

By JUDY WAGUMA

Biting the HIV scourge as Bill faces

THE HIV/Aids Prevention and Control Bill has suffered setbacks as individual interests now seek to water down some of its radical proposals.

The HIV/Aids Bill proposed in 2002 has so far been published not less than three times since 2003 when the Cabinet adopted it.

Recent developments are however raising eyebrows, especially the planned tabling of the private members bill, in parliament sometimes this year.

It appears that the initial bill, the government proposed bill has irked some stakeholders in the health insurance business, who fear that some of its provision might compel them to accept premiums from people living with HIV/Aids.

As expected, stakeholders are up in arms and have conversely managed to block the passing of the private members bill into parliament.

They have therefore called for the tabling of the initial Bill and are now in the process of lobbying the politicians to ensure that the bill is passed amidst claims that there is no political will in fighting the scourge.

Debra Okumu, the programme manager of the Kenya women Political Caucus (KPWC) is however optimistic that the bill will see the light of day sooner rather than later.

"Currently there is no Legislation in place for HIV and Aids, we are therefore pushing forward so that we obtain policies that will meet the needs of those affected, more so the women who bear a disproportionate burden in terms of infection levels and care," Okumu says.

There is need to include home based care within the bill. It is established that clause six of the bill only mentions health care providers and health care services and fails to mention home based care.

« BY WILSON UGANGU » Sexual Violence against Men and Masculinity

The power of men and their bodies

Although it is hardly ever noticed or even talked about, but the truth is that men just like women suffer rape and extreme forms of sexual violence. The rape of women however is the most visible and talked about. While women will readily testify about their rape ordeals, men do not.

Long after the assault, the plight of men who have endured sexual violence will remain shrouded in silence, and protected as family, community and national secrets. Experts say that this invisibility is due to the prevailing notions of masculinity and the male body held by members of society.

Here in Kenya, the sporadic media reports of sexual violence on men especially during car jacking ordeals serve as a barometer that these are uncharted seas – a subject that journalists and members of the public are not quite comfortable with.

However, the Nairobi Women's Hospital which pioneered Kenya's first and only gender violence recovery centre to handle the medical and social aspects of domestic and sexual abuse in women and children of both sexes, is now receiving a growing number of adult male patients seeking treatment for sexual assault. These cases however have not received as much public attention as the rapes of women.

One possible explanation is that men do not readily testify to being sexually violated. Women, by contrast often readily testify about their rape ordeal. This of course raises fundamental questions as to whether men are more reluctant than women to report that they have been victims of sexual assault.

In Africa and other parts of the world, documentation on cases of sexual violence against men occurs in situations of armed conflict. In societies that have experienced armed violence, people will readily talk about the women and children who were raped and defiled. However, no one talks about the men who were sexually defiled.

In the former Yugoslavia, a United Na-



tions Commission report makes reference to the extreme forms of violence that men endured during the war. The report describes a number of sexual assaults against men, for instance beating men across the genitals and forcing them to undress; rape and assault by foreign objects; castration and the severing of sexual organs. According to this report, sometimes prisoners were forced to perpetuate acts of violence against each other.

However, despite the fact that journalists had access to this report, very little attention was given to this issue in the media. Zarkov Dubravka, who has studied the wars which led to the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia points out that even the international media which tend to be fervent about reporting rapes of women, shied a way from the topic of sexually assaulted men. The media all over the world published pictures of starved men and women, sick and malnourished children, but no one ever published the picture of a raped man.

In an analysis of how the media represented the various cases of sexual violence against men, Dubravka notes that between November 1991 and December 1993, there were only six articles in the Croatian press on the subject. Within the same peri-

od however, there were over one hundred articles referring to rapes of women. Unlike the rapes of women, sexual violence against men was deemed by the press not to be a public affair.

The reasons for the inability to act especially by the media lie mainly in society's construction and representation of masculine power. Generally, society does not expect men to fail in situations of conflict. The reality that men could be subjected to extreme forms of sexual violence does not register in society's conception of masculine power.

Masculinity is directly associated with the power to protect oneself and others, sexual power as well as intellectual and moral power. Men who lack these powers are not proper men. How could journalists who subscribe to the same masculine stereotypes be expected to represent the reality of sexually assaulted men folk?

At another level, the masculine power of a man and the male body symbolically represents the collective pride of the community, ethnic group and the nation. Nationhood, ethnic nationalism and manhood coalesce into one. This means that the defilement of a male body, does not only demean the individual's spirit and sense of self worth, but also ▶ pg. 5

« BY JUDY WAGUMA » The need to include women in conflict resolution

Sustainable Peace on the wings of women

With frequent conflicts experienced in several countries within East and Horn of Africa, women now want to be involved in conflict resolution and to be represented at peace negotiations.

It is a concern that civilians especially women and Children account for a vast majority of those affected by armed conflict, as they deeply suffer the wounds of sexual, mental and physical violence, more than their male counterparts.

Also the consequences of conflicts have combined to create conditions under which human development and peace cannot meaningfully be achieved, says Naomi Wangai, director, department of gender.

She stresses that the lack of security or instability renders development

and poverty unattainable.

"Women as well as men have much to offer in terms of skills on the negotiating table and a lot to gain when peace prevails", she adds.

Even with Security Council Resolution 1325 passed unanimously on 31 October 2000, there is the need for the women's participation in decision making during various negotiations.

The resolution is the first ever passed that has specifically addressed the impact of war on women, and women's contributions to conflict resolution and sustainable peace.

Women have more to contribute to the peace resolutions in the world since they are peace makers



and homemakers, and they also have skills in various areas, says Wangari.

She says that at National level, the Kenyan government has provided a foundation for the pursuance of peace as demonstrated by its contributions to the efforts of peace in the region.

She adds that the formulation of a sessional paper in 2005 on gender equality and development, currently before parliament provides a road map for greater involvement of women in peace making, prevention of violence and conflict resolution.

This just reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-

building.

The 1325 resolution however stresses on the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution.

It is also in the need to implement fully international humanitarian and human rights law that protects the rights of women and girls during and after conflicts.

The resolution also recognizes the urgent need to mainstream a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations. Therefore the need for an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls is effective.

There should be institution-

al arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation in the peace process significantly to contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security.

Various women, from parts of East and Horn of Africa, during a regional consultation on women, peace and security convened to seek away forward on how to get to these negotiation tables.

The consultative forum was assembled to generate a momentum for advocacy for inclusion of the Sudanese women from Darfur in the on-gong peace talks, to strengthen regional networking and mentoring women leaders especially parliamentarians, says Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda (pictured), regional Programme Director, UNIFEM.

«BY BETTY OYUGI» Life-saving intervention after rape

Fighting the violence from the pulpit

Religious organisations have taken up the fight against gender violence right onto their pulpits and through to their programme work.

Churches are now calling on their congregations and followers to step up the fight against gender based violence.

Associate Pastor, Janet Mutinda, at the Mamlaka Hill Chapel (formerly known as Nairobi Chapel) says that from January 2006, a special desk will be set up to deal with gender violence.

"Gender violence is a reality and we as Christians are called to do what is real and what is needed. And the best way in which we can do this is face the reality and accept it," she adds.

Rev. John Kamau of the Organisation of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) says they are working with independent African churches by mobilising their leaders to be involved in the prevention of such occurrences within their church membership.

They are dealing with at least 55 individual denominations and ten more have applied to be involved in the membership.

"These are churches that value traditional practices, we don't criticise them but instead seek to work in solidarity with the communities to understand why they indulge in such practices," Rev. Kamau adds.

Carol Kamau, a consultant says that it is time for the Church to join in the fight against gender violence as the church has always been accused of condoning violence.

She adds that the capacity of the Church needs to be built so that they can be able to cope with such cases when they arise: "We should not accuse the survivors and victims but help them instead. This will aid in breaking the cycle."

The Parklands Baptist Church in Nairobi

is one church that has created a haven for the victims and survivors of gender violence by establishing a listening place for women after last year's campaign on the 16 days of activism against gender violence.

To help in fostering the campaign, Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA) and other church organisations are using a case study from the bible known as the TAMAR campaign which seeks to challenge and equip the church to speak out against gender based violence.

The campaign is derived from a bible story where King David's daughter, Tamar was raped by her half brother Amnon. The church recognises her as a symbol of strength and courage because she spoke out against the abuse.

Pastor Fred Nyabera, the Director of FECCLAHA expresses that the church should be involved more because people place much trust in the authority of its institutions.

"This is the beginning of a campaign with the churches. We are planning to involve more churches as time goes by, because of the power the churches have in fighting this vice," explains Pastor Nyabera.

The concept of involving the church in Kenya is relatively new. Until recently, the focus for victims and survivors of violence is to break their silence by either reporting to the police or human rights organisations.

OAIC is taking seriously the vulnerability of women in the society and their absence in decision-making organs and will be addressing the need to strengthen the voices of women in decision-making organs.

They are embarking on re-writing the

constitutions of the churches they are dealing with to incorporate the voices of women and youth.

This is a way they say could help in countering gender violence, as women themselves understand problems that affect them and that one cannot address a problem they cannot understand.

However, the Muslim faithful have a different perspective on gender based violence as the Quran and Muslim laws abhor this kind of practise.

Fatuma Ali Saman, Principal of the Nairobi Muslim Academy says that Islam requests that people respect their spouses. She adds that the Quran also states that a mother should be respected.

"The only obstacle to these provisions is culture; one of such cultures for example is the symbolic beating of a woman when she is getting married. This in a way subdues wife beating, yet Islam forbids violence," she explains.

Another form of violence that Muslims have to deal with is the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

Fatuma reiterates that Muslims are called upon by Allah to enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid what is wrong. Hence mutilating a woman's genitalia in the name of Islam violates the most sacred tenets of Islam.

Religious organisations therefore, face the challenge of raising awareness on the prevalence, magnitude and consequences of sexual and domestic violence. They should also speak out against the abuse of women and children.

Most of the causes of gender based violence are rooted in the society. Some of them being; exercise of power and control, society and culture, parental influence and false beliefs.

By ROSEMARY OKELLO

NCA leads in the fight against violence



Assistant Regional Representative NCA/Eastern Africa, Kirsten Engebak

NCA AND other faith based organisations join hands in the fight against Gender based Violence.

Even though Gender Based Violence is as old as the church, few faith based organisations have invested in the urgency required to tackle the consequences with their congregations.

Traditionally, domestic violence is treated as family matter, and the churches in the region seldom lend its moral voice to the victims. On the contrary, the churches often have turned their back to domestic violence and/or at best have offered only tacit response.

Despite a generally passive church response to violence, it is generally recognized that there are no institutions in the Eastern African societies that have a wider outreach and are better respected by local communities than the churches. For example a recent study in the region concludes there are more than 150,000 faith based institutions working on the grassroots in the region.

It is through this broad alliance of church partnerships that the Norwegian Church Aid - Eastern African office (NCA/EA) has its distinct advantage.

By building on the trust and confidence that these institutions enjoy in the local community and by engaging them into alliances for change, NCA/EA argues that they could potentially impact the development of a new cultural paradigm free of gender violence and where women and girls will enjoy fundamental rights.

NCA/EA is actively engaged in two of the largest faith based human rights networks in Eastern Africa, respectively BEACON and FECCLAHA both with an enormous geographical outreach and with potentials impact on millions of followers in Eastern Africa.

Assistant Regional Representative NCA/Eastern Africa, Kirsten Engebak said: "In the recent years the issue of gender violence has come increasingly into focus in our collaborative work. In the next plan period the ongoing efforts with BEACON and FECCLAHA will be further intensified and expanded and will largely build on the solid foundations of experiences and materials already in place".

"Because of the seriousness of this situation, NCA/EA sees no other alternative than to continue its vigorous fight against gender violence during times of humanitarian crises." Said Engebak

The power of men and their bodies » Continued from pg. 4

to a great extent reflects the inability of his community, ethnic group or nation to protect itself.

In many conflicts, the rape of women does not carry serious social significance by way of restitution, other than the fact that it will be regarded as a crime against humanity. However, the sexual assault of men assumes even greater significance in all forms of social discourse. This is because the entire being of the community is symbolically represented in the man. The male body defines ethnicity and nationhood.

Experts have also pointed out that according to society's understanding; a man's sexual organ is not just a physical part of his body. In fact there is a certain degree of claim that the general society has over a man's sexual organ. In many communities across the world, a man's sexual organ represents the virility of the nation. Its loss therefore cannot be taken for granted as it symbolically represents the ultimate emasculation of the man and the ultimate defeat of the community.

During armed conflict, as Dubravka points out, castration is used to take a way the main symbol of the enemy's masculini-

ty. While on the other hand, the masculinity of the castrator is ritually enlarged by appropriating the masculinity of the castrated.

Elsewhere in Africa, Chinua Achebe in his book Things Fall Apart uses the character of Okonkwo, to illustrate his people's conception of male power. Okonkwo was not only a strong wrestler, but a symbolic embodiment of the strength and nationhood of Umuofia. He was the pride of the nation.

His fame as we are told had spread through the nine villages of Umuofia like a fire in the harmattan winds. His visibly well curved muscles and wrestling prowess was the physical manifestation of this power as well as that of his ethnic group.

His fall to the more formidable imperial power of the colonialist at the end of the story, inevitably also marks the fall of Umuofia. The lesson here is that in the face of the imperial power, the Okonkwos of Africa found themselves without the means physical or otherwise to defend their communities against invasion by imperialist forces. Indeed, throughout human history, hegemony and domination have been justified by the judgments as to who are and

who are not the proper men.

It is this same conception of male power that defines relationships between men and women especially within family contexts and society in general. Women are expected to look up to their men for protection, provision, and general direction in life. When men fail to protect their women and children especially during conflicts, the shame is not only personal, but also communal.

These expectations thus force men to pretend to be who they may not be. They exaggerate their capabilities just to sustain the masculine myth. On the other hand, women's worthy efforts and capabilities in societal development are downplayed and downgraded simply because society does not associate them with the masculine capabilities traditionally associated with men. This reality is even more accentuated during conflicts. That is why men who have been sexually violated will not open their mouths to testify, lest they are ridiculed and seen to be lesser men.

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PARTNERS

