

**A Review on Militarism, Sexual and Gender Based Violence
against Women: Anecdotal evidence from Kasese District in
Uganda**

This paper was commissioned by Isis-WICCE as part of its annual International Peace Exposition which took place in Kasese district in December 2011 and written by Prof.Samson James Opolot Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Basic Research (CBR), Uganda

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A Review on Militarism and Sexual and Gender Based Violence against Women: Anecdotal examples from Kasese District in Uganda¹

1. INTRODUCTION

Isis-WICCE commissioned this review on “Global, Regional and National Trends on Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV)” as part of the presentations to mark the GBV Expo 2011 on *Challenging Militarism and Ending Violence Against Women* and 10 years of UNSCR 1325, held in Kasese District of Uganda between 28 November - 1st December 2011. The objectives of the review were as follows: to review global, regional and the national definitions and trends of sexual and gender based violence; to analyse the challenges of SGBV common to women of all economic, social and political standing; to assess the policy experiences, trends and responses to GBV affecting various women in contexts of conflict and those recovering there from; and to establish the gaps in addressing SGBV and how best could they be redressed. The dynamics of SGBV are specifically addressed in the context of militarism, which is long observed to create conditions under which violations against humanity and women in particular get exacerbated. The flagship document of the Expo 2011 categorically stated that: *‘militarism presents violent forms of masculinity, which often has grave consequences for the safety and security of the population especially, women and children’* (Isis-WICCE et al 2011). Thus Kasese District, which has historically experienced long periods of armed and social conflicts is used to spice the review with empirical anecdotes to justify the assertion that indeed conflict and post conflict conditions exhibit higher than normal levels of SGBV and hence its selection to host the Isis – WICCE SGBV Expo 2011. In addition to some surveyed opinions, the critical views of stakeholders who participated in the Kasese Expo 2011 are also included in this report.

The report is organized under the following thematic sections; section two focuses on understanding SGBV: what it is and how has it been transitioning in theoretical and practical contexts; section three looks at understanding the connections between SGBV and militarism; why the interest in the theme? Section four focuses on the global trends of SGBV; section five provides the anecdotal evidence from Kasese District; in terms of forms, effects and responses to SGBV this far; section six

¹¹ The paper is a product of the Keynote Address delivered at the Isis-WICCE Expo held on November 28th – December 1st at Catholic Hall in Kasese District. I am indebted to Isis-WICCE for the opportunity and funding for the preparation of the paper. Special thanks to Mr. Bedda Kireju of Isis- WICCE for comments on the draft.

provides some 'voices' on the pros and cons of SGBV derived from the dialogues held at the Expo 2011 in Kasese; and finally section seven concludes the report drawing on policy developments, mentioning gaps and proposing future strategic decisions for engaging and resolving SGBV in Kasese and Uganda as a whole.

2. WHAT IS SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE?

Unequivocally meanings of SGBV differ according to country, community and legal context. The starting point is to deconstruct the range of associated concepts underlying the scope of sexual abuses meted on women, girls, men, boys and children – GBV, VAW, VAC and finally SGBV.

Gender Based Violence (GBV) addresses all forms of violence based on gendered assumptions, irrespective of the sex or gender of the perpetrator or the survivor/victim.

Violence Against Women (VAW) explicitly addresses the particular types of violence women and girl-children are exposed to on the basis of their sex and the inherently inferiorizing gendered assumptions surrounding their belonging to the female sex.

Violence Against Children (VAC) in turn is used to denote the particular risks that children in general are exposed to, again irrespective of their sex (Rumble 2008).

SGBV is a composite concept. The World Health Organisation provides one of the most inclusive terminology for SGBV as *“any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic women’s sexuality, using coercion, threats of harm or physical force, by any person regardless of relationship to the survivor, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work”* (WHO 2003). The scope of the definition is expanded to include forced sex, sexual coercion and rape of adult and adolescent men, women and children. In addition, Margaret de Boer (2011) adds custodial violence against women and other violence by state officers especially raping of women in police or prison cells, forced sterilization to control reproductive behavior of the female population or a sub group thereof, and female infanticide or killing of baby girls which is common among poor families in parts of rural Asia.

2.1. BEYOND DEFINITIONS: CRITICAL FEMINIST THEORY AND SGBV

Definitions aside, we need to borrow some critical insights from radical feminism theory in order to appreciate the complexity of understanding, addressing and strategizing for eliminating SGBV worldwide. In this section, I am specifically interested in three critical feminist stand points.

First of all, one needs to appreciate that that SGBV is an expression of values of unequal gender relations and power. It cannot be dislodged without contending with

patriarchy and sexist masculinity. SGBV expresses itself, and is further perpetuated, in a variety of ways and through the various channels in patriarchal societies, so that its subtle entrenchment in cultural/traditional and societal attitudes, norms and behaviors, re-moulds all knowledge surrounding non-violent ways of relating between genders (see among others, Rumble and Keesbury 2008, Amina Mama, 1996, Ayesha 2002) Therefore, it would be possible to suggest that such reshaping happens to the point where the occurrence of GBV, whether in its more crude forms (violent homophobia, gang rape, domestic abuse) or in its more structural expressions (polygamy, dowry/bride price, FGC/ Male circumcision), becomes an accepted 'norm' of life, and part and parcel of how societies perceive and recognize themselves (Rummmble 2008). This is rights here with us! Men and women are socialised to appreciate and perpetuate forms of negative masculinity by which mostly women are oppressed, their rights over their sexuality undermined. Consequently, there is always an increase in SGBV once it is compounded with a mix of other factors like militarism, chronic poverty and social dislocations explaining higher levels of SGBV in such areas compared to others which are more economically and peacefully endowed.

Secondly, it would seem that SGBV on the African continent may be directly observable, quantifiable, explainable and attributable depending on how far the definitions reach, but its root causes and underlying principles are deeply embedded in our history and the very way the modern systems and institutions of belief, governance, production and trade, communication, and security were and are still designed and implemented by and as domains of men, nobility, the wealthy, etc. In so doing, militarism and SGBV become tools of deliberate structures in place to alienate, disempower and exploit weaker ones; at macro levels among these poor nations in the global economic system and at micro individualist levels, women. Thus, one of the drivers of militarism lies in global inequities and the inherent fear therein of the possibility of the oppressed to revolt and change deep seated class and gender privileges. The result is arms race and negative masculinities designed to maintain the status quo.

Thirdly, as Rumble et al aver, SGBV happens within multiple layers of power, space and language. By accepting the theory of GBV as having different levels and shapes, these can be argued to encompass the whole of society, from the most '**public**' of spheres to the most 'private'. For that matter, SGBV is alive in our work spaces as much as in our domestic and personal lives. They furthermore range from '**macro**' mechanisms - such as the gearing of state services, support and resources towards particular groups (i.e. men) while directly or indirectly excluding others from access to those very resources - to more '**micro-level**'— and often culturally grounded — mechanisms, such as Female Genital Cutting (FGC) or Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), domestic abuse/wife battery, early marriage of girl children etc. Another

dimension to be added include those seemingly "*random*" acts of gender-based violence, such as stranger rape, curative rape of lesbians, gay-bashing, sexual harassment, forms of social policing such as constant unwanted sexual attention towards particular femininities, homophobic hate speech, etc (Rumble and Keesbury 2008, Amina Mama, 1996, Ayesha 2002).

However all said and done, and in spite of the tremendous theoretical gains in understanding and even deconstructing gender schisms in society, we seem not to see the way out yet. In concluding this section, I would like to share some arguments I raised while debating on culture and women's land rights in Uganda and Africa at large. In that article, I call for a deeper interrogation of culture and its role in arbitrating rights of women in Africa – *similarly the same would apply to issues of women's rights to a dignified and abuse free sexuality*. Given the three feminist stand points I raised in the earlier sections, I pose the question: *is it useful to remain vague on the claims about culture in the denial of women's rights?* – we social scientists are being challenged to unpack the simplistic conclusions about culture; to challenge the essentialist notion of an African culture that has an affinity or inclination towards denials of rights of women and is said to perpetuate SGBV; *we need to examine in critical detail what is negatives in cultures and under what contexts they produce and perpetuate specific forms of SGBV*. This then offers an opportunity to map out, document and promote the positive elements in African cultures which are supportive of promoting and empowering women's rights over their sexuality. In other words, how do we go beyond the impasse – the pessimism – grounded in debates on culture, women's land and sexual rights in Africa? (For a detailed treatment of this debate see Opolot, 2010).

3. UNDERSTANDING MILITARISM AND SGBV

It is well documented that militarism exacerbates sexual and gender based violence in societies the world over. In Uganda, the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development (MOGLSD) Policy Framework on Violence against Women (2008) states that: *'military conflict, in combination with societal factors and traditional practices that have already weakened the historical position of women, creates an ideal environment for increased incidents of GBV'*. This sets the rich context under which to view militarism and SGBV in a Uganda riddled with a history of armed conflicts.

Indeed, from a robust economy at independence in 1962, Uganda slid back into anarchy and economic woes under military rule during the 1970s. It is documented that levels of violence, including heightened SGBV and loss of property were rife during this era of lawlessness (Barya et al, forthcoming). In the past three decades since the overthrow of the military regime in 1979, several parts of Uganda have experienced more violent civil and armed conflicts; Northern Uganda (under the

Lord's Resistance Army rebellion), Karamoja region (internal and cross border cattle raids), West Nile (West Nile bank rebels), Luweero Triangle (National Resistance Army rebels) and Kasese (from Isaya's resistance struggles during the 1960s to the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU) and later the Allied Defence Forces (ADF) rebels activities of the 1980s). In all the aforementioned areas, these conflicts have left trails of SGBV crises behind them. In addition, while the guns may have fallen silent, the psychosocial harm, social dislocations and the destruction of the socioeconomic, political and socio-cultural fabric of these post conflict societies are alive and still negatively affect both the survivors and wider society as a whole. In short militarism is dangerous to human beings, inimical to development and foments GBV. In Kasese District, the proliferation of child mothers is one form of SGBV outcome arising out of a history of protracted militarism. One of the child mothers tells her story in the caption below:

"Zuri was busy making breakfast for her family when the ADF rebels struck on the 13th of November 1996: they forced me to carry my two year old child then, they also told my husband to carry some of their property and forced us to move with them...my husband was killed while ... my body was their playing field ... They would do anything they wanted ..." (cf. Isiss-WICCE et al, 2011: 10).

Still, debate rages as to why SGBV rates are so high during periods of armed conflict. There appears to be two principal explanations. The first holds that, as a result of the generalised chaos and frequent social breakdown that accompany warfare, the disincentives against engaging in SGBV are reduced, if not removed, while the 'opportunity' to do so increases. In this understanding, the prevalence of rape and other sexual violence is not symptomatic of a systematic or premeditated strategy; rather, it reflects the fact that many individual combatants (or, indeed, groups of combatants) respond to the increased 'freedom' they have in similarly abusive fashion (Wood 2006). In other words, instability and chaos arising during protracted conflicts provides a window for negative forces within society to vent violence on others and mostly the weaker sections of community that includes women, children and other minorities.

The second explanation focuses on cases where sexual violence represents a deliberate, organized, proto-military tactic designed either to kill, demoralise or remove the population in question. Where this occurs, as in Rwanda in 1994, it falls in the class of 'crimes against humanity' or even 'genocide'. In 1998, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda made the landmark decision that rape is a crime of genocide under international law. In one judgment, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navanethem Pillay, said: 'From time immemorial, rape has been regarded as spoils of war. Now it will be considered a war crime and

we want to send out a strong message that rape is no longer a trophy of war' (Cf. Howard and Lunn, 2009).

3.1. WHY FOCUS ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN CONFLICT SETTINGS?

In conflict situations, women and girls are at greatly increased risk of physical and sexual violence. As Zuri's story from Kasese District narrated above attests: 'many women and girls are subjected to rape including gang rape, forced and or early marriages often with enemy soldiers, sexual slavery, and other forms of violence (e.g. being forced to witness others being raped, mutilations, etc.). For example, the Isis-WICCE/WANEP and Ministry of Gender and Development, Liberia report (2008) cited the extensive raping of women as a weapon of war in the conflicts in Liberia. A story from a female from Maryland, Monrovia narrated that:

"...four MPLF soldiers raped me ... they threatened me that if I refuse, they will kill me with my children. I accepted because I wanted to save my children and I knew they were serious... other women were raped, mutilated and then killed ... (Isis-WICCE et al, 2008: 121).

Consequently in such instances, many women have fled their homes, have lost their families and livelihoods, and may have little or no access to health care and education for rehabilitation thereafter. Above all these factors create conditions in which women and girls' vulnerability to STDs and HIV/AIDS is disproportionately increased (WHO, 2004). This is a generic feature in contexts of armed conflicts across the globe and particularly in east and central Africa. The testimonies we shall share later show that Uganda as glimpsed from Kasese district is no exception.

4. GLOBAL TRENDS OF SGBV

Howard and Lunn (2009) provide one of the most comprehensive analyses of global trends in SGBV. They have dissected the world into the: industrialised world, Africa, the Carribean, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America. Below is what they found out.

4.1. SGBV IN THE 'INDUSTRIALISED WORLD':

According to Howard and Lunn (2009), there is plenty of evidence that strongly suggests that SGBV is alive in these contexts. For example, in the U.S it is estimated that one in four university aged females has been the victim of either rape or attempted rape. A 2000 report claimed that in Washington DC, the country's capital, around 200 people were raped every year, while in the U.S as a whole over 250,000 people suffered rape or sexual assault. In 2007, the US Department of Defense recorded 1,400 reports of rape amongst its staff and asserted that as many as 34%

of female service personnel had suffered sexual harassment. In Japan, a broad range of commentators have argued that low indices of SGBV are more attributable to a widespread and highly misogynistic 'culture of silence' than to Japan's progressive attitudes towards sexual and gender equality.

4.2. AFRICA:

According to Howard and Lunn (2009), in Africa the incidence of SGBV is highly correlated with the prevalence of armed conflict. Conflicts have been accompanied by the widespread use of rape and other sexual violence. The statistics are startling. In DRC it is believed that over the course of the last decade, tens and possibly hundreds of thousands of women have been raped. It is estimated that over 500,000 women were raped during the Rwandan Genocide of 1994 (de Brouwer 2005), while in Sierra Leone it is believed that around 9% of the female population suffered some form of sexual assault during the conflict of the 1990s.

4.3. THE CARIBBEAN:

In this context GBV is associated with peacekeepers, whose purpose ironically is to prevent conflict. Recent years have seen a spate of cases where UN troops have been indicted for abusing the position they hold to sexually exploit highly vulnerable indigenous populations. This has occurred in a wide range of contexts, including notably Sierra Leone and DRC. By far the most high profile case, however, is that of Haiti (Howard and Lunn, 2009).

4.4. THE MIDDLE EAST:

In many Middle East countries around the world, violence and discrimination on the basis of sex or gender are enshrined in law (Howard and Lunn, 2009). Though this is (and historically has been) the case in many countries, perhaps the paradigmatic contemporary example is that of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is widely considered one of the most conservative nations on earth, where daily behaviour is strictly regulated and where an extensive infrastructure of police and religious authorities ensures that legal norms against women's liberties are applied. While these legal norms vary in their severity, their combined effect is such that the American feminist writer, Andrea Dworkin, described the situation as one of 'gender apartheid' (Howard and Lunn, 2009).

4.5. ASIA:

In the context of Asia, human rights groups repeatedly point to the failure of certain governments to implement their laws as a key reason for the continuation of widespread SGBV. Despite this progressive legal framework, however, Human Rights Watch (HRW) have documented very clearly that certain groups of women, predominantly those from the 'lower' or 'untouchable' castes, face systematic

discrimination in modern India. HRW have recorded 'the use of sexual abuse and other forms of violence against Dalit women as tools by landlords and the police to inflict political 'lessons' and crush dissent and labor movements within Dalit communities' (ibid.), while researchers with HRW and other human rights bodies have found a persistent trend of non-prosecution of crimes committed against low-caste women (Howard and Lunn, 2009).

4.6. LATIN AMERICA:

According to Howard and Lunn (2009), this area of the world has long been associated with a distinctly patriarchal form of machismo - a term that has generally come to refer to an 'exaggerated aggressiveness and intransigence in male-to-male interpersonal relationships and arrogance and sexual aggression in male-to-female relationships'. In the culture of machismo, then, 'being a man' means being an aggressive (and at times violent) sexual predator. Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, 'being a man' in this sense of the term has been identified by a number of observers as an integral component in the perpetuation of violence by men against women.

4.7. THE CASE OF UGANDA

What is that state and dynamics of SGBV in Uganda? It is worth examining some dimensions of the issue, tensions and conflicts underlying SGBV in Uganda before referring to the realities in our case study of Kasese District. Two key reports are used here. One reports is the UNFPA (2009) on the challenges and opportunities for addressing SGBV in Karamoja. The rationale for the review is that it provides another window to appreciate the relationship between and impact of militarism, and not just 'armed conflict' per se on SGBV, such that it does not seem as if it is a problem unique to Kasese district. The other information derives from a national report by CEWIGO, which arose from monitoring Uganda's advancements towards meeting commitments of the UNSCR Resolution 1325. This report provides the bigger picture on the progress towards improved recognition and protection of rights of women in Uganda as a whole.

4.7.1. UNFPA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADDRESSING GBV IN KARAMOJA

Karamoja region is known for high levels of GBV and this study provides some explanations. These factors include among others extreme poverty and the absence of viable livelihoods for the Karamojong which often forces parents to see the girl child as a way out of poverty and hunger. They continue to state:

"Young girls are therefore married off forcibly to save their families from starvation. Among pastoralists the practices of cattle raids also seriously expose women and girls to such violations as rape and sexual assault which is carried out in frustration when raids are not successful. In addition the traditional way of courting a girl for marriage also allows for the prospective suitor to rape the girl and abduct her for

purposes of marriage and this is acceptable as a traditional way of beginning a marriage relationship' (UNFPA, 2009: iii).

Others are harmful practices like widow inheritance and female genital mutilation that are widely acceptable and practiced even though they have been held in Uganda and worldwide as gross violations of women's and girl's rights. Climate change driven adversity has further complicated access to pasture and food and in the resultant poverty and food insecurity has driven young girls into sex work in order to provide for their families. The study further reveals that in:

"Karamojong culture women are perceived as minors in their whole lives, they are regarded as people with no capacity make any kind of decisions on their own and that they deserve to be disciplined in the same way as children when they wrong their spouses. This has contributed to many practices that discriminate against women and violate their right, for example, in cases of domestic violence and exclusion from decision making processes in both the public and private arena, including on issues such as the number of children a woman can have" (UNFPA, 2009: iii).

Finally, it is appalling that in most cases, the gross violations of women's rights go unreported in the formal justice system because most people subscribe to the traditional justice system which is more accessible to them. In short, Uganda still falls short of delivering effective justice, law and order services to promote sustainable reporting and enforcements against SGBV, which curtails development.

4.7.2. MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNSCR 1325 IN UGANDA

It is equally important to establish the state of change in addressing SGBV in Uganda as well. The Centre for Women in Governance (CEWIGO) carried out an assessment of the progress the government of Uganda has made in implementation of UNSCR 1325. UNSCR 1325 is defined as a ground breaking resolution passed by the UN Security Council on 31st October 2000, because it recognizes that:

"...armed conflict impacts on women differently from the way it affects men and demands for the protection of women and girls during armed conflicts and post-conflict situations. The Resolution also highlights women's role as peace builders and agents of change, and calls on the UN and member states, civil society and the international community to ensure that women participate in conflict prevention, peace negotiations and all peace processes and reconstruction decisions and programs" (CEWIGO, 2011: 9).

What does the CEWIGO study say?

For purposes of this report I set out to specifically look at the section of the CEWIGO report on progress in addressing SGBV. The report notes that GBV remains

widespread and occurs at alarming rates throughout the country. Arrests and conviction of perpetrators is negligible. For example:

"Available data shows that about 60% of women experience physical violence from the age of 15. In all districts which were monitored, SGBV is actually on the rise. While reporting of SGBV cases is slightly increasing, the level of investigation, prosecution and penalizing of perpetrators remains low. Likewise, the denial of inheritance rights persists as does, early marriage, polygamy and, bride price. ... Although Uganda has a long history of conflict, gender and peace education are not fully integrated in its education curricula despite concerted efforts by civil society to get the Ministry of Education to review its curricula at all levels including teacher education curricula" (CEWIGO, 2011: 8).

Broadly speaking alongside other contemporary reports like the forthcoming 2012 UNECA/UNDP/CBR ECGR report (see draft Barya, et al 2011), the CEWIGO report outlines concerns over a wide range unmet demands – for effective inclusion of women, in among others, executive roles in parliament, the army, judiciary, in local councils, etc, and their benefits from ongoing development in Uganda. According to the CEWIGO study, *while the guns fell silent in 2006, many issues of women, peace and security still abound.* Likewise, the draft presented at the dissemination workshop for the UNECA/UNDP/CBR report concludes that: *It therefore becomes clear that a number of reforms and changes are necessary if Uganda's political process is to enhance democracy, inclusiveness and to manage diversity on a just, healthy and sustainable basis* (Draft summary UNECA/UNDP/CBR report: 8).

5. A GLIMPSE AT KASESE DISTRICT OF UGANDA

Kasese is a district in southwestern Uganda and was formed in 1974, named after its main municipal centre, Kasese town. The district is located along the Equator and borders the districts of Kabarole and Bundibugyo in the north, Lake George and Kamwenge district in the east, Bushenyi district and Lake Edward in the south and the Democratic Republic of Congo in the west. Kasese District has a history of territorial and armed conflicts. The information is based on literature and few informal interviews with cultural and local leaders on understanding the nature and dynamics of SGBV in Kasese district. In that regard, I am indebted to Ms. Teddy Kiswahili and Ms. Ritah Bihande who facilitated the meetings with the Obusinga cabinet and elders which were most informative. Additional relevant information was obtained from earlier studies conducted by, among others, Isis-WICCE and the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) in Kasese. Hereunder are highlights of key elements of GBV in Kasese district.

Common forms of GBV found: In Kasese District SGBV takes multiple forms which includes wife neglect and desertion especially during insurgency and war, defilement and rape, wife and child battering, denial of women's ownership and control of critical resources like land, child labour, psychosocial and physical trauma and proliferation of single child motherhood.

Some reasons behind the high incidence of GBV include: A history of armed and domestic conflicts, high levels of poverty which leads to struggles and denial of women's rights over resources like land, high levels of consumption of intoxicants like alcohol, early and forced marriages which sometimes involve girls below 12 years of age! And the heavy burden placed on women to manage homes.

Key perpetrators of GBV include: Husbands who neglect girl child education and instead marry them off, parents and guardians who only look at girls as sources of bride or wealth, people who molest and use children for child labour, teachers and other adults who exploit children for sex and cultural leaders who condone and bless early marriages and the use of girls for compensating conflicts or reparations. For example, it is said that when families have disputes between themselves they could offer a girls hand in forced marriage as a compensation to defuse tensions.

Some effects of SGBV on women and girls: the influx of child mothers, physical injuries, unstable marriages, deformity and disability, psychosocial torture resulting in traumas, influx of orphans and street children, child prostitution, poor enrolment and high school dropouts especially for the girl child, illiteracy, high levels of fistula and the high incidence of HIV and AIDS.

Besides the above insights from the literature and the few interviews we present yet more depth into the complex factors driving the state of SGBV in Kasese district that emerged out of the public dialogues held with various stakeholders including parents, child mothers, leaders and law enforcers during the Isis-WICCE SGBV Expo 2011 held in Kasese Municipality.

5.1. VOICES FROM THE ISIS-WICCE SGBV EXPO 2010 IN KASESE

On the 30th of November 2010 the Expo held a series of dialogues seeking the direct engagement of stakeholders of SGBV ranging from a multitude of child mothers, parents, officials from Kasese District and the cabinet of the Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu. This session further amplified the concerns over this unending complex and is presented here with limited paraphrasing.

5.1.1. VOICES OF GIRLS ON DRIVERS OF CHILD MOTHERHOOD

The young mothers raised the following factors:

Parents neglect us in preference for boys: most parents in Kasese were said not to be providing for girl child education and even when some of them do so, they rarely provide the range essential learning educational materials required by the pupils and students. These girls are therefore forced to improvise with other sources including boys and men to get books, pens, and afford school feeding, etc.

We have unique needs which are not addressed: the girls said they have peculiar needs as they mature for which some steady supply of money is very essential but most parents were said not to provide for, and once again they are forced to engage in affairs with men or outright commercial sex to obtain money.

5.2.2. WHAT ARE THE CHILD MOTHERS' PRIORITIES FOR CHANGE?

The child mothers raised the following suggestions for change in regard to the above issues:

- ? Government should revise its policy on school feeding and take it up as a public responsibility because only few parents seem to prioritise the matter.
- ? Government should provide adequate supply of educational materials in schools like text books, chalk, writing boards and classrooms to ensure children can be effectively engaged in learning in schools.
- ? Government should build more schools and equip them to cater for the unique needs of people (more so children) with disabilities and girls who face challenges particularly with ablutions which may not be accessible or lacking in privacy for their convenient use.
- ? Government should revise the curriculum to reduce the subject load on pupils in primary schools. Too much content has created a number of challenges on one hand it tires pupils and denies them enjoyment of education and on the other it becomes costly as parents are unable to buy pupils so many exercise books required for the many subjects covered.
- ? Government should provide more and better equipped health facilities for easy access by girls and women particularly focusing on accessible sexual reproductive health services that are lacking in most of rural Kasese and other parts of Uganda.
- ? Government should ensure the policy of reintegrating child mothers back to school is adhered to and enforced across the country in order to provide them an opportunity for education after delivering.
- ? Parents were called upon to desist from being drivers of SGBV when they molest girls and offer them off for early marriages even when it is against their will. And they should be sensitized never to keep silent and condone any practice of SGBV in future. In addition, they should be encouraged to become more vigilant and responsible parents to their girls as well.

- ? In the same vein parents were called upon to groom boys with respect for females and a compassion for gender equality but not the usual stereotypical patriarchs. Theoretically some have referred to this as grooming a 'positive masculinity'.
- ? The girls affected by SGBV should be encouraged to live positively and learn to overcome and look beyond their predicament and progress by either going back to school where such opportunities arise or take on developmental work to cater for themselves and their children.
- ? Girls should be encouraged against early sexual relationships or fornication but they should focus on their education as the priority.
- ? Cultural leaders, district officials and lower level governmental structures and the police were called upon to provide zero tolerance to SGBV in future.
- ? Local leaders like the Local Council I or the popular village councils should be targeted for human rights and SGBV training to ensure they become the change agents in their respective communities to curb the practice.
- ? Parliament was called upon to expedite the enactment of laws enforcing against the practice of SGBV in Uganda; for example, one participant wondered as to when will the Domestic Violence Bill come to pass into law?
- ? Law enforcers should apprehend perpetrators of SGBV because in most cases the girls felt boys and men are usually not pursued or are given light sentences which do not curtail the complex challenge of SGBV. In fact one child mother categorically stated that this could lead girls to develop a hatred for men.
- ? In addition, law enforcers should deal a big blow on 'sugar daddies'; men found defiling girls should be handed very heavy sentences to ensure they stop enticing girls into SGBV.
- ? Media should be mobilized and sensitized on reporting positively against SGBV such that they are capable of highlighting the problem and engaging in advocacy for change.

5.3.3. RESPONSES OF PARENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS ON THE ABOVE:

One of the mothers cited the Bible and reminded the girls that they are not meant to fornicate nor become adulterous because sex out of wedlock is prohibited and sinful.

A disabled parent challenged the girls to desist from self martyrdom and resist temptations to early motherhood; how could able bodied girls like you get trapped? What would happen if you were in my position as a disabled girl child? What therefore is the plight of disabled girls in Kasese District? At what age do the disabled girls get pregnant? What is the implication of high levels of SGBV and child mothers in Kasese on sexual and reproductive health services if they are falling short of the demands of adult women in the country?

A lady from the clergy decried the high levels of defilement in the district and called for effective means for hunting down the perpetrators. In her view the problem is that God's order had been broken and parenting skills had also broken down. Leaders have lost their moral authority and society is in a state of decay. The result is that there are no role models anymore. However, mistakes come and mistakes go; there is always hope and redemption after sin so girls in Kasese were encouraged to make radical choices to fight against SGBV by, as much as they can, saying no to men's advances or even turning to the seminary to serve God. She encouraged children to exploit the 'life skills' programme provided by the church during school holidays to live positively and productively.

5.3.4. VOICES OF THE DISTRICT POLICE:

The child mothers raised a couple of questions directed at the law enforcement sector. Some of these are the following:

A 19 year old mother of 3 children asked: *in case I give birth and the father abdicates what will you do to that father?*

A 15 year old asked: *A boy has defiled and impregnated me but when I report to police the boy is arrested but released shortly after, what is that?*

A 19 year old mother of one child asked: *If in anger I decide to take the child to the fathers home and abandon it there how will the police judge me or what will they do to me?*

At the point the police responded as follows:

The police appreciated the challenges that embrace SGBV in Ugandan as a whole but more so in Kasese District. SGBV could be against women, children or men but the challenge is not the police but how everyone can help address the underlying factors which include:

- ? Solving conflicts which cause violence
- ? Addressing poor parenting
- ? Changing negative culture that promotes early marriages and oppression of women merely for 'Embene' or goat as bride wealth.
- ? Teachers who defile their pupils
- ? Even policemen and any other adults who abuse girls under their care.

The police had the following challenges in responding to the challenges of SGBV:

- ? Laws against corporal punishment prohibit being tough on children of these days so they often lack discipline in schools and outside school the police may not do much because they are minors
- ? Proliferation of information and communication technologies in hands of children and youth has exacerbated access to pornography and children's connectivity for vices like drug and prostitution rings
- ? Police have very few Police Doctors who are mandated to examine defiled girls and recommend accordingly for arrests and treatment to be made.
- ? Most parents in Kasese and accomplices so they do not follow up cases of SGBV to their logical conclusion but in some cases go around the police and once bribed they withdraw the case and marry off the girls.
- ? There is ignorance of the law and as a result people are not aware that they could be arrested and charged for poor parenting, abuses, rape, etc for as long as they are reported and there is evidence to support the allegations. For example, the girl who asked about abandoning a child to the father should know that it is criminal to do so.
- ? The level of child prostitution in Kasese District is very high hence the children are not just victims but also perpetrators of SGBV themselves.
- ? Police often lack the logistics to pursue cases this ranges from not having facilities like FORM III which should analyse cases of examined SGBV to not having transport to access SGBV hotspots on the mountains of Rwenzori where it is most acute.
- ? Above all, there is need to demystify the law by taking it down to the people in order to effectively address SGBV in Uganda.

5.3.5. VOICES OF OBUSINGA BWA RWENZURURU :

The Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu, have stepped up campaigns to sensitise against GBV by, among others, discouraging forced and early marriages in the community. For example, the Constitution of the Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu was revised in accordance with the need for gender inclusive clauses; it denounces SGBV. The Obusinga cabinet has undergone gender trainings and exhibit commitment in that regard. The Obusinga is not working alone but has enlisted the support of the Kasese local government, local leaders, development partners and civil society in fighting SGBV in Kasese district. However the Obusinga and partners face some challenges in fighting SGBV, which include:

- ? Inherent discontent among former rebels who have not been fully resettled and compensated by government tend not to embrace development programs
- ? Poverty and persistent domestic conflicts over limited resources
- ? Disrespect for women's equal rights and access and ownership of resources
- ? A culture of silence driven by lack of confidentiality, intimidation, ignorance of the law against GBV and self censorship among girls

- ? Corruption and collusion by some biased mediators who conceal GBV perpetrators and survivors after soliciting bribes
- ? Inability in most women to afford litigation which leads to neglect of the law or failure to follow cases to their logical conclusion
- ? Deception among parents in stating actual age of affected children.

In other words, these are the critical areas that government and development partners should support the Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu to address in curbing the heinous evil of SGBV in Kasese District.

5. POLICY EXPERIENCES, TRENDS AND RESPONSES TO GBV

Lots of gaps remain but credit goes to global international rights-based approach in development and to development spearheaded by the UN agencies has effectively opened the door for a powerful stream of legal feminist activism, which has since resulted in a variety of international, regional and sub-regional policy instruments centred around the core themes that have emerged from gender-based violence research done on the continent, such as domestic violence, sexual violence, traditional practices defined as violence, and the role of the state in relation to violence. Other accomplishments include, but are not exclusive to, the following rights-based tools:

UN instruments:

CEDAW – 1979

General Recommendation 19 (11th session) 1992

Declaration on the Elimination of violence against Women – Res. 48/104 - 20th Dec. '93

UN Trafficking Protocol - *"Protocol to prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in persons, especially women and children, supplementing the UN convention against Transnational Organised Crime"* - (2000, Palermo, Italy)

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Fourth World conference on women - 15th Sept. 1995

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (31st October 2000)

UN General Assembly Resolution (Intensification Res.) - 81st session - 19th Dec. 06

Regional Instruments:

AU Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' rights on the rights of Women in Africa - 11th July 2003, Maputo

AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa - 6th-8th July 2004, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Sub-regional Instruments:

SADC Declaration on Gender and Development – signed 8th Sept. 1997 in Blantyre, Malawi

Addendum to SADC declaration – *'The Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children'* – SADC conference on Prevention of VAW in Durban 5-8th March 1998 – signed 14th Sept. 1998

ECOWAS Trafficking Declaration (Dakar declaration) – signed 20th - 21st December 2001 in Dakar

SADC Protocol on Gender and Development – signed August 2008.

The Uganda Action Plan on Security Council Resolutions 1325 & 1820 and Goma Declaration

The above efforts have not been wasted. The ideas of *'female bodily autonomy'*, *'women's rights'* **or** *'gender equality and –equity'* are very recent ones and as such continue to be challenged and threatened across the globe. Across the world, there have been transitions from women's ever-increasing involvement in grassroots-community activism to the official **'gender mainstreaming'** policies of the international organizations and governing bodies – and to the point indeed where there is such a wealth of literature on every problem imaginable within gender theory, that it becomes increasingly harder to distinguish between quality and not-so-quality, if the sheer amount of problems discussed there has not already paralysed our intentions. For example, on top of having ministries of gender and development, Uganda government and monarchs like Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu, Obwakabaka bwa Buganda, and others, have all integrated women in central positions of power in their respective governance structures.

Gaps in addressing SGBV and recommendations

The gaps include immoral media programs, weak frameworks for re-integration of abused children e.g. child mothers back to schools, biased settlement of gender disputes in public in favour of men, poor capacity for prevention and treatment of survivors of SGBV – in terms of trauma, HIV/AIDS, chronic cancers and wounds, etc. At structural levels, emphases should be on gender and not women per se; failure to address underlying drivers of GBV such as unemployment, poor incomes and poverty, the prevalence of exploitative cultures like forced marriages, armed conflicts, and alcoholism; lack of appropriate confidentiality facilities for counseling survivors leading to a culture of silence and non-exposure that favours GBV offenders; corruption in both formal (courts) and informal (clans) systems mediating SGBV cases; weak and non-enforceable laws and regulations on SGBV; high costs of litigation, which most women cannot afford, among others. Above all we still have challenges of developing appropriate mechanisms for measuring and

documenting accurate GBV information and ensuring the dissemination of such information as appropriately and widely as possible for impact on remedial actions locally, regionally and internationally.

Some recommendations follow below.

6. TENTATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

Support and work with local initiatives. We already have local initiatives underway to fight SGBV like what is being done by the engendering of the Obusinga Constitution, with gender equality and anti-SGBV clauses, etc. Let us not duplicate but make them work such that actions can be sustainable.

There is need to re-integrate or assimilate “fallers” back into mainstream development processes; these include total orphans, girls with early pregnancies, school drop outs, child mothers, former offenders, etc. All these should not be wasted as many examples show how those in such conditions and have been given the opportunity to return to schools excelled.

There is an urgent need for adopting multi-sectoral programs that address gender based violence alongside cross cutting areas of need like conflict prevention, management and resolution, HIV prevention and AIDS treatment, income generating projects, secure water and sanitation projects (WATSAN) and economic development of post conflict settings like Kasese. SGBV is not a stand alone; having solved insecurity what about livelihoods and other needs: SGBV calls for holistic responses as opposed to fragmented ones.

Government should commit substantial funds into addressing structural bottlenecks to attainment of basic needs: e.g. security, providing safe drinking water, schools, health centres, shelter, markets, and recreation in post conflict settings as prerequisites for peace and development. Uganda's GBV's dependability on (often short-term) foreign funding in order to create deep-reaching and long-lasting transformative action, often belies their efforts.

Development partners like Isis – WICCE should reinvigorate fundraising and dedicate more funds and energies in co-implementing credible community driven SGBV projects with local CBOs or district partners. The symbiosis between Isis-WICCE and the Kasese War Widows Association is a successful case in point. I am awakened by the fact that the literature shows that GBV-programmes are affected by shrinking funding which presents the challenge of undoing many of the gains achieved over the past decades in combating GBV. The effect of the decreased funding is then compounded by often very strict and ever changing organizational accountability

requirements set by the donors – often too strict and complicated for many small, community-based programmes to manage. As a result many organizations working in the field of GBV have recorded a decline in programmes. Collaborations are highly relevant in this regard.

To be more practical and sustainable there is need to promote working models like the Peace, Empowerment, Accountability and Reclaiming survivors of SGBV approaches (PEAR). The approach embeds responses to cater for immediate and long term rehabilitation of survivors of SGBV while at the same time empowering them to become conscious change agents against SGBV and peace building.

There is need for more inclusiveness in programming for the prevention of SGBV by attempting to involve both women and men (since SGBV outcomes are sustained by both males and females) in developing positive alternative norms. This could start with bringing teens together to challenge male chauvinism or machismo and develop a more cooperative, loving masculinity that relies less on violence.

Above all, there is still need for promoting continuous or sustained sources of credible SGBV data in Uganda. What we have is intermittent and sometimes contradictory. We need to build capacities of local leaders, schools/universities, police, prisons, research organs, etc; the states, regional blocks and international systems to collect credible stats. To do so we need to streamline indicators for collecting and documenting SGBV. For example, in line with the gender wing of the UN Statistical Division. They have developed indicators for physical abuse, sexual violence, harmful practices, early marriage, etc. This will provide credible data for more accurate responses to SGBV and gender based equitable development as a whole.

Considering the complex phenomenon of GBV, VAW, VAC and the whole embracing SGBV, let me conclude by referring to this as yet work in progress, for which more concerted effort by all of us is required to continue improving our knowledge and advancing our strategies towards eliminating SGBV from Uganda and the world at large for good. I remain indebted to your comments in future.

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