factors such as financial instability
- Lack of a child, or boy child
- Biological
- Jealousy / envy
- Unmet sexual demands
- Finances or financial difficulty

JEALOUS AND LACK OF TRUST

Jealousy and lack of trust are major factors that cause violence in families.

Some violent men watch their wife's every move, cross-examine them about their present activities, about their past lives, search their clothing, read their diaries, phones, note book and even call their friends to find out their activities.

Morbid Jealousy

Some men are jealous of their unborn and born baby because they want all the love and attention from their wife.

Thus, they batter their wives when they are pregnant, force them to have an abortion, will beat their wives when sucking a baby or even because they did not attend to them because they were attending to the baby and/or immediately.

Other men will beat their wife because they are jealous that other men admire them.

SOCIETY NORMS AND GBV

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is deeply rooted in social norms, reflecting unequal power dynamics and traditional expectations related to gender roles. Social norms play a significant role in shaping attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions, contributing to the perpetuation of GBV. Here are several ways in which social norms have led to GBV:

GENDER INEQUALITY

a) *Expectations and Stereotypes:* Traditional social norms often dictate specific roles for men and women, reinforcing stereotypical expectations.

These expectations may include men being perceived as dominant, assertive, and powerful, while women are expected to be submissive, nurturing, and compliant.

b) *Power Imbalance:* Socially constructed gender roles create a power imbalance, where men are afforded more privilege and authority. This imbalance can lead to the justification of violence as a means of maintaining control and dominance.

NORMALIZATION OF AGGRESSION

Acceptance of Male Aggression: Some societies may normalize or trivialize male aggression, considering it a sign of strength or masculinity. This normalization can lead to the acceptance of violent behavior in various contexts, including intimate relationships.

Silencing Victims

Stigma and Shame: Social norms may contribute to the stigma and shame associated with being a victim of GBV. Victims, particularly women, may fear judgment if they speak out, leading to underreporting and perpetuating a culture of silence.

Shame and stigma are what has led individuals to keep violence as a secret.

CULTURAL PRACTICES AND CUSTOMS

Harmful Traditional Practices: Some cultural practices, such as forced marriages, female genital mutilation, or honor killings, perpetuate violence against women. These practices are deeply ingrained in societal norms, making it challenging to challenge or eradicate them.

LACK OF COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION

Limited Understanding of Consent: Social norms may contribute to a limited understanding of consent, particularly in intimate relationships. Lack of education about healthy relationships and consent can lead to the normalization of coercive or violent behaviors.

POWER DYNAMICS

Power dynamics play a crucial role in understanding and addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

Power dynamics refer to the ways in which power is distributed, exercised, and maintained within relationships and societies. GBV often stems from imbalances in power between different genders, particularly where societal structures reinforce unequal power relations between men and women.

How can power dynamics contribute to GBV?

FORMS OF POWER IN GBV:

Economic Power: Economic disparities, where one gender holds more financial resources and opportunities than the other, can lead to power imbalances. Economic dependence or control can be exploited to perpetrate GBV where the financial stable at times violates the financially unstable.

Social Power: Societal norms and expectations often grant men more social power, influencing how relationships are perceived and reinforcing traditional gender roles. Social power imbalances contribute to the justification of violence to maintain control.

Political Power: Unequal representation in political spheres can perpetuate policies and laws that either protect or neglect victims of GBV.

The lack of political power for certain groups may hinder efforts to address and prevent violence.

WHICH IS IT?

- Is it in societies where men need to be more financially stable?
- Is it in cases where the financially stable woman has the male figure do all household chores?
- Is it in societies where household chores are meant to be feminine even when she already has a great workload?

IMPACT OF POWER DYNAMICS ON GBV

I. Control and Dominance: Perpetrators of GBV may use violence as a tool to assert control and dominance over their victims. This is particularly true in situations where one gender is socially or economically disadvantaged.
II. Intimidation and Fear: The powerful party in a relationship may use violence as a means of intimidating and instilling fear in the victim, thereby maintaining control through a climate of terror.

III. Perpetuation of Inequality: GBV can serve to perpetuate existing power imbalances. Violence may be used to keep certain individuals or groups marginalized, reinforcing a cycle of discrimination and inequality.

Sexism

Sexism is assumption about, the superiority of one's own sex. This is often accompanied by a stereotype or preconceived idea about the opposite sex. Sexism most commonly takes the form of an assumption of male superiority, especially in a dominated male patriarchal society, regarding girls and women as inherently inferior intellectually, psychologically and physically to boys and men. Both men and women share this view. Unfortunately, it has over time and in different societies shaped institutions.

Institutionalized sexism operates as social oppression.

For example, in leadership and politics, law, education, religion and other spheres of life where females are relegated and might automatically be screened out, giving advantage to males.

At first glance, this might not be obvious discrimination but it becomes clearer when the requirements bear no relation to our gender.

Sexism is closely connected to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and can be considered a contributing factor. Sexism involves discrimination or prejudice based on a person's gender, often favoring one gender over the other. In the context of GBV, sexism plays a significant role in perpetuating violence, particularly against women.

HERE'S HOW

i. *Power Imbalance*

Sexist cultural and social norms contribute to the acceptance of unequal power dynamics within relationships.

ii. *Normalization of Violence Against Women*
iii. *Lack of Support for Victims*
iv. *Objectification and Dehumanization*
v. For instance, *calling ladies and girls Kamwari karia*

IMPACT ON REPORTING AND PROSECUTION

Sexism is often intertwined with harmful cultural practices that discriminate against women.

TOXIC MASCULINITY

Men and women's lives are intimately linked with the psychology of men and women. This is closely related to societal notions of male and female, and with masculinity. Men and women's lives can be greatly enhanced through a study of the sexes and their implications on the gender of the individual.

For instance, rape, domestic. Men take violence and sexual harassment as dramatic examples of the patriarchal oppression of women. It would be possible in psychology to mitigate traumatic experiences of sexual harassment by developing prevention strategies that are more effective and treatment. This is through an enhanced understanding and interventions of males and females.

Masculinity refers to a set or sets of socially and culturally defined standards of maleness that men are expected to adhere.

These include roles, attitudes towards the male, conceptions of male, female, and expectations. There are multiple standards of masculinity as defined by various groups of people. These are key in the socialisation process and define male and females.

For example:

- *Crying is a sign of weakness*
- *Feeling pain is a sign of weakness*

Thus, crying and feeling pain are unacceptable for men and a sign of vulnerability. Thus, repressing emotions is a sign of strength for men and invulnerability. Boys learn emotions of invulnerability.

Males also learn physical aggression, toughness and status seeking. This process of being shamed, ridiculed and assaulted is aversive. Yet boys learn it by all costs.

Men meet several challenges and potential areas of conflict in efforts to meet standard demands associated with masculinity ideologies. This is often called sex role strain, gender role conflict or masculinity gender role stress. Men are restricted in expressing emotions, and this contributes to greater psychological distress and fear of intimacy.

Masculinity therefore has role conflict and stress related issues with emotional expressions, need for success and definitions of relationship. Masculinity has both positive and adverse effects.

POSITIVE / DESIRABLE EFFECTS OF MASCULINITY

Men holding more traditional concepts of masculinity may have strengths in certain areas in time of crisis such as:

- Problem solving: may develop certain solution skills
- Logical thinking, may be able to think more comprehensively especially in crisis.
- Anger expression: may be able to remain calm and problem focussed in times of crisis
- Men tend to subsume personal needs to the greater duty of family, and protecting and providing for family. This is because they view themselves as providers.
- Men are more prone to risk taking, and are able to take more risks and be involved in very risky behaviour. This is an advantage in various situations including business and work.

ADVERSE AND UNDESIRABLE EFFECTS OF MASCULINITY

a) *Emphasis on strength.*

Men are seen and expected to be strong and unemotional. This enables men to assume an upper hand in depressing situations, for example, they cannot cry including tragedies such as death. Men suppress all emotions. However, the long-term restriction on displaying emotions is apparent in other symptoms such as being paranoid, higher levels of depression, higher levels of anxiety, anger and abuse personalities.

b) *Toughness and Violence.*

Men are expected to be strong and tough. This can lead to aggression and violence. When provoked by another boy /man, they are expected to fight. Even a parent will encourage the boy to fight back. For example, men may be unable to express emotions such as grief and loss and may turn to less acceptable emotions such as drugs and substance of abuse and men are more likely than women to die from alcohol-related diseases.

Men may result to violence instead of being ashamed or dealing with other emotions. *In addition, men are more likely to die from suicide.* Most violent crimes are by men, including violence against females. Clubs and sports such as wrestling, boxing, army, gangs, bullying in school encourage violence.

c) *Risk Taking.*

Men are expected to be aggressive, fearless and invulnerable. The extent to which a man is considered masculine is determined by the willingness to engage in extreme behavior. Men are more likely than women to take risks than are injurious and can lead to death, and most of these are preventable.

d) *Invulnerability.*

Men sometimes think they are not prone to danger. For example, in taking unnecessary risks such as gang crime and other risk behaviors.

For example, a man may be valued by ability to consume large amounts of alcohol or number of packets of cigarettes one smokes.

Likewise, the faster the car, boat, plane and the acrobatics make the hero. This includes high heights.

Though men are more likely than women to die of accidents and to be injured in risky behavior, they are less likely to take precautions. Thus, many deaths of men due to accidents, fatal clashes and disease are premature and unnecessary. Men are less likely to see a doctor for a check or to seek health information.

e) *Powerful and Successful.*

Men are taught to be powerful, moneymakers and self-determined. They are taught to be in control, competitive and successful. This explains why many men tend to carry a weapon, a knife, gun, *rungu,* spear and other weapons. This is a symbol of power.

Once again, this is the reason why men are the ones who commit most violence including reported crimes. Violence is also evident in the media including movies that display men as aggressive and powerfully in control. Equally, men who feel they are not powerful for various reasons are likely to be distressed, and psychologically disturbed and turn to violence and/ or drugs for solace.

f) Health and Safety.

Men are often uncomfortable discussing their health and healthcare services. They believe in their own health and are reluctant to seek medical care. For example, many men rarely seek treatment after injury or in case of an accident. Seeking help implies that they are vulnerable or weak, and men are convinced they are strong. For example, sunscreen to prevent skin cancer, going for cancer screening, wearing of seat belts and males spending less time with the doctor.

Women are more likely to value cooperation, caring and nurturing, while males seem to be more attracted to competition, goals, and goal setting. Women are more likely to be feeling types and men thinking types. Men are more likely to slap, beat, kick or choke. They are also more likely to attack with a weapon even by an intimate partner and in hate crimes. Men are also more likely to indulge in drugs and substance abuse.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE AFTERMATH

Gender-based violence is not a private matter; but a human rights violation that affects many spheres in life. It occurs in every region of the world, affecting individuals and families of diverse income and socio-demographic groups. These harmful effects are multifaceted and can be physical, psychological, social and economic. GBV undermines the health, dignity, security, and autonomy of persons affected, yet remains surrounded by a culture of silence. While women and girls are most at risk to many forms of gender-based violence due to their increased vulnerability and marginalization, we must not overlook the impacts of violence against men and boys.

It is reported, "*Globally, men and boys are disproportionately likely to perpetuate most forms of violence and to die by homicide and suicide*".

Here are some of the significant effects:

- Physical Health Consequences

Injuries: Physical violence can result in immediate injuries such as bruises, cuts, fractures, or even life-threatening conditions.

Reproductive Health Issues: GBV can lead to sexual and reproductive health problems, including sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unwanted pregnancies, and gynecological issues.

- Psychological Impact

Trauma and PTSD: Survivors of GBV may experience trauma, leading to symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Depression and Anxiety: GBV can contribute to long-term mental health issues, including depression, anxiety, and other mood disorders.

Suicidal Thoughts: Some individuals may contemplate or attempt suicide because of the psychological distress caused by GBV.

- Social Consequences

Isolation: Survivors often withdraw from social interactions due to shame, fear, or stigma associated with the violence.

Disruption of Relationships: GBV strains relationships with family and friends, leading to breakdowns in trust and communication.

Homelessness: Some survivors may become homeless because of fleeing abusive environments.

- Economic Impact

Financial Dependence: GBV can trap survivors in financially dependent relationships, limiting their ability to escape abusive situations.

Lost Productivity: The physical and psychological effects of GBV may lead to absenteeism from work or reduced productivity.

- Generational Impact

Cycle of Violence: Children who witness or experience GBV may perpetuate the cycle of violence in their own relationships.

Interference with Parenting: GBV can interfere with a parent's ability to provide a safe and nurturing environment for their children.

- Poor help/ Health-Seeking Behavior

Delayed Medical Help: Due to fear, stigma, or financial constraints, survivors may delay seeking medical attention, leading to worsened health outcomes.

- Legal Consequences

Legal Issues: Survivors may face legal challenges related to protective orders, custody battles, or criminal proceedings against the perpetrator.

- Impact on Community and Society

Undermining Social Fabric: GBV weakens the social fabric of communities by eroding trust and cooperation.

Economic Burden: GBV imposes a significant economic burden on society through healthcare costs, legal expenses, and lost productivity.

- Effects of GBV to Children & Women

Violence against women is always also violence against their children, even if these are not directly attacked. Just witnessing the violence, for example, can be enough to lead to:

- Sleep Disturbances
- Developmental Disorders
- Aggressiveness
- Anxiety

Furthermore, another very serious aspect that needs considering is the passing down of both violent behavior and trauma to subsequent generations. Children who experience or witness violence and its consequences learn to accept this violence as a way to solve conflicts.

Women who have experienced sexualized violence can pass on the traumatic experience to their children and grandchildren subconsciously as transgenerational trauma in the form of anxieties, stress and defensive responses. This can have an adverse effect on bonding within families.

- **Effects of violence against women for society**

Violence against women has far-reaching consequences for society. Transgenerational trauma, which can be handed down from survivors of sexualized violence to their children, negatively affects the psychological health of whole families.

Patriarchal structures, based on sexism and other forms of discrimination, directly create a climate of violence in which women do not feel safe to move around in public spaces or to fully live their lives.

When women are restricted from accessing education or choosing their profession, a society is missing the potential contribution from half of its population. Furthermore, many women cannot help secure the livelihood of their family, or only in a minor way.

Poor educational opportunities for girls and women then correlate directly with poverty, child and maternal mortality, and even the climate catastrophe.

- **Effects to State and The Economy**

The participation of women in many political and economic sectors is severely restricted because of the discrimination against them.

This means society does not benefit from the potential of a large part of its population. Studies show that the extent of the participation of women has a direct influence on the stability of a state and on its economic success.

Women who have been subjected to violence suffer more frequently from physical and psychological injuries, leading to their absence from the workplace, which reduces the productivity of companies and harms the national economy.

Society also bears the costs of violence against women in the form of the costs for women's safe houses, court cases, police work, and psychological or medical treatments.

Furthermore, as is recognized in UN Resolution 1325, sexualized violence is both a serious obstacle to successful peace negotiations and a threat to peace and stability in the long term.

Peace agreements made without the participation of women or consideration of their needs cannot be sustainably successful.

- **Adverse Effects of GBV to Men**

"Research conducted in a broad range of contexts and regions confirms that *the physical, mental, social, and economic impact of sexual violence on men and boys can be devastating, with both short and long-term effects."*

Physical consequences on males normally includes injuries to the genital areas, urinary and bowel incontinence, sexually transmitted infections including HIV, sexual dysfunction, and infertility.

Psychologically, male survivors may feel shame and guilt. "*Some survivors struggle with gender identity and sexual orientation given the common myth that male survivors are, or become, gay". They may experience anxiety and depression, tendencies for self-harm, suicidal thoughts, sleep disorders, anger and aggression, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, and engage in risky sexual behavior.*

Socially, men and boys may be ridiculed, blamed for the assault, and adult men may be abandoned by their wives and families. Some adult survivors may be unable to perform their job duties, resulting in job loss and increasing their risk of poverty.

Boy survivors may leave school, develop behavioral problems, or engage in negative coping strategies, such as substance abuse.

We recognize that gender norms and inequalities, and gender-based violence affect health outcomes for all people. Gender-based violence is not discriminatory and can happen to men and boys in addition to women and girls. Health, legal, and support services must acknowledge violence against men and boys so we can best meet their needs in the communities we serve.

CHAPTER FIVE

REAKING THE SILENCE

Violence in all of its forms is a violation of human rights and we must ensure we are working to combat it at every opportunity.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a pervasive issue that affects individuals across the globe, yet the stigma surrounding it often creates barriers that prevent survivors from speaking out and seeking help. "Breaking the Silence" is an important initiative aimed at dismantling these barriers, fostering open conversations, and advocating for a society where survivors feel empowered to report and seek support.

Research has shown that boys are more likely than girls to face abuse from a non-family member, and perpetrators are often older males known to the survivor. This also occurs in cases where young children are sexually assaulted. People known to these individuals perpetuate majority of such incidences.

Social Stigma

Social stigma refers to the negative attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes that society may attach to individuals who have experienced or are affected by GBV. This stigma can manifest in various ways and can significantly affect survivors, creating barriers to reporting, seeking help, and reintegrating into society.

Research across institutions reports that the true number of survivors is vastly underreported especially when it comes to male survivors of GBV. “There are many barriers that may prevent a man from disclosing his experience not only is there a lack of awareness about the issue and its prevalence, but societal expectations about what it means to “be a man” may cause a survivor to suppress his trauma.

From an early age, men receive the message that they should never be, or even appear, vulnerable or weak; the idea that men cannot be victims is central to gender socialization

Barriers

These are things that hinder an individual from speaking out. They include:

Stereotypes

Men and boys may not successfully be able to fully access and utilize health, legal, and support services as health providers and authorities "may not know how to identify signs of sexual violence against males, due to gendered assumptions of women as victims and men as perpetrators. Some may be hostile, profess disbelief, or dismiss male victims outright"; which may also affect reporting.

It is very important that institutions learn *"to do the right thing at the right time for every person, every time. May it be to a male or female".*

Masculinity

Masculinity can contribute to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) when certain traditional or toxic norms associated with being "masculine" are reinforced.

These norms may include expectations of dominance, control, and aggression. When individuals feel pressured to conform to these societal expectations of masculinity, it can contribute to power imbalances and lead to behaviors that manifest as GBV.

Toxic masculinity may promote the idea that expressing vulnerability or seeking non-violent solutions is a sign of weakness, potentially fostering a culture where aggression becomes an accepted means of asserting control, especially within intimate relationships. It is essential to recognize that not all expressions of masculinity contribute to GBV, and efforts to promote positive and healthy masculinity can play a crucial role in preventing violence.

BLAMING AND SHAMING SURVIVORS

Stigma: Survivors of GBV may face blame and shame, with society questioning their choices, behaviors, or character.

Impact: This blaming and shaming contribute to a culture of silence, where survivors may be hesitant to speak out due to the fear of judgment and negative perceptions from others.

CULTURAL AND SOCIETAL NORMS

Stigma: Cultural norms and societal expectations can stigmatize those who have experienced GBV, perpetuating harmful beliefs and stereotypes.

Impact: Survivors may internalize these norms, feeling ashamed or reluctant to disclose their experiences, especially if such disclosure challenges prevailing cultural beliefs.

FEAR OF RETALIATION

Stigma: Survivors may fear retaliation or social backlash from their communities or even from the perpetrators if they speak out.

Impact: This fear can be a powerful deterrent to reporting GBV incidents, as survivors may prioritize their safety and well-being over seeking justice.

STEREOTYPING AND MARGINALIZATION

Stigma: GBV survivors may face stereotyping, with society attaching labels that can lead to marginalization.

Impact: This stereotyping may result in survivors being excluded, making it challenging for them to reintegrate into their communities and access necessary support.

NORMALIZATION OF VIOLENCE

Stigma: In some contexts, societal norms may contribute to the normalization of certain forms of violence, diminishing the perceived severity of GBV.

Impact: This normalization can lead to underreporting and a lack of societal outrage, perpetuating a cycle where GBV remains hidden and unaddressed.

GENDERED EXPECTATIONS

Stigma: Gender stereotypes may contribute to the stigmatization of survivors, especially if their experiences challenge traditional gender roles.

Impact: Survivors, particularly men or those who do not conform to stereotypical victim narratives, may hesitate to come forward due to concerns about not fitting societal expectations.

These barriers; prejudices; social taboos, fear of stigma and falling outside of masculine norms; and legal frameworks catered to one group, limits the access of men and boys to services they need and results in boys and men often delaying reports of abuse and receiving the assistance they need.

Society plays a very important role in the prevention of Intimate Partner Violence and in women's abilities to end their abusive relationships and recover from them. A multitude of factors influence and determine women's decisions and opportunities regarding leaving their partners. i.e.

- Individual (e.g., financial dependence)
- interpersonal (e.g., the need to protect their children) aspects
- community-oriented (e.g., social support)
- sociocultural (e.g., social norms about women's roles in a relationship)

However, IPV is still often considered exclusively a problem attributed to the individual or the couple.

SOCIETAL RESPONSES TO GBV SURVIVORS

- Blame (being held responsible for the abuse).
- Shame (being treated in a way intended to cause humiliation or distress).
- Discrimination (being treated differently or judged).
- Loss of status (not being valued as more powerful than or equally powerful to others who do not experience abuse).
- Isolation (being isolated by others).
- Dismissal/denial (facing issues where they are not believed, their abuse is downplayed, blatant unprofessionalism (receiving responses that are unethical or against victims' rights to competent care).

UNLEASHING THE VOICES

Addressing social stigma related to GBV involves challenging and changing societal attitudes, fostering empathy and understanding, and creating environments where survivors feel safe, supported, and encouraged to speak out.

Initiatives that promote education, awareness, and advocacy play a crucial role in dismantling stigma and creating a more supportive and empathetic society for GBV survivors.

Gender-based violence remains a significant human rights problem globally. No country, even those claiming high gender equality, has eliminated GBV. It affects one in three women and girls, regardless of factors like class, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, disability, or culture.

It does not have to. Every day, millions of people, groups, and organizations work to bring change at the family, community and national levels. Here are solutions to gender-based violence (GBV) that I have come across in my own work to end violence against women and girls.

CREATE AWARENESS THROUGH EDUCATION

GBV is a learned behavior, which can equally be unlearned. Education is a key solution to gender-based violence (GBV), which is a learned behavior and can be unlearned.

Men and women should know their rights, how to report violence, and reject harmful gender norms.

Understanding how patriarchal structures contribute to harmful gender norms is crucial. Communities and facilitators should be educated on recognizing and addressing GBV at various levels.

Violence against girls and women stems in male dominance and the socialization of men. Become educated on the roots of violence against girls and women! Read books and articles, join a group at school and attend any training available to you. Learn about the myths and realities of gender violence and understand how our society condones it.

UNDERSTAND THE SPECIFIC ROOT CAUSES OF GBV

While there are some consistent elements of gendered violence from one context to the next, we need to examine the particulars of a given situation in order to shift behaviors and attitudes.

The more specifically we can understand the systems of marginalization and patriarchal structures in place in a given community, the better we can find ways of addressing those systems and finding sustainable ways for people of all genders and generations to break harmful habits.

BELIEVE AND SUPPORT SURVIVORS

One of the biggest barriers to ending GBV today is that survivors are often not believed when they speak up. At times, they are judged. This creates additional stress and abuse for those who take that incredibly brave step the first step needed to break the cycle of GBV and also discourage other people suffering gendered violence from speaking out.

This not only harms those experiencing violence, but also entire communities. Gender-based violence thrives in silence, and one of the biggest things we need to do to end GBV is to first understand how widespread the problem is. Beyond believing survivors, we also need to ensure that they have the support they need after reporting their abuse.

Even if a woman is believed, she can also be stigmatized for being attacked.

No one who suffers from GBV should suffer further through societal exclusion. This is especially true for survivors of rape and sexual assault. At minimum, survivors of abuse should have access to quality healthcare (including psychosocial support), legal services, economic assistance, and shelters or safe spaces for themselves and their children.

PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO HIGH-RISK GROUPS

We know that GBV can happen to anyone, although women are more likely to be targeted than men are. Within that, however, are a number of different identities that can make certain women even more vulnerable to violence. A 2018 study from UNFPA reveals that girls and young women with disabilities face up to 10 times more gender-based violence than those without disabilities. Those with intellectual disabilities are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence.

FIND NON-HARMFUL ALTERNATIVES TO HARMFUL TRADITIONS

Some of the most common types of GBV are not actually regarded as harmful in some communities. For instance, female genital mutilation (FGM) has been regarded as a traditional rite of passage for young women.

A number of approaches are necessary to fight a harmful tradition like FGM, including engaging men as allies and strengthening community accountability. There are other ways of symbolizing a girl's transition into womanhood. Finding a healthy and safe way of doing so will keep the spirit of the tradition alive while adapting it for what we know now to be a risky practice.

CHALLENGE GENDER NORMS

Some gender norms that are not as violent or harmful, but still contribute to GBV. Many of these seem inoffensive at face value, such as the stereotype that women tend to the home while men go to work; or the notion that certain activities are "for boys" or "for girls."

However, all of these norms and stereotypes support a larger system of inequality between the genders that, at its worst, can turn violent. Much like a pandemic, we have to bring all cases; severe and mild under control in order to halt the spread.

Engage men as allies and partners

Women need to be supported and empowered, however any solution to GBV that does not engage men and boys is only going to work so well before it is undermined. There should be an approach that supports both men and women in transforming their attitudes and behaviors by questioning what it means to be a man or a woman, understanding how traditional beliefs may not work practically in contemporary society, and ultimately moving couples towards more positive and equal relationships.

Focus on community change

Gender-based violence may seem at times like an intimate issue, one that happens behind closed doors and out of the public eye. However, it is a community's responsibility to band together in order to end violence especially against women and girls.

Keep girls in school

Speaking of keeping girls in school…Child marriage and related forms of gendered violence may prevent girls from finishing their education. We know from data that girls who are missing an education are more susceptible to violence, especially at home. A girls' education should include topics like gender equality, consent, sexual reproductive health, and the notion that her potential in life is equal to that of a man's. By understanding these concepts and developing practical and intellectual skills alongside them all facilitated through a safe learning environment — younger generations of girls and women will be more capable of fighting back against GBV.

Empower women economically and financially

Many women lack the same financial and economic rights as men, including land ownership and the ability to set up a bank account. Leaving women dependent upon men for basics like their income and livelihoods means that we are also furthering the idea that women are "less than" their male counterparts. Establishing economic parity between the helps to reduce dependencies, break stereotypes, and build a foundation for widespread gender equality.

Treat GBV as a public health issue

Gender-based violence can affect survivors' physical and mental health long after the attack itself. Many forms of GBV specifically affect the health of the targets of such violence, including FGM and sexual assault. Survivors need to have access to the resources they need in the wake of these events, such as emergency contraceptives and STD screenings.

For women especially, they should feel safe confiding in a healthcare professional if they are experiencing violence at the hands of a family member or intimate partner. This can be a question initiated by their provider during a checkup, with follow-ups in place if the patient indicates they are at risk. Bringing in the healthcare system of any area (at the local and/or national level) makes GBV not simply a matter of laws and justice, but about the well-being and dignity of all community members.

Normalize mental health and psychosocial support systems

This is important for both survivors and perpetrators of GBV. Survivors deserve comprehensive psychosocial support to recover from an act of GBV, whether one-time or protracted.

However, perpetrators of GBV also need and deserve resources to build and maintain their own mental wellness.

Many perpetrators of GBV are not inherently "bad" or malicious. But, during a crisis such as a conflict that leads to displacement or a pandemic that leads to lockdowns and job losses — many lack the emotional resilience to navigate the stresses of an uncertain situation. This is especially true for men growing up in cultures where their sense of manhood is questioned if they can no longer provide for their families, which has proven to assist mental wellness and decrease negative coping mechanisms like gender-based violence.

Address other intersectional issues including climate change, hunger, and poverty.

GBV rarely happens in a vacuum. Many factors at play in a community may increase stress and vulnerability, such as climate change and the effects of which often cause displacement and place stress on available resources.

The UN notes that girls living in poverty are 2.5 times more likely to be forced into an early marriage (another form of GBV) in order to reduce the financial burden of their families. There is a bit of a chicken-and-egg scenario to these factors, however one thing is clear: Addressing GBV in tandem with any of the issues it has demonstrably linked to will help solve both issues at once.

Legislate, legislate, and legislate

Many of the advances towards ending GBV are only so effective. Women must be afforded the same legal protections as men in a society, with constitutional amendments to back these rights up for both current generations and those to come. This includes everything from outlawing honor killings and child marriage to guaranteeing land rights and equal pay for equal work, to even bolder moves, such as requiring a country is governing body to have gender parity. As we have seen from examples like the banning of FGM in Kenya, many citizens will ignore these laws, but having them in place means that communities can take on a greater role of accountability, knowing that the law is on their side.

a) Recognize the role of gender in violence.

While boys and men do experience abuse, it is important to remember that the majority of victims of violence are female and the majority of perpetrators of violence are boys and men.

b) Interrupt sexist and discriminatory language.

Words are powerful, especially when used by people who have power over others. We live in a society where words are used to put women down. Gendered name-calling sends the message that girls and women are less than fully human. When girls and women are seen as inferior, it becomes easier to treat them with disrespect and violence. Change the way you speak to help change the way you think.

c) Be critical and question.

Be critical and question how the media portrays girls and women, whether on television, online, in magazines or in music videos.

The media regularly uses images of violence against women, and sexually exploits girls and women to sell products.

Write or e-mail the company about their negative images of women and girls and do not buy their products.

d) Get the message out!

Youth do not need to rely on mainstream media to get the message out. Social media is a great way to share articles, tips and tools for the prevention of violence.

Report any photos and posts you see that exploit or degrade girls and young women on social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

e) Interrupt abuse.

If you see a person grab a girl or push her girl into her locker, say something to stop his abusive behavior. If one of your female friends is intoxicated at a party and being led away by a person, stop him from being alone with her and help her get home safely.

f) Stop sexual harassment.

Do not engage in any forms of sexual harassment, such as catcalling, and unwanted touching and be empowered to speak up against friends and peers who do. Do not look the other way!

g) Stop victim blaming.

Do not blame girls and women for how they choose to dress or judge their behavior. Violence cannot be prevented through limiting the freedoms of girls. This only allows the violence to continue because perpetrators become invisible and not held accountable, and those who witness the abuse remain silent.

h) Stop rape culture.

One way to stop rape culture is by not allowing people to minimize or normalize sexual assault and rape through jokes. If a peer tells a joke about sexual violence against girls and women, say you do not find it funny and you will not tolerate it.

i) *Call gender-based violence what it is – violence, not "bullying."*

Using the term "bullying" to label violence against girls and women masks the truth of what is really happening. By labeling it correctly, you are helping to stop a culture, which normalizes and minimizes violence against girls and women.

j) *Create safe spaces to discuss gender-based violence.*

Create an after-school club or group where you can openly discuss your views and experiences and support your peers.

k) *Confront and reflect on your ideas and beliefs.*

Reflect on your beliefs, actions and opinions and why you have them. Be honest, admit your faults and commit to changing the way you think and act.

l) Stop stereotyping men and women's roles.

Social roles and expectations may affect our decisions about relationships. Men are taught that expressing feelings is not "masculine." Examine your social roles and learn ways to express feelings directly and non-violently to create more meaningful interpersonal relationships. *Remember that violence is a choice, and it is preventable.*

Do not make excuses for friends and peers who are violent. Do not support the notion that violence is caused by mental illness, lack of anger management skills, alcohol and drug use, stress, etc. Violence is a choice, and it is preventable.

m) Be supportive and believe.

When girls tell you about violence they have experienced in their lives believe them. It is extremely rare for girls to invent false stories about sexual assault and violence. You may be the first and only person she tells. Believe her and support her decisions, without being judgmental.

n) *Be aware of available resources for girls and women.*

Familiarize yourself with the resources for girls and women in your community, including women's centers, shelters and antiviolence organizations. Be a positive resource for girls close to you by sharing information and making referrals.

o) *Be a mentor.*

Volunteer your time to preventing violence by speaking to others. This brings awareness to the issue, which will motivate others to act.

p) Understand and practice consent!

Boys and young men need to be respectful when entering into a sexual relationship and should not feel entitled to girls and women's bodies.

Just because you are, a 'nice guy' does not mean you should have any expectations.

Remember: Consent is like a cup of tea, it's never forced.

CHAPTER SIX

SEEKING REFUGE

At times, individuals experience violence are they are not aware of places or institutions where they can get assistance. It is very important to understand that the world is changing. The government, institutions and individuals are setting up places where survivors can be assisted. It is very important to seek for assistance in times of need.

EXISTING PLACES TO SEEK FOR ASSISTANCE

The following are active spaces in Kenya where GBV survivors are assisted and attended to.

- **Sound Mental Health**

Sound Mental Health is a wellness-focused organization dedicated to advancing mental health awareness and support. Rooted in the belief that emotional well-being is fundamental to personal and societal growth, Sound Mental Health serves as a hub for advocacy, education, and intervention.

The organization is particularly renowned for its innovative programs, including nature walks designed to promote holistic healing and youth-led forums that address mental health challenges in communities.

Beyond its outreach initiatives, Sound Mental Health specializes in creating safe spaces for individuals to explore and strengthen their mental health. By combining evidence-based practices with creative community engagement, the organization fosters resilience and empowers people to thrive.

Central to its mission is the integration of counseling services and wellness activities, ensuring participants receive both practical tools and emotional support.

Recognizing the importance of addressing stigma, Sound Mental Health prioritizes awareness campaigns that challenge misconceptions about mental health. These efforts extend to collaborations with schools, workplaces, and faith-based organizations, where tailored programs promote psychological well-being.

To contact Sound Mental Health or learn more about their initiatives, reach out via:

Email: **info@soundmental.org**
(www.soundmental.org)

- **Healthcare Assistance Kenya**

Healthcare Assistance Kenya (HAK) is a humanitarian Non-Governmental Organization that operates the only and the first-ever Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Rapid Response System and Helpline 1195 that today supports survivors of GBV from grassroots to break the silence and quickly access GBV services through helpline **1195** after a violation.

The main aim of this project is to help survivor's access quick GBV services on referral through a confidential SMS system for timely prevention and treatment of infections such as HIV.

Email: **info@hakgbv1195.org**

❖ Gender Violence and Recovery Centre

The Nairobi Women's Hospital is known for quality healthcare provision especially to women and girls, and so the Gender Violence and Recovery Centre is an addition to its core competence of health provision, but with a focus on victims of gender-based violence.

Beyond shelter and physical protection from harm, the Centre is also keen on psychosocial support and awareness to the community on gender violence, a key step in causing attitude and behavior change against gender-based violence. It has also been involved in providing training against GBV to various parties such as corporates members of the disciplined forces and the Judiciary.

Helpline number is **+254 709 667 000** or **+254 719 638 063.**

❖ FIDA Kenya

Members of the public are now able to access counsellors, and lawyers free of charge on FIDA's toll-free number **0800-720-50.**

Not only is the line free of charge, but they also offer legal advice and psychosocial support, which is professional and confidential as well.

Phone No.: **0722 509 760**

Email: **info@fidakenya.org**

- **Kenya Men Engage Alliance**

KEMEA Network views gender equality as integral to its operations and for the creation of nonviolent and gender-just societies in Kenya.

The network membership includes community-based organizations, institutions, government departments and individuals working with boys and men in HIV and AIDS, Positive fatherhood, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual reproductive health rights (SRHR).

Website:
http://menengage.org/regions/africa/kenya/

❖ **Child line Kenya**

Child line Kenya works in partnership with the Government to STOP child abuse and provide a safe environment for all children. They offer the only nationwide helpline service dedicated to children that runs 24 hours toll-free and is accessible by simply dialing **116.**

Phone Number: **+254 722 116 116**

Email: **116@childlinekenya.co.ke**

RESCUE CENTERS

- **Tumaini Girls Rescue Centre**

Located in Meru County, Tumaini Girls Rescue Centre facilitates the protection, rehabilitation and reintegration of girls who may have experienced or face danger of sexual violence, physical or psychological abuse, while guiding them spiritually with Christian values. The Centre also collaborates with other community home shelters and acts as a referral point and a collaborative center especially in providing shelter for boys in distress.

It has an in-house resident capacity of 60 girls with the potential to support 300 boys and girls under its community program.

Tumaini Girls Rescue Centre helpline number is **+254724370653**

- **Wangu Kanja Foundation**

The Foundation was born after its founder, Wangu Kanja, went through a gruesome sexual and physically violent experience 20 years ago. As was the case at the time, the society castigated her and this brought out the need in her to set up a place where sexual violence victims can seek solace after the experience. Apart from awareness creation, the center provides medical aid, psychosocial and legal support, in addition to financial empowerment to survivors.

Wangu Kanja Foundation helpline number is **+254722790404**

- **Medicins Sans Frontieres (MSF's Lavender House Clinic- Mathare, Nairobi)**

Run by the MSF (Doctors without Borders) Lavender House Clinic is a rescue center for victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in Mathare Nairobi County.

Owing to prolonged social and economic segregation, sexual and gender-based violence is prevalent in slums and other low income earning areas such as Mathare hence the need for the Clinic. The clinic offers medical and psychosocial support to the victims, as gender violence may also result in mental health issues if left unattended.

If you are going through a mental health crisis and need help, reach out to a counsellor or a psychologist. If you are going through abuse or you know a person going through abuse, reach out me; KINYA N. GITONGA on social media or +254796037994 for sessions.

GENDER DESKS

At times, individuals fear engaging or reporting cases of violence at police posts especially in Kenya

It is important to note that majority of the government hospitals have a Gender desk where one can seek assistance from.

Institutions of higher learning too have set up places where students can seek assistance. For instance, The University of Nairobi has a gender desk. Let's not hesitate from speaking out and seeking assistance.



Walking Away

Walking away in times of violence can be a crucial act of self-preservation and a strategy to ensure personal safety. The essence of walking away in such situations is grounded in the following key principles:

a. *Physical Safety:*

Leaving a violent situation is a fundamental step to avoid physical harm. Walking away can create distance and reduce the immediate threat of violence.

b. *Emotional Well-being:*

Walking away allows individuals to protect their emotional well-being by removing themselves from an environment that may be emotionally abusive or traumatizing. It provides an opportunity to seek a safer space for mental health.

c. *Conflict De-escalation:*

Leaving a violent or confrontational situation can contribute to de-escalation. Removing oneself from the immediate conflict can prevent further escalation and potential harm.

d. Empowerment and Autonomy:

Choosing to walk away is an empowering act that reaffirms one's autonomy and control over their own life. It signifies a refusal to be a passive victim and a commitment to personal agency.

e. Breaking the Cycle:

Walking away can disrupt the cycle of violence. By refusing to engage in or tolerate violent behavior, individuals take a stand against the normalization of violence and set a boundary for acceptable conduct.

f. Seeking Help:

Leaving a violent situation may be a precursor to seeking help from support networks, law enforcement, or professionals who can assist in addressing the root causes of the violence and providing resources for recovery.

g. Preventing Escalation:

Walking away can prevent the situation from escalating further. This action can reduce the risk of severe harm and provide an opportunity for calmer heads to prevail.

h. Promoting Personal Growth:

Walking away reflects a commitment to personal growth and well-being. It acknowledges that individuals deserve to live in an environment free from violence and strive for healthier relationships.

It is important to note that the decision to walk away is a personal one, and the context of each situation may vary. In cases of ongoing violence or abuse, seeking professional help.

CURRENT LEGAL FRAMEWORKS ADDRESSING GBV

Kenya's legal framework encompasses a variety of international, regional, and national instruments aimed at addressing sexual violence and promoting human rights. The Constitution of Kenya, 2010, serves as the foundational document, integrating international principles into national law. Article 2(5) and (6) of the Constitution dictate that general principles of international law become part of Kenyan law upon ratification of treaties or conventions.

KEY LEGAL INSTRUMENTS AND LEGISLATION

a. Constitution of Kenya, 2010:

Article 19 (2) emphasizes the importance of protecting human rights, and Article 25(a), 29(d), and (f), and 50 prohibit torture or cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment.

Article 27 ensures equal protection for both genders, prohibiting discrimination and mandating measures to address past discrimination.

Article 28 affirms the inherent dignity of every person, and Article 30 prohibits slavery, servitude, and forced labor.

b. Penal Code:

While the Penal Code prohibits violence, it lacks specificity in addressing Sexual Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). Challenges arise from the absence of distinct offenses such as spousal battery.

c. Children's Act:

The Act safeguards the rights of children, prohibiting violence, exploitation, female circumcision, early marriage, and other harmful practices. It explicitly prohibits sexual exploitation of children.

d. Sexual Offences Act, 2006:

Enacted to combat rising sexual violence, the Act criminalizes a range of behaviors, including rape, sexual assault, child pornography, and sexual harassment. It recognizes sexual harassment as a distinct crime.

e. Criminal Procedure Code:

Section 176 empowers courts to promote reconciliation in cases of personal offenses, allowing for settlements on terms approved by the court.

f. Protection against Domestic Violence Act:

This Act empowers individuals in domestic relationships to seek protection orders, providing a legal recourse against domestic violence.

g. Police Service Standing Orders (PSSO), 2017:

Chapter 67 outlines how the police should respond to sexual violence cases, prohibiting such acts by police officers and establishing mechanisms for reporting and investigation.

h. Employment Act:

Section 6 defines and outlaw's sexual harassment in the workplace, obligating employers with twenty or more employees to develop a sexual harassment policy in consultation with employees or their representatives.

i. International and Regional Instruments:

CEDAW, the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, Guidelines on Combating Sexual Violence in Africa, the Maputo Protocol, CAT, and the Rome Statute contribute to Kenya's legal framework, reinforcing commitments to prevent, investigate, and punish gender-based violence.

Kenya's legal landscape reflects a commitment to human rights, gender equality, and the prevention of sexual violence, although challenges persist in addressing gaps within the legal system, especially in the context of SGBV.

CHAPTER SEVEN

UNSEEN WOUNDS

Gender based violence of all forms has adverse effects on several domain of life. In the previous chapters, we have learnt the effect of GBV men and women, the society and children at large. *Within the haunting echoes of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), the invisible scars etched upon the psyche of survivors reveal a profound and often overlooked aspect of their trauma.*

THE IMPACT OF GBV ON MENTAL HEALTH

Does GBV has an impact on one's mental health? Do such compromise one's wellness? Yes. Mental health and wellness are key and it is greatly affected by violence of any form. The following are common mental health disorders caused by GBV.

I. TRAUMA

Trauma manifests in various ways, and individuals may experience a combination of symptoms. Here are some common signs of trauma, particularly in the context of GBV survivors:

- *Flashbacks and Intrusive Memories*

Reliving the traumatic event through vivid and distressing memories.

Flashbacks that make the survivor feel like they are back in the traumatic situation.

- *Avoidance*

Avoiding reminders of the traumatic event, including places, people, conversations or activities.

Steering clear of conversations related to the traumatic experience. At times individuals report being triggered by images, sounds or even smells that reminds them of the traumatic experience.

- *Hyper arousal*

Heightened state of alertness, leading to difficulty sleeping or concentrating.

Irritability, anger outbursts, or an exaggerated startle response.

- *Negative Changes in Thoughts and Mood*

Persistent negative beliefs about oneself, others, or the world.

Feelings of isolation, guilt, shame, or diminished interest in activities once enjoyed.

- *Difficulty Trusting Others*

Struggling to trust people, including friends, family, or new relationships.

Fear of vulnerability and concerns about being betrayed again.

- *Physical Symptoms*

Somatic complaints such as headaches, gastrointestinal issues, or chronic pain. Changes in appetite sleep disturbances, or other stress-related physical symptoms.

- *Emotional Numbing*

Feeling emotionally detached or numb as a way of coping with overwhelming emotions.

Difficulty experiencing joy, love, or other positive emotions.

- *Hypervigilance:*

Being excessively watchful or on guard, expecting danger at any moment.

Difficulty relaxing or feeling safe, even in non-threatening environments.

- *Substance Abuse*

Engaging in substance use as a way to cope with emotional pain.

Escaping from or numbing the trauma through alcohol, drugs, or other substances.

- *Impaired Relationships*

Struggling with forming and maintaining healthy relationships.

Difficulties in communication, trust, and intimacy with others.

- *Self-Harming Behaviors*

Engaging in self-destructive behaviors as a way of coping with emotional pain.

Acts of self-harm, including cutting or substance misuse.

It is important to note that each survivor's experience is unique, and not everyone will exhibit the same signs. Additionally, these signs may vary in intensity and duration. Not forgetting the existence of vicarious trauma.

Vicarious trauma occurs when individuals who support or bear witness to the stories and experiences of GBV survivors absorb and internalize the trauma, leading to negative effects on their own well-being.

II. ANXIETY

Anxiety refers to a heightened state of apprehension, fear, and worry experienced by survivors because of their traumatic experiences. Anxiety is a common manifestation of the impact of GBV.

Here are some ways in which anxiety may manifest in GBV survivors:

- *Hyper arousal*

Survivors of GBV may experience a constant state of hyper arousal, characterized by heightened sensitivity to potential threats.

This heightened alertness can lead to difficulties in relaxing, concentrating, or sleeping.

- *Flashbacks and Intrusive Thoughts*

Anxiety may manifest through intrusive memories or flashbacks of the traumatic event. Survivors may find themselves unexpectedly reliving aspects of the GBV experience, causing distress and emotional upheaval.

- *Avoidance*

Anxiety can lead to avoidance behaviors, where survivors actively try to avoid situations, places, or people that may serve as reminders of the traumatic event. This avoidance can affect daily activities and social interactions.

- *Constant Worry and Fear*

Survivors may experience pervasive and excessive worry about their safety or the safety of their loved ones. This ongoing fear may extend beyond the immediate aftermath of the GBV incident, affecting their sense of security in various aspects of life.

- *Physical Symptoms*

Anxiety often presents with physical symptoms such as muscle tension, headaches, gastrointestinal issues, and an increased heart rate. These physical manifestations are the body's response to the perceived threat associated with the traumatic experience.

- *Difficulty Trusting Others*

The trust that may have been shattered during the GBV experience can contribute to anxiety about forming new relationships or trusting others. Survivors may be cautious and hesitant, fearing the possibility of betrayal or harm.

- *Social Anxiety*

Survivors of GBV may develop social anxiety, making it challenging them to engage in social interactions or public spaces. Fear of judgment, shame, or encountering potential triggers may contribute to social withdrawal.

- *Nightmares*

Anxiety may manifest during sleep in the form of nightmares or night terrors related to the GBV experience. These distressing dreams can contribute to sleep disturbances and further exacerbate feelings of fear and helplessness.

It is important to recognize that anxiety is a natural response to trauma, and survivors of GBV may benefit from professional support, such as therapy or counseling, to address and manage these symptoms. Creating a supportive environment, breaking the silence surrounding GBV, and offering understanding and empathy are essential components in helping survivors navigate the challenges of anxiety in the aftermath of gender-based violence.

III. POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

PTSD is characterized by a set of symptoms that persist for an extended period after exposure to a traumatic event. These symptoms are grouped into four clusters: intrusion, avoidance, negative alterations in cognition and mood, and alterations in arousal and reactivity.

Symptoms of PTSD may manifest shortly after the traumatic event or have a delayed onset, emerging weeks, months, or even years later.

Without appropriate intervention, PTSD symptoms can persist over time and significantly affect a survivor's daily life, relationships, and overall well-being.

RISK FACTORS

Certain factors may increase the risk of developing PTSD after GBV, including the severity and duration of the trauma, a lack of social support, prior trauma exposure, and pre-existing mental health conditions.

Treatment and Support

Effective treatments for PTSD in GBV survivors often include psychotherapy (such as trauma-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy) and, in some cases, medication.

A supportive and understanding environment, including relationships with friends, family, and professionals, plays a crucial role in the healing process.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WHISPHERS OF RESILIENCE

Resilience is the art of not giving up besides facing challenges. Resilience is key especially to survivors of GBV. It empowers them to embrace healing and provide them with strength to overcome trauma.

Story continuation…

NOWHERE TO RUN

Joyce did not know where to go; she was not sure but she remembered of her friend; Marion. They had not spoken nor seen each other for long but she knew that her friend would understand her; she was a woman like her after all. She walked the whole day and when she arrived, she was tired beyond words. Marion just glanced at her and she could tell that Joyce was not okay physically and psychologically. She fed and assisted her to bath.

Joyce: "*Please forgive me for falling at your doorstep so suddenly Marion. I have been going through a lot. I am so thankful that you gave me food before I could tell you all that troubles me. I do not wish that you show me more sympathy or mercy but I would be grateful if you hosted then I will leave in the morning*.'

Marion: "*Joyce, we are friends, we have been for a long time. Just because we have not been keeping in touch for a while does not mean I will hesitate to assist you. I will gladly give you refuge but I have to ask my husband for the way forward because he is the head of the family so…*"

Joyce: "*It is fine, Marion, I understand how the family works quite well*."

Marion: "*Speaking of family, have you got your own currently*?"

Joyce did not want to talk about that at all. She was still suffering from a fatal wound and she was not ready to talk about it, not now.

Ted: "*Marion…Oh sorry, I did not know you had a guest there. Come, I want to tell you something*."

Marion's husband (Ted) looked at Joyce all that while as Marion stood from where she was seated until she left the room.

Marion came back later and gladly announced that her husband had accepted to host her until whenever she needed. Joyce was relieved; at least she was away from her husband and her father. She still knew that she would have to tell her hosts why she left her home.

She told Marion that she had had a disagreement with her husband and she wanted to get away from him for a while.

"*People do not run away from there trouble dear, that is foolish. And I thought you were the wise one",* Marion said laughing.

Jane was deeply hurt by those remarks. She had presumed that she would understand her. She did nothing though. She felt like crying. She was trying to hold them back.

In the following weeks, Joyce settled into Marion's home, finding solace in the warmth of her friend's family.

She spent her days helping with household chores and bonding with Marion's children.

Marion's husband, understanding the gravity of the situation, provided Joyce with emotional support and guidance. As Joyce shared more about her past, Marion began to comprehend the depth of the abuse she had endured. The scars ran beyond the physical wounds; they reached into the core of Joyce's spirit.

Marion, determined to help her friend rebuild her life, suggested that Joyce consider starting her own business. With Marion's encouragement, Joyce explored various business ideas. She discovered a passion for designing handmade jewelry. Marion's husband, recognizing Joyce's talent and determination, offered to help finance the initial setup costs. Together, they created a small workspace in a corner of Marion's home where Joyce could unleash her creativity.

Joyce faced not only the challenges of healing from her traumatic past but also the societal stigma attached to divorced women. Gossip spread like wildfire in the small community, fueled by judgmental whispers and disapproving glances.

However, Joyce remained steadfast; focusing on her newfound purpose and the support, she had from Marion's family.

As Joyce dedicated herself to her jewelry-making venture, word of her talent began to spread. Local women, inspired by her resilience, started purchasing her creations. With time, Joyce gained the confidence to display her products at local markets, attracting a wider clientele.

Despite the initial resistance and judgment, the quality of Joyce's work and her unwavering determination began to change perceptions. Slowly, the community started to appreciate her as a successful entrepreneur rather than a divorced woman. Marion, always by her side, became an advocate for Joyce's strength and tenacity, challenging societal norms and prejudices.

Joyce's jewelry business flourished, allowing her to become financially independent. She even started mentoring other women who had faced similar challenges, empowering them to pursue their dreams.

Over time, Joyce became a symbol of resilience, breaking free from the chains of abuse and societal expectations. As her business grew, Joyce decided to give back to the community.

She initiated workshops and awareness programs about domestic violence, hoping to break the cycle of silence and encourage others to seek help. Marion continued to support Joyce in these endeavors, recognizing the importance of raising awareness about the often-hidden struggles faced by many women.

In the end, Joyce's journey became an inspiring tale of triumph over adversity. Through resilience, friendship, and determination, she not only rebuilt her life but also became a beacon of hope for others. The small community, once judgmental and discriminatory, began to change its perspective, acknowledging that strength and courage could emerge from the darkest corners of one's past.

IMPORTANCE OF RESILIENCE.

I. Empowerment and Agency

Resilience empowers survivors by helping them regain a sense of control and agency over their lives.

It enables them to make decisions and take actions that contribute to their recovery and well-being.

II. Breaking the Cycle of Victimhood

Resilience helps survivors break free from the cycle of victimhood. Instead of being defined solely by the traumatic experiences, resilient individuals can redefine their identities, focusing on their strengths and capabilities.

III. Psychological Healing

Building resilience facilitates psychological healing by promoting adaptive coping mechanisms. Survivors can develop the emotional strength needed to process the trauma, manage stress, and rebuild their mental well-being.

IV. Encouraging Help-Seeking Behavior

Resilience encourages survivors to seek help and support. When individuals believe in their ability to overcome challenges, they are more likely to reach out to friends, family, or professional services, fostering a network of support.

V. Advocacy and Awareness

Resilient survivors often become advocates for change. By sharing their stories and experiences, they contribute to raising awareness about the prevalence of GBV, challenging societal norms, and advocating for policy changes to better address these issues.

VI. Community Building

Resilience fosters a sense of community among survivors. Connecting with others who have faced similar challenges creates a supportive environment where individuals can share resources, advice, and encouragement.

VII. Preventing Victimization

Resilience acts as a protective factor against victimization. When individuals develop the ability to set boundaries, recognize red flags, and prioritize their safety, they are less likely to find themselves in situations of abuse again.

VIII. Creating Positive Role Models

Resilient survivors serve as positive role models for others, inspiring them to believe in their capacity to overcome adversity.

IX. Long-Term Healing

Resilience is not immediate survival but also about long-term healing. It enables survivors to envision a future free from violence, promoting a sense of hope and optimism.

X. Building a Resilient Society

The collective resilience of individuals contributes to building a resilient society. As more survivors reclaim their lives and contribute positively to their communities, the overall resilience of society increases, creating an environment less tolerant of GBV.

Healing and Recovery

Navigating the journey of healing and recovery for Gender-Based Violence (GBV) survivors is a complex and deeply personal process. It involves addressing the physical, emotional, and psychological impact of the trauma while fostering a sense of empowerment and resilience.

Aspects involved in Healing: This is addressed to health care professionals as well as the survivors.

- *Recognizing the Impact of GBV:*

Survivors of GBV often endure physical harm, emotional abuse, and psychological trauma. Recognizing and acknowledging the full extent of these experiences is the first step in the healing process. This involves understanding the multifaceted effects of GBV on mental health, self-esteem, relationships, and overall well-being.

- *Immediate Safety Measures:*

Ensuring the immediate safety of an individual is paramount. This includes accessing emergency services, involving law enforcement if necessary, and providing information about crisis helplines. Creating a safe space for survivors to share their experiences without fear of judgment is crucial in the initial stages.

- *Seeking Professional Support:*

Professional support plays a pivotal role in the healing journey. Mental health professionals, counselors, and therapists with expertise in trauma can help survivors navigate the emotional aftermath.

- *Legal Assistance:*

Navigating the legal aspects of GBV is a crucial component of the recovery process. Survivors should be informed about their legal rights and supported in seeking legal assistance. Legal professionals specializing in GBV cases can guide survivors through legal processes and help them pursue justice.

- Rebuilding Self-Esteem and Empowerment:

GBV often leaves survivors with shattered self-esteem. Rebuilding a positive self-image is a gradual process that involves empowerment through decision-making. Encouraging survivors to reclaim control over their lives, make choices for themselves, and set boundaries contributes to rebuilding a sense of agency.

- *Economic Empowerment:*

Addressing economic vulnerabilities is essential for long-term independence. Programs that offer job training, financial education, and entrepreneurship opportunities empower survivors to achieve economic independence. This step is crucial in reducing dependency and ensuring a sustainable future beyond GBV.

- *Navigating Relationships:*

Rebuilding trust in relationships, whether familial, or romantic, is a delicate process. Survivors may need support in establishing healthy boundaries, learning to communicate effectively, and recognizing signs of toxic behavior. Building a strong support network of understanding individuals is vital.

- *Advocacy and Community Awareness:*

Survivors can play a crucial role in breaking the silence surrounding GBV. Engaging in advocacy and community awareness efforts helps reduce stigma, educate the public, and contribute to societal change. Sharing personal stories fosters understanding and empathy, challenging harmful stereotypes and attitudes.

- *Long-Term Planning and Goal Setting:*

Assisting survivors in setting realistic short-term and long-term goals provides a roadmap for the future. This includes planning for independence, education, career development, and personal growth. Goal setting helps survivors envision a life beyond the immediate aftermath of GBV.

- *Embracing Resilience:*

The journey of healing is a testament to the resilience of survivors. Celebrating resilience involves recognizing the strength it takes to overcome adversity. By highlighting stories of triumph and displaying the resilience of survivors, the healing journey becomes an inspiring narrative of courage and hope.

CHAPTER NINE

A FUTURE BEYOND GBV

The healing and recovery journey for GBV survivors is ongoing, but it is also transformative. As survivors progress, they contribute to a larger narrative of empowerment, advocacy, and societal change. The ultimate goal is to foster a future free from GBV, where survivors are not defined by their past but empowered by their strength and resilience.

THE ROLE OF MENTAL HEALTH IN RECOVERY

Mental health plays a critical role in the healing and recovery process for individuals who have experienced Gender-Based Violence (GBV). The impact of GBV extends beyond physical injuries and can significantly affect a survivor's mental well-being. Recognizing and addressing mental health needs is essential for a comprehensive and effective recovery. Here are several reasons highlighting the importance of mental health in healing from GBV:

- *Trauma Processing:*

Survivors of GBV often experience profound trauma. Addressing mental health is crucial for processing and navigating the emotional impact of the trauma.

- *Reducing Anxiety and Depression:*

GBV survivors may face heightened levels of anxiety and depression. Mental health support can help alleviate these symptoms, improving overall well-being.

- *Enhancing Coping Mechanisms:*

Mental health services provide survivors with coping mechanisms to deal with triggers, stress, and emotional challenges that may arise during the recovery process.

- *Rebuilding Self-Esteem and Self-Worth:*

GBV can shatter a survivor's sense of self-esteem and self-worth. Mental health interventions focus on rebuilding a positive self-image and promoting self-empowerment.

- *Addressing Guilt and Shame:*

Survivors often grapple with feelings of guilt and shame. Mental health professionals can help individuals navigate and overcome these complex emotions, fostering healing and self-forgiveness.

- *Improving Sleep Patterns:*

GBV can disrupt sleep patterns, leading to insomnia or nightmares. Mental health support can address sleep-related issues, promoting better rest and recovery.

- *Strengthening Resilience:*

Mental health interventions contribute to the development of resilience, helping survivors navigate challenges, setbacks, and uncertainties during the recovery process.

- *Providing a Safe and Supportive Space:*

Mental health professionals offer a confidential and non-judgmental space for survivors to express their thoughts and emotions, fostering trust and open communication.

- *Preventing Long-Term Mental Health Disorders:*

Timely mental health support can prevent the development of long-term mental health disorders such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or depression, promoting a healthier future.

- *Improving Interpersonal Relationships:*

Healing from GBV often involves rebuilding trust in relationships. Mental health services can assist survivors in navigating interpersonal dynamics and developing healthier connections.

- *Promoting Emotional Regulation:*

GBV survivors may struggle with intense and overwhelming emotions. Mental health interventions focus on promoting emotional regulation and helping individuals manage their emotional responses.

- *Encouraging Participation in Therapy and Counseling:*

Mental health professionals can facilitate therapy and counseling sessions tailored to the unique needs of GBV survivors, providing a structured and supportive environment for healing.

- *Empowering Decision-Making:*

Mental health support empowers survivors to make informed decisions about their healing journey, fostering a sense of control and autonomy.

- *Reducing Risk of Substance Abuse:*

Individuals who have experienced GBV may turn to substance abuse as a coping mechanism. Mental health interventions can reduce this risk by providing healthier coping strategies.

- *Contributing to Overall Quality of Life:*

A focus on mental health contributes to an improved overall quality of life for survivors, enabling them to lead fulfilling and meaningful lives beyond the immediate aftermath of the violence.

In summary, prioritizing mental health in the healing and recovery process for GBV survivors is essential for addressing the holistic impact of the trauma and fostering long-term well-being. It plays a pivotal role in empowering individuals to reclaim their lives and move forward with resilience and strength.

A Glimpse into the Future

The future of GBV especially in Kenya is dependent on various aspects including the government, economy, societal attitudes, effectiveness of interventions and your personal inputs.

SHARED STORIES

(*Jane, a young girl with a backpack, walks onto the stage, symbolizing the end of her school day. The backdrop displays a quaint school building. The sounds of distant laughter and the chatter of students fill the air. Jane looks hopeful yet burdened with the weight of her studies*.)

Jane (soliloquy): (With a sense of innocence and determination) Books clasped like treasures, lessons etched in my soul, a young mind dreaming, striving for a greater goal. The school's embrace, a haven of knowledge sweet, but beyond these gates, life and destiny meet.

(*As Jane starts to walk towards her home, she is excited to finish primary education. She looks forward to joining high school to further her education.*

Being a bright girl, she is so positive that she will have performed well. The sun shining very bright, it scorches and burns her little brown face. She is determined to get home. Seated at the veranda is her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Tunde. They wear expressions of anticipation and seriousness. Her mother looked anxious which is normal especially during conflicts, as her mother cannot voice her ideas out to their father. He is the only voice of reason.)

Mrs. Tunde (whispering to her husband): Here she comes, our little Jane. Don't you feel that we are robbing her, dreams? She has a life to attain.

(*Mr. Tunde nods with a mix of pride and concern. Jane approaches her parents, her eyes sparkling with the day's acquired knowledge*.)

Jane: (Smiling) Mom, Dad, today was amazing! Have managed to complete my primary education. I should be joining secondary soon.

Mr. Tunde (smiling): Our little scholar, a beacon of light, you know we love you right? Being your father, I know what is best for you...mmmmh. Now get in the sitting room, you have a visitor. Now!

(*Jane is frightened and rushes inside the house only to meet a little older man than her sitting comfortably on her favorite chair. She hears her father cough right behind her. Slowly she turns around hoping what she is thinking is not right*.)

Mr. Tunde: Jane, there is someone here you must meet, this man, named Robert, gentle and sweet.

(*Robert steps forward, attempting to make a good impression*.)

Robert: Good evening, Jane. I have been admiring you for the longest and I have patiently waited for you to complete school. With your consent, they have handed you over to me for marriage and I wish to say, let our journey together commence today.

(*Jane, caught off guard, looks at her parents with a mix of surprise and uncertainty*.)

Jane: (Internal conflict evident in her voice) Mom, dad…. (Tears flowing) Why this? However, my studies, my dreams, what of those?

(The scene concludes with Jane standing at the crossroads, torn between the dreams she envisioned and the expectations placed upon her by her family.)

Intentionally left incomplete for the reader to complete…Do they believe that Jane will have the ability to follow her dreams? Or she will get married.

CALL TO ACTION

- *Unite Against Gender-Based Violence*

In the face of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), our collective response defines the pathway to change. Each voice, each action, contributes to a world where dignity, respect, and equality reign supreme. Here is your call to action:

- *Raise Your Voice*

Speak out against GBV. Break the silence that shields perpetrators and emboldens violence. Your voice is a powerful force for change.

- *Educate and Advocate*

Equip yourself with knowledge on the nuances of GBV. Be an advocate for comprehensive education in schools and communities, challenging stereotypes and fostering understanding.

- *Support Survivors*

Extend a hand to those affected by GBV. Create safe spaces for survivors to share their stories without judgment. Your empathy can be a lifeline on their journey to healing.

- *Empower Through Education*

Support initiatives that promote gender equality education. Advocate for curricula that challenge harmful norms and cultivate respect, empathy, and understanding.

- *Promote Economic Independence*

Champion economic empowerment for women and marginalized communities. Support initiatives that provide skills training, job opportunities, and financial independence.

- *Advantage Technology for Good*

Utilize technology to raise awareness, report incidents, and connect survivors with essential resources. Harness the power of social media to amplify the message against GBV.

- *Be a Role Model*

Lead by example. Demonstrate respect, equality, and empathy in your daily interactions. Your actions can inspire others to follow suit.

- *Educate Yourself Continuously*

Stay informed about current issues related to GBV. Attend workshops, webinars, and engage in ongoing learning to deepen your understanding and inform your advocacy.

REMEMBER

Change begins with each one of us. By taking collective action, we can dismantle the structures that perpetuate gender-based violence and build a world where everyone lives free from fear and violence. It starts with you; it starts with us. Stand up, speak out, and let our united efforts be the catalyst for a future without Gender-Based Violence.

Letter From the Author

SHINING A LIGHT IN THE SHADOW

Dear You,

In a world that has been spoilt by the shadows of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), your commitment to hope and resilience is a beacon of light. Your belief in a future where every individual lives free from the chains of violence is not just a dream; it is a powerful vision that can shape the reality we strive for.

Every step you take towards awareness, education, and empathy contributes to dismantling the foundations of GBV. Your compassion for survivors, your advocacy for change, and your dedication to building a world founded on respect and equality are the building blocks of a brighter tomorrow.

Remember, hope is not just a fleeting emotion; it is a force that propels us forward, even in the face of adversity. The vision you hold for a GBV-free world is not just aspirational but achievable.

With every person who joins in this collective vision, the resonance of hope grows stronger, echoing across communities and nations. Many women are still stuck in abusive marriage or relationships.

Some say, ‘I have five kids, if I leave with them, where do I take them? To who? A lot also wonder, if I leave, where do I start? ‘Feel encouraged that you can start small but being safe. Your children need you; your family also needs you.

Your actions, no matter how small, have a ripple effect. They inspire others to stand alongside you, creating a movement that transcends borders and transforms lives. In the pursuit of a GBV-free world, your hope is not just a wish; it is a catalyst for change, a catalyst that has the power to reshape our shared future. Thank you for embodying hope, for believing in the possibility of a world where dignity, respect, and understanding prevail. Your journey is not just a personal one; it is a journey that paves the way for countless others to follow. Together, let us continue to stand united; fueled by the unwavering hope that one day, every corner of our world will be free from the shadows of Gender-Based Violence.

Let us join forces to create a world free from GBV

REFERENCES

1. *The Constitution of Kenya, 2010*
2. *National Council for Population and Development; Policy Brief 26 Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Kenya*
3. *LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN KENYA by Nzamba Kitonga*
4. *Solutions to Gender Based Violence by Concern Worldwide*