

# *Changing Lives*



*Transformative interventions in addressing violence against women and girls*



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# Preface

Slightly over three years ago we started a journey of making homes, communities and societies in Kenya safer for women and girls, and to advance justice for those who experienced violence. This action was in response to the 2014 Kenya Democratic Health survey estimates which showed over 40.7% of Kenyan women aged 15-49 had experienced sexual or physical violence in their lifetime; with 25.5% of those having suffered it within 12 months preceding the study. Our own research among communities in eight counties -Kilifi, Kwale, Nakuru, Kisumu, Baringo, Bungoma, Wajir, and Mandera- showed women experienced various forms of violence that significantly limited their quality of life and wellbeing.

These counties were further found to experience high levels of either criminal or inter-communal violence. Evidence has shown than communities that experienced one or more forms of these typologies of violence, also recorded higher indices of vulnerabilities among women and girls, which often resulted in higher incidences of violence, including sexual violence. Therefore, investing in strategies to mitigate and respond to these three forms of violence not only improves overall community security but importantly makes homes and communities safer for women and girls, and ultimately improves quality of life.

It is against this context that Jamii Thabiti (Swahili for Community Wellbeing) initiated various interventions to respond to violence against women and girls in these counties and communities. The interventions entailed strengthening policy frameworks to improved safety and security sector response to violence; enhancing effectiveness, coordination, oversight and accountability of service delivery and improving community knowledge and ability to challenge normative values that underpin violence.

Three years on, Jamii Thabiti celebrates success in improving trust and working relationship between the communities and the police officers; building the capacity of police officers on violence against women and girls and on the Standard

Operating Procedures (SOPs) on Prevention and Response to sexual violence; developing prototype laws to support counties to build sustainable mechanisms to address violence against women and girls; and of empowering women and girls to break away from the vicious cycle of violence.

Remarkable stories of change from Baringo to Wajir, from Kwale to Kisumu, and Nakuru to Mandera- speak of the impact of these investments have in transforming the experiences of individuals, communities and even institutions. This book, aptly titled, *Changing Lives, transformative interventions in addressing violence against women and girls*, has attempted to capture these transformative and life changing interventions that have brought smiles and meaning to life of many people in the counties where Jamii Thabiti programme was implemented.

In this book, you will interact with inspiring and heart warming stories of survivors of violence in Kisumu who have managed to transform their lives from abusive relationships to one of glee and hope, thanks to the support of Jamii Thabiti. In Kwale, you will read about encouraging stories of creating Drivers of Change among police officers through training and support by Jamii Thabiti. These officers are now celebrated champions against violence on women and girls. In return, communities have found a renewed sense of trust in the officers.

In Nakuru, we bring you the story of a passionate officer, who through Jamii Thabiti support has become a source of hope for a community that is battling high levels of violence against women and girls. On the legal front, the reader will interact with stories of how a prototype Bill on addressing violence against women and girls developed under Jamii Thabiti is helping Baringo, Kwale, Bungoma, and Wajir counties to formulate an effective legal framework on addressing the vice.

Equally defining is how, through this programme, police officers from the Regional Commanders, County Commanders, Sub-County Commanders to officers in 32 police stations in the eight counties have institutionalised Sops on Prevention and Response to sexual violence. The SOPs offer a framework to

enhance state and non-state actor engagement in the prevention of sexual violence and access to justice for survivors.

The collection of stories not only offer hope but illustrates the possibilities to change the narrative around violence against women and girls and ensure justice for survivors, only if right interventions are implemented. But this has to be done with focus, partnership, commitment and passion. The narratives are also a testimony that a multi-sectoral approach to addressing violence against women and girls works.

It is my hope that you will find the interventions and stories shared in this book worthy reading and replicating in other contexts where women and girls are experiencing various forms of violence. The rallying call is for unity of purpose and commitment to making it possible for individuals to led lives free of violence and to making communities and our world secure, safe, and just for women and girls

Enjoy the Read

*Jacqueline Mbogo*

Jacqueline Mbogo

Chief of Party - Jamii Thabiti

# Acknowledgements

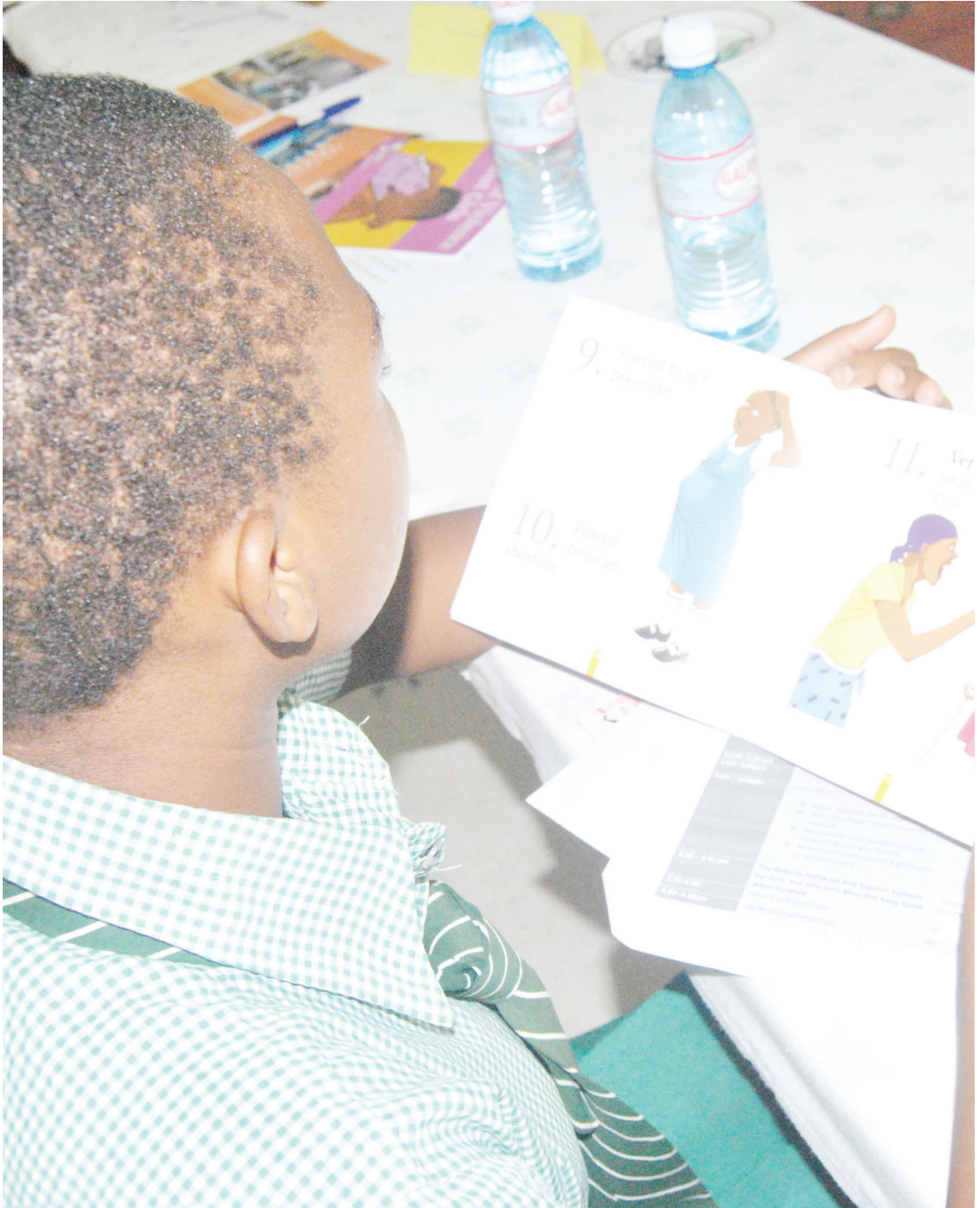
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Immense gratitude to the beneficiaries of the Jamii Thabiti programme who created time and agreed to share their stories of joy and pain. Thanks to the National Police Service and other actors for allowing us to enter your spaces and to influence and facilitate change.

Your support has made the production of this book a reality. Sincere gratitude to Jacqueline Mbogo, Chief of Party, Jamii Thabiti Programme for your leadership and in believing that this good idea was worthy supporting; James Ndugu, for your support and assistance to refine and refocus this idea; and to Jacinta Makokha for technical guidance during the creation of this book. Thanks to the editorial team at African Woman and Child (AWC) Feature Service for putting this together.

Many thanks to Women Concern, Women Empowerment Link, African Women and Child Feature Service, and Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development for undertaking the interventions that have resulted in these positive and inspiring stories. Finally, to all Jamii Thabiti staff and partners who in one way or another, contributed to the success of this project. Please accept our gratitude.





A school girl from Kilifi going through a book on forms of violence against girls produced by Jamii Thabiti

**CHAPTER 1**

# **Table banking: *Turning abused women into engines of growth***

**I**n a village battered by poverty and poor development, a group of women are holding lively discussions about their triumphs and challenges in life. Occasionally the conversation shifts to their children, who inspire them to work hard and live to see another day.

A couple of years ago, these women could neither afford a smile nor speak about the tribulations they were going through. Their partners routinely subjected them to gender based violence. So disempowering was the violence that some gave up. But today as we sat to talk about their lives, the mood was a positive one.

These women come from Kisumu, a county where violence against Women and Girls remains a major concern. The Kenya Demographic and Health Survey, 2014 estimates that 45 percent of women in Kenya have experienced physical violence since the age of 15. In Kisumu,

57 per cent of the women reported experiencing that form of violence.

The government has responded to the situation by enacting a number of laws including Sexual Offenses Act; Protection Against Domestic Violence Act and the Childrens Act. But these laws seem to have done little to reduce the levels of violence. Structural failures, corruption, and disempowering environment have made it difficult for survivors of violence to enjoy justice.

Complicating the situation is that abuse of women has been accepted as a culture and tradition. Many communities do not consider wife beating, or widow inheritance as immoral. Such perceptions and poor attitudes towards women and girls rights have led survivors of violence to suffer in silence. The social treatment and a lack of acceptance that women and girls have rights have therefore led many women to believe that

suffering and pain is part and parcel of the life of a woman.

These are some of the reasons that made women sitting in this room to keep silent about their suffering for a long time. But one organization decided that enough is enough and begun an initiative to not only help the women speak out about the violence they were going through; but to more importantly, empower themselves economically. This gave them the courage to leave abusive relationships.

This transformative journey started in 2017 when Women Concern, a community based organization operating in Kisumu County, gathered together women survivors of violence to chart how they were going to empower themselves.

### **Transformative strategy adopted**

In 2016, with the support of Jamii Thabiti, a programme run by Coffey International with funding from Britain's Department for International Development, Women Concern begun this empowerment journey. The women were first offered psychosocial support to enable them overcome the trauma they had experienced.

“Initially, we were providing the much needed psychosocial support for these survivors of violence. That was our mandate. But it began to appear like a never ending cycle because you would counsel the same woman for 18 months and she could come back complaining

of the same violence,” says Margaret Ochieng’, Executive Director of Women Concern.

This dilemma prompted Women Concern to change strategy and address the underlying issues that were keeping the women in this vicious cycle of abuse. “The question was what could add to the intervention to improve the plight of these women?” recalls Ochieng’.

One day in July 2017, as they sat to ponder on how to break this vicious cycle of violence, an idea came up: Formation of a village savings and loan groups to advance funds to the survivor’s of violence. This was to enable them engage in business or other income generating activities. With the earnings, the women would be able to break away from abusive relationships.

The outcome of this was the birth of the table-banking, where the abused women would contribute any little money they got, to help build up the fund. Each survivor of violence was asked to contribute Ksh 25(USD 0.25) as initial deposit into the fund. A total of 25 women survivors in four sub-counties: Nyando, Kisumu West, Kisumu Central and Muhoroni formed the first group of shareholders of the village table banking concept.

But the collection of funds posed a challenge. This made the women to come up with another idea: whenever they attended trainings supported by



**Margaret Ochieng', Executive Director of Women Concern.**

development partners and there was transport reimbursement, half of that money would be deducted and deposited in the table banking fund.

“We used to give Ksh400 to each woman as transport reimbursement whenever they attended our trainings in the villages. We agreed each woman would contribute 50 percent of her transport reimbursement to table banking. So for 25 women attending a training that would translate to Ksh10, 000 (USD 100). Out of this Ksh5, 000 (USD 50) went to the table banking fund,” said Ochieng’.

In addition to this, the women continued to make individual contributions of Ksh 25 (USD 0.25) shillings every Friday as stipulated in their constitution. Several months down the line, this was increased to Ksh 50 as the women started taking the banking very seriously.

Meanwhile, the women groups came up with rules and regulations of how they were going to run their Fund. One of this was fines for members who broke any of

the group’s set of laws. All fines collected were ploughed back into the fund.

For instance, lateness to meetings attracted a fine of Ksh20 (USD 0.2), and absence with apology a fine of Ksh30 (USD 0.3), while one without apology Ksh50 (USD 0.5). In Nyabende, Nyabende Gender Based Violence Survivors Jamii Thabiti Self Help Group members pay Ksh50 (USD 0.5) fine whether absent with or without apology from scheduled meetings. So strict they are that in a span of eight months, they had raised a total of Ksh280, 000 (USD 2800) through contributions and fines.

Other groups were doing well with the highest having saved Ksh 400, 000 (USD 4,000) and the lowest Ksh150, 000 (USD 1,500). At the moment, four sub-counties namely Kisumu West, Kisumu Central, Muhoroni and Nyando, have active groups with table banking in operation.

The other rule the groups established was that before money is lent to women, they have to be capacitated on how to do

business. Hence, the Women Concern and the members of the Fund felt that they needed business skills before they could start applying for loans from the fund. In response to this need, trainings were conducted around financial management, records keeping, documentation and group dynamics.

### **Promising results**

The women are allowed to borrow the money at 10 per cent interest to invest in ventures of their choice. In Nyabende, whether you borrow the money or not, you must pay an interest of Ksh50 (USD 0.5) every Friday. So far, the women have used the borrowed loans to start small businesses, buy assets like land, and run small scale projects such as rearing cows, goats and chicken. They have become a beacon of hope for so many others in similar situations.

The borrowed loans have improved the economic stability and emerged as an important success of the table banking. “Since we did not have a lot of money, we started by lending members Ksh500 (USD 5), which increased to Ksh4,000 (USD 40) and now we are at Ksh7,000 (USD 70),” says Susan Atieno, a member of the Obunga group.

As their economic fortunes improved, many of the survivors decided to leave behind their abusive marriages and are now single mothers looking after their children. They have land and other assets to secure their own future and

that of their children. Such indicators of success have made the groups to revisit their constitutions to reflect this new development. For instance, Nyabende group has revised its constitution to increase the weekly contributions for each member from Ksh50 (USD 0.5) to Ksh500 (USD 5).

“We have been properly trained and we know how to keep proper records and tabs on all contributions,” said Awino.

This empowerment of women survivors of violence has led to another unexpected result: the number of violations reported to the police has increased. Women interviewed said the survivors of violence and people in communities are not fearful that reporting the perpetrator will worsen the situation of the violated woman. They know that there is hope and the groups will come in to help the woman survivor.

Due to this expectations, residents of Muhoroni and Nyando are at the forefront in reporting cases of Violence against Women and Girls directly to the police while at the same time providing crucial leads that have assisted in strengthening survivor cases against their perpetrators.

Women Concern has also noted that the success of these survivors of violence has led to the community members embracing the issue of psychosocial support and recovery of those who experienced sexual and gender based violence.

On their part, the success of the table banking made the women to start thinking of how they were going to secure the future of their children through similar initiatives. This led to the birth of the Toto Tin (kids tin fund), an offshoot of the groups table banking. Resources from this fund are used to cater for the education and health needs of children of the members.

“We contribute Ksh20 (USD 0.2) every Friday for the welfare of our children. And all the groups have close to Ksh100,000 (USD 1,000) in their kitty. This money is only borrowed for the welfare of a child, be it school fees, school uniform or an illness,” Auma explains. As result of this, children of the members are rarely send home for schools fees and when it happens, the fees is paid promptly.

### **Dealing with challenges**

But as the organization registered these positive developments, it had to confront some challenges. One of them was limited resources to enable them move around the County and monitor what the groups are doing and their needs.

The other challenge was some police stations were not moving at the same speed as the cases being report. Ochieng fears that the goodwill they are enjoying from the community will die when the members feel that the wheels of justice are moving too slowly.

### **Excellent learning points**

These issues and the success recorded have however provided excellent learning points for the Women Concern and the women survivors of violence. One of the lessons they learnt was that strategic partnerships within the Jamii Thabiti program is an effective and efficient approach to addressing issues of violations of women and girls. The organization leveraged on what others were implementing instead of reinventing the wheel.

They particularly reported to have worked well with sub-committees on VAWG established by African Woman and Child Feature Service. These structures have proved useful when it comes to following cases of violence reported by the survivors.

Women Concern also learnt that for initiatives addressing violence against women to succeed, they need to bring on board key players within the community. For instance, on the issue of widow inheritance and widow dis-inheritance, the Luo Council of Elders advised the Women Concern to encourage the women to report to them first before going to court. The organization noted that this was often a successful approach.

Ochieng’ strongly feels that establishing village banking and a fund for survivors would greatly help increase access to justice and break the vicious cycle of abuse that many women and girls have to endure. **CL**

# How table banking saves lives

**G**race Awino is a survivor of violence who was on the verge of committing suicide when Women Concern, a Community Based Organization, started the village table banking initiative.

She had been beaten by her former husband to a point of death. “The abuse had gotten to a level that I could see death beckoning. But I was a young mother of four children, no proper education, no job, I had nothing. So I stayed in this abusive marriage,” says Awino.

But when her husband married another woman and the violence intensified, she started nursing suicidal thoughts. “I just wanted to die. My way out of the misery was to kill myself and escape my troubled life,” she said recalling the tough times she went through.

So many times the husband threatened to kill her, but nothing was done about it. “I reported my case to the police station but without physical evidence, they did not take the matter seriously. So I began resigning myself to fate,” recalls Awino.

“I was very frustrated and started taking bhang and drinking heavily. I

would go home empty handed and we would sleep hungry. There was no hope for me, so I started listening to what was being taught and I thought to myself that maybe my second chance was coming.”

Just when she was giving up, a friend referred her to the Women Concern to share her story. It also happened that at the time she came to talk about her case, Jamii Thabiti program was running interventions at the community level targeting women and girls survivors of violence.

One of the interventions that Women Concern was implementing was the village table banking. This initiative was an economic support system for women survivors of violence. The organization had innovatively added an economic aspect to its other cocktail of interventions in the hope that once the women have financial independence, they would have courage to leave abusive relationships.

This initiative gave Awino a second chance when she joined the Nyabende Gender Based Violence Survivors Jamii Thabiti Self Help Group. The group is based in Ahero, Kisumu County. She



A man at one the AWCFS forum discusses violence against women and how best to stop vicious cycle of violence

recalls with a broad smile how she and others were taken through trainings on how the table banking movement works. She was also trained on finance management, an empowerment that saw her become the group’s treasurer, a position she has used to help the group accumulate sufficient resources.

“We recently shared out Ksh240, 000 (USD 2,400) that we had accumulated since August last year. The second phase has begun and a lot of money is coming in since we are 30 members, and each is contributing between Ksh50 (USD 0.5) to Ksh500 (USD 5) every Friday,” says Awino.

The other fund they started, the Toto Tin kitty has been of great help as well for

her. She does not need to beg her former husband to pay school fees for her children.

Take the example of her oldest child who was joining form one in 2018. Awino was able to borrow Ksh26, 000 (USD 260) from Toto Tin kitty to take her to school. The good news is money borrowed for the welfare of a child is repaid without interest.

“I used to be a bar maid but now my children are in school, I even took a loan of Ksh100,000 (USD 1000) and added to Ksh50,000 (USD 500) savings I had. I used the money to buy a piece of land just behind Ahero Police Station and now I am beginning to build a home for my children. The loan has been repaid in full,” says Awino with a great sense of fulfillment. **CL**

# Inspiring interventions at a glance

**A** sensitization initiative targeting community members particularly the boda boda (motorbike taxis) who the community blamed for perpetrating violence against women and girls has produced desirable results.

The boda boda riders were transformed into male champions who contributed to the strengthening of the referral pathway. They formed the boda boda Gender Based Violence Action group. Through this group, Boda Boda riders were reached with messages that promote the safety and security of women and girls.

Ms Ochieng' indicated that Muhoroni and Nyando were success cases in creating a formidable boda boda action groups. One of the successes of this intervention was that the boda boda community is reporting cases of violation of women and girls directly to police officers. These young men are often at a vantage point of accessing information and they have been providing useful information to law enforcers.

"They are also directly imparting the referral pathway as they have been

providing transport to the hospital, police stations or even the courts for survivors of violence. Often, we have had to chip in and pay the transport once called upon by our male champions with whom we are in regular communication," says the Women's Concern's Director, Margaret Ochieng'.

In addition to the Boda Boda initiative, Ochieng's organization implemented the Adopt-A-Cop strategy where police officers were invited to various primary schools to encourage children who are being abused or fear being abused to walk into a police station and report. The children were supplied with Speak-Out-Boxes where they could share confidential information about the abuse they were experiencing in school or at home.

The Women Concern partnered with the Gender Technical Working groups to deliver the messages to schools in a manner that is friendly to children. The Speak -Out-Boxes continue to be a space for primary school children to share their stories. Some of the letters children have written detail the form of abuse they have suffered, the name of the perpetrator, dates, time and place where it took place.



Boda Boda taxi operators in Nzoia copies of Jamii Thabiti Magazine that focuses on VAWG

Arrests have been made as a result of this information. One of the most astounding cases was the incarceration of a serving Chief for the defilement of a 14 year old minor. The former Chief was

jailed towards the end of January 2018. The Women Concern is now working on expanding the Adopt-A-Cop program to secondary schools. **CL**



A Police officer speaking to the the Community Forum in Musikoma on VAWG issues during a Jamii Thabiti forum conducted by AWCFS

**CHAPTER 2**

# *Strategies for delivering justice for women survivors of violence*

**S**tories of women and girls who have experienced sexual violations in Kenya seem not to be ending. Every year, depressing statistics are released showing the increasing number of women and girls who have to endure violations in their homes, learning institutions, workplace, and in the communities they live in.

Going to report the cases to the police stations is sometimes a nightmare for many women and girls. Police officers have been accused for not only mishandling these cases, but mistreating the survivors of this form of violence. Communities in which these women and girls live are not willing to get perpetrators of sexual violations reported to the police.

In most cases, they are comfortable with settling of such matters out-of-court. Sexual violations are not treated as a criminal matter or with the seriousness it deserves. Such approaches have left women and girls to be violated with impunity.

The bad situation is made worse by lack of structures to respond to such violations or where they exist, they are too weak to do so. These triple challenges have made it very difficult to mount an effective response towards violence against women and girls.

## **Approaches to addressing triple challenges**

It is this disturbing scenario that saw the African Woman and Child Feature Service (AWCFS) develop a programme to respond to these triple challenges. With the support of Jamii Thabiti, a programme managed by Coffey International, and Funded by United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), AWCFS came up with a three-pronged approaches to respond to these challenges.

The strategy involved enhancing the knowledge and skills of police officers stationed at the gender desk on VAWG; holding community forums between police officers and the community to

discuss VAWG and other security issues; and establishing and strengthening structures at the community level that address violence against women and girls.

There were also other strategies to compliment these key strategies. They included using various media platforms to educate and inform the public on how to prevent and respond to VAWG; training media practitioners on effective reporting of VAWG; and working with national institutions that provide policy and legal frameworks that guide interventions around VAWG.

The counties where this strategy was applied were Nakuru, Kisumu, Bungoma, Kwale and Kilifi. The intervention also targeted national institutions that are tasked with issues of policy formulation and legislation.

For the training, four stations were chosen in each County based on the number of VAWG cases they were handling. This had been established through a baseline survey that was done before the project begun. Two police officers working on the gender desk from each of these police stations were chosen to go through the training.

The officers were educated on various presentation and manifestation of VAWG and how they were expected to respond to such cases within the framework of the Standard Operating Procedures. Senior police officers and gender experts educated them on how to

get communities to report cases of sexual and gender based violence. At the end of the training, the officers were given copies of relevant laws and policies that address violence against women and girls as reference materials.

The next step involved holding strategic community forums that brought together the trained police officers and members of the community to discuss responses to violence against women and girls. The community members who participated in the forum were those being served by the police station represented by the trained officers.

Such a design helped them to discuss challenges and approaches that were of common knowledge, and relevant to both of them. Police officers from the gender desk under the leadership of their Officer Commanding Police Station (OCS) would participate in the forums. At the end of the forum, the officers and the community exchanged telephone numbers, formed Whatsapp group or teams designed to improve information flow between them and the officers at the police station.

The third approach entailed establishing a structure that would formalize and enhance the work of the community and the police officers. This however proved tricky since such a structure could not be established outside the police recognized structures.

This necessitated AWCFS to initiate

discussions with the Directorate of Community Policing, Gender, and Child protection. It was agreed that for the structure to enjoy support of both the police officers and the community members, it needed to be a formation within the Community Policing Committees.

“The committees largely focused on criminal violence and it was our belief that there was great potential to improve the safety and security of women through this community structures,” explained Ms Ruth Omukhango, Programme Manager at AWCFS.

“This would create a community driven agenda that was owned by the community and that was also sustainable,” she adds.

Meetings with Community Policing Committee members were then held during which a six member special VAWG sub-committee was established. As part of the rules, each committee had to have a third of its members being women. At the end of the process, 20 sub-committees focusing on VAWG issues had been established in the five counties.

Their brief was to enhance the focus and attention to violations against women and girls in the communities they were representing. They were also expected to work closely with the police stations in addressing violations against women and girls.

“This way, the community had a smaller committee whose main mandate was to



**Ms Ruth Omukhango, Programme Manager at AWCFS.**

address the violations women and girls were experiencing. The sub-committee has its own leadership elected by members of the larger committee with members representing six wards within a sub-county,” says Ms Omukhango.

Meanwhile, other strategies were being pursued to augment these key strategies. An aggressive media campaign to educate and increase visibility of VAWG issues was carried out on various radio stations that broadcast in vernacular and Kiswahili languages. One of the objectives of this campaign was to get people to report cases of violations to the police stations. The other was to get the communities to start a conversation around the vice and suggest solutions on how to address it.

Media practitioners were also brought on board to intensify the conversation and educate the public that violence against women and girls was a human rights violation. But for them to be effective

in this, the practitioners were first taken through several trainings.

In addition to media programmes, AWCFS worked with schools under the Safer Schools program in which hundreds of girls benefited from information on how to protect themselves from abuse, how to report and how to identify a perpetrator.

User-friendly materials with illustrations were developed to help them appreciate their rights, forms of violence and sexual harassments.

### **Promising results**

This cocktail of interventions started to produce promising results that are likely to improve the situation of and access to justice of survivors of violence against women and girls. One of the major success was the incorporation of special VAWG committees within the official community policing committee structure. Embedding this structure in the bigger police response increased the commitment to and the seriousness with which the issues of VAWG were dealt with at the police station level.

Training of police officers on gender desk and involving them in community engagement forums had a major transformative effect on them. At least eight of them became champions campaigning and educating the public on this vice.

In Diani, Kilifi, Bungoma Town, and

Kisumu Central police stations, police officers serving on the gender desk went into communities and on radio stations to educate the public on VAWG and address issues of trust between them and the public. In Kwale, for instance, Emma Mututa has been going around the communities to sensitize them on this vice.

The number of cases reported to the station increased as well. This development can be attributed to the role of community forums, outreach visits by officers, and VAWG committees that have helped to improve the trust between the communities and the police officers on handling of these cases.

In Diani police station, for instance, the number of VAWG cases reported everyday increased from two to about five. In Nakuru County, Elementaita Police Station, Kaptembwa Police Station and Nakuru Central Police Station have recorded encouraging progress in addressing VAWG cases.

“This significantly improved relations and strengthened partnerships between the police and the community. The communities were willing to report cases to the officers knowing that justice will be done,” says Ms Omukhango.

Stories of increased collaboration between the police and the communities they serve abound. Police officers who were trained said following two key interventions: Jamii Thabiti community



Group work session: Training of Jami Thabiti Partners VAWG and Strategic communications training at Bungoma Tourist Hotel.

forums between the community and the police officers; and the establishment of the VAWG committees, good things are happening.

The community members were willing to share confidential and useful information on cases of violence against women and girls. Initially, many were not doing so since they did not trust the officers. Take the VAWG committees. Police officers at various gender desks have acknowledged the positive contribution of these committees to the increased reporting of cases of sexual violations of women and girls.

Many of these committees have created Whatsapp groups, whose membership includes police officers. They use this platform to share information and ideas on how to handle VAWG issues.

Diani Police Station in Kwale, Kaloleni Police Station in Kilifi, Musikoma Police Post in Bungoma, Muhoroni Police

Station in Kisumu are among the police stations that have recorded remarkable improvement in the management of violence towards women and girls. as result of the improved way of doing things.

### **Challenges encountered**

Despite this positive progress, the interventions encountered some challenges. Lack of resources to iterate the interventions in some areas emerged as a key challenge. For instance, training of police officers on standard operating procedures needed to be conducted for officers in other units that work closely with the gender desk. This could not happen in some cases due to resource constraints.

The stereotypes and attitudes of some police officers remain a major obstacle in addressing VAWG. It is going to take time before completely transforming how officers' handle VAWG issues. Police



Police officers in a group work session during training on VAWG held in Bungoma.

transfers were another major challenge. Officers who had been trained could be transferred within months after training. This made it difficult to do follow-up and monitor how the training and interaction with the community was changing their approach to VAWG issues.

### Learning points

The good news is these interventions offered valuable lessons for future interventions or replication. Forming strategic partnerships with key players such as the Ministry of Education, media, law enforcement agencies, and downstream partners increased the visibility, attention and the seriousness with which VAWG issues were handled. Such partnerships also made it cheaper to address some of the challenges.

The other lesson was establishment of structures in communities where the police officers and community members were represented encouraged candid

conversations and willingness to work together as a team in solving VAWG issues.

### Desirable future actions

As Jamii Thabiti celebrates the positive results that have been achieved, there is need to find ways of safeguarding the gains recorded so far. This will include enhancing and monitoring the capacity and contribution of VAWG sub-committees; monitoring the work of the trained police officers and empowering them to give periodic feedback on how the knowledge gained was informing their work.

Targeting and working closely with other strategic partners such as the County government, the Director of Public Prosecution, opinion makers in communities and managers of health facilities is likely to increase chances of survivors of VAWG accessing justice and other forms of support. **CL**

# Emma Mututa: Police officer on a mission

The sweltering heat at the Diani Police station seems to have little effect on desperate and confused women, children, and a few men who are waiting patiently in queues to be served by the police officers.

On the left side of the station, a long queue has formed as women with children on their backs wait to see one of the officers. This is the Gender Desk, and those on the queue are waiting for Emma Mututa, an officer who runs the desk. Located at the corner of the police station to provide some privacy and dignity to the survivors of sexual violations, the desk has become their only hope to get justice.

For many of the women and girls, some with torn clothes or bruised faces, seeing Mututa is a matter of life and death. She is the bridge and their only hope to dealing with the injustices they have been subjected to.

Today as we visit the police station, majority of her clients are mothers accompanying their daughters. They have been sexually violated. A few of them are pregnant. Their mothers sit by them quietly, deep in thought.



Emma Mututa is the police officer in charge of the gender desk at the Diani Police Station in Kwale County. Photo Joyce Chimbi

“The situation is very serious. At least 15 children in the queue are not in school. They are here on cases of defilement and assault. But they know I will see to it that the perpetrator gets what he deserves,” says Mututa.

In a single day, she attends to between five and 10 clients, majority of who are children. Defilement, child marriages, wife battering, rape or denial of access to education for the girl child, are the main types of cases reported to her.

Today, as we interview her, there are at least 20 people in the queue and only two of them are men. The rest are women and girls. According to Mututa, at least 80 percent of the violations reported to her are defilement cases with the rest being rape and assault.

Mututa attributes the huge numbers to the outreach programmes and ability to handle the cases well, the two important attributes that were instilled in her during her participation in a Jamii Thabiti programme. She is one of the officers that benefited from a Jamii Thabiti training undertaken by African Woman and Child Feature Service in 2016.

This training helped to ground her on issues of violence against women and girls, the legal framework, and the Standard Operating Procedures when dealing with such cases. For many police officers like Mututa, this training was their first interaction with a plethora of

laws, policies and guidelines on violence against women and girls (VAWG).

Mututa says “the Jamii Thabiti training opened up my eyes to violations and issues that I had never considered when dealing with cases involving defilement, rape or assault. This has really improved how I address these issues.”

“I knew about the Sexual Offences Act 2006, and this is true for many police officers. But we did not know about the other Acts. We used to rely on the penal code. The intervention by AWCFS to bring us together for a formal three day training set me on a new path,” Mututa explains.

Mututa says she was happy to learn about the Standard Operating Procedures for the management of sexual and gender based violence that the National Police Service and other stakeholders developed.

“During the training, we interacted with lawyers in a cordial and productive manner. Often we have very antagonistic relations with lawyers because they defend the very people we are pushing to put behind bars,” she says. Some of the lawyers she met at the training such as Esther Aroka, she notes, have become a source of crucial legal information and advice.

This training also introduced her to techniques and importance of reaching out to communities and speaking to them about violations women and girls

face. To ensure this happened, AWCFS linked her and other officers with the communities in an engagement forum where they openly discussed about what the community members and the police felt about each other.

These frank discussions made community members to start seeing the officers as friends and not as enemies. It is during one such meeting it was recommended that officers reach out to communities to educate them on VAWG and how to seek justice when violated or if they witness a violation.

Initially, Mututa says she was timid when she decided, after these forums, to engage in community outreach visits to sensitize the public on VAWG as well as build close relationship with them.

“An intervention to help bring the community closer to police officers is very important in fighting the vice and addressing animosity between the two groups. It is within the community where these cases occur, the community is the survivor, perpetrator and the witness. We need the community as a stakeholder,” says Mututa.

She has designed a programme of going into the communities. “I do outreach where I go into the villages educating the community. I am was able to define offences, teach them about different types of violence and also encourage them to come to me. I also gave the community

my personal phone number to call me anytime they had an issue that required my attention,” she says.

Immediately after her outreach visits, says Mututa, long queues started forming at the Diani Police station’s Gender Desk. This has increased the number of reported cases. The other thing she learnt during the trainings was how to handle survivors of sexual violence.

“Before the trainings, I was very serious and formal. I thought that this would confirm to them my power as a police officer and make them feel safe. But I have learnt that I need to be more informal and friendly. I also rarely wear the uniform, it intimidates them,” she adds.

She says she has been capacitated to a level that she is able to counsel women and girls who have been sexually violated. “Women who have been raped and girls who have been defiled are considered to be of loose morals. The society thinks they brought it upon themselves and that is why they rarely seek justice. I have to counsel and reassure them.”

She also realized that for the cases she handled to be successful, she had to build the capacity of a fellow police officer on handling SGBV issues.

“Handling this cases require involvement of police officers from other Units. The Records Unit is one of those very important ones. So I trained an officer from records,” explains Mututa.

“Even at the reporting desk I have influenced some changes. As you can see it is an open area and survivors’ are intimidated and fear to speak when other people are listening. What we have agreed with my colleagues is that when reporting officer establishes that is an SGBV case, it is quickly referred to me,” says Mututa.

Mututa has also influenced the addition of another officer at the gender desk whom she has trained as well. What makes her happy is that unlike in the previous years, the gender desk can now fully function even when she is assigned other duties or on leave.

Her efforts and the interest of the public in the desk is also making other Police Units to take note. This includes the Officer Commanding the Police Station who continues to offer full support to the gender desk.

### Challenges

While good things are happening, Mututa has to content with challenges. She says many of the survivors of the violence or even some officers are not aware of the referral pathway, which is very critical to these cases.

Poverty, illiteracy, retrogressive cultural practices, a culture of silence, and proliferation of Discotheque funerals and Discotheque weddings are challenges that make Mututa’s work very difficult. So are the Kangaroo courts that the

community uses to address these cases.

The socialization of the girl child to aspire for nothing else but marriage poses difficulties to Mututa as girls engaged in early marriage ask her to drop defilement cases feeling that what is happening to them is fine.

### Learning points

These experiences have however helped her learn useful lessons. One of them is that many of the SGBV cases can be addressed if there are concerted efforts to deal with them. This include continuous joint training of key stakeholders- Ministry of Education, the prosecutors, the Children Protection Officers, the Probation Officers and the police officers from various Units.

Mututa further says that trainings on violence against women and girls should involve police officers from the Crimes Unit who are often the first respondents in cases that have elements of sexual and physical assault towards women and girls.

She has further learnt that sensitization of senior police officers on the need to overhaul the reporting office to provide a private room for VAWG cases, a separate Occurrence Book with a separate reporting office for sexual violations is likely to enhance the confidentiality, privacy and dignity of survivors of SGBV **CL**

## Testimonies of community members on police support on VAWG

**H**azel Kitsao always wonders what would have happened to her and her 17-year-old daughter if they had not met Emma Mututa. Kitsao had tried in vain to get justice for her daughter who was defiled and the person who violated her started mistreating them.

“My daughter was defiled and got pregnant. After delivery, the man who defiled her kidnapped the four month-old baby. This is when we called Madam Emma,” says Kitsao.

She recalls how Mututa started tracking the man to get hold of the baby. But by the time they found him, it was too late. The baby had died. But Mututa said justice had to be done. “The officer started guiding us on how to proceed with the case and seek for justice,” explains Kitsao.

For Mututa, what happened in this case are some of the frustrating moments she has to endure. “My frustration is that I receive defilement cases when the pregnancy is already at seven months. It is very difficult to handle such a case as you must wait for the baby to be born and a paternity test is done.”

“Often,” she adds, “by that time, people have become impatient or been compromised in a Kangaroo Court. They just disappear.”

Her clients are however happy for her support. Kitsao says that Mututa has worked tirelessly on this case throughout its different phases.

There are times when Mututa has to provide them with bus fare as they move from one office to the next. “She is always a phone call away. She guides us on the phone, makes home visits especially when we are not able to go to her because of the distance.”

Another mother whose daughter was also defiled concurs with Kitsao. Hanifa Salim says she was sent to Mututa by villagers who told her that she will not leave any stone unturned in pursuing the perpetrator.

“Many suspects of this kind of crime even prefer to be booked under the Crimes Unit but not the gender desk, Mututa is very aggressive with these cases and she takes them very seriously,” says Salim.

Her daughter is a survivor of defilement and the case is in court. Mututa regularly meets the family to strategize on how to deal with the matter.

According to the community members who have interacted with the gender desk officer, all the cases receive personalized response from Mututa.

Zeinab Hussein, who lives in the area served by Diani Police Station notes that before Mututa began her outreach visits and speaking in public gatherings where she encourages people to report violations of women and girls at the station, justice was a far cry for many. Such cases, she says, were decided upon with village elders, where a few goats would be exchanged as fine.

“Even in defilement cases where the girl was impregnated, the cases would just be hushed. On many occasions, the perpetrator would refuse to pay the set fine and claim they were going to marry the girl. These days if you have a defilement case, you go to Mututa,” she says.

Salim confirms that wife battering is now being reported after hearing from Mututa during her public address or outreach visits that it is an offense. “We used to think that this is normal but we are reporting these cases and people are being punished. Some people are even in jail.”

It is such testimonies by community members that buttress the argument that building the capacity of gender desk police officers can go a long way in the prevention and response to crimes against women and girls. **CL**



Sophia Chelegat - MCA Baringo county assembly

**CHAPTER 3**

# ***Using laws to make private and public spaces safe for women***

**T**he news that four girls aged between 11 and 14-years-old had been married off in Baringo County in early 2018 left many people confused and angry.

What worsened the situation was the role of an Assistant Chief of Kalabata sub-location who helped facilitate the marriages when the law expects him to be on the forefront championing child rights and taking action against such vices. But this was not his lucky day. Women groups came out demanding justice be done.

One of them was Saphina Chelegat, a Member of County Assembly (MCA), Baringo County. When she heard what had happened, she alerted members of the gender technical working group on their Whatsapp group. Immediately, the women swung into action and mounted a massive campaign that resulted in the arrest of the Assistant Chief and the

parents of the girls. Meanwhile, the girls were rescued and taken to a safe place.

Chelegat had set up the WhatsApp group in 2015 while serving as the chair of the Women Caucus at the County Assembly. The group was to help track potential cases of female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage in the county.

By 2018, this group had become handy in addressing the many cases of violence against women and girls. But while Chelegat and others in the Baringo County appreciated this, they felt long-lasting solutions were required.

Their prayers were answered in 2016 when the County government was among the four counties that entered into partnership with The Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development (CCGD) to develop legal and policy response to VAWG issues. The other three counties were: Kwale, Bungoma,

and Wajir.

Working under the Jamii Thabiti Programme, CCGD was using this strategy to formulate effective County based responses to address the depressing VAWG issues in these four counties.

### Approaches used

The highlight of this intervention was to help the selected counties to develop VAWG related legislations and policies to respond to violations in their specific contexts. But to start off the process, CCGD initiated a rapid assessment of legislations and policies in the four counties to establish the frameworks in existence that address VAWG. The assessment was critical in helping appreciate the legal and policy gaps present in each of the four counties.

The findings of the assessment indicated there was a gap in the laws and policies, which in turn affected how the counties were responding to violations against women and girls. These gaps necessitated the formulation of a generic Prototype Bill that the counties would use to enhance their legal regime around VAWG. The representatives of the four counties were called to a meeting to validate the contents of the Bill before commencing the process of domesticating it at their individual counties levels.

“The project mainly targeted County

Executives and members of the County Assembly because they are the key policy and law-makers,” explains John Owegi, Legal Education Programme Officer with CCGD. “These officers also control any processes that take place at the County level,” he added.

### Encouraging results

As result of this intervention, each of the four counties has developed a Bill on violence against women and girls within the framework of the prototype Bill. Baringo County is one of those where this intervention was very successful. By the time of writing this *Changing Lives* book, the county had a draft Sexual and Gender Based Violence Bill, which it had introduced in the Assembly for debate. The debate was however shelved to allow members to participate in the 2017 General Elections.

“When the bill was formulated, we were in the final year of the Assembly and everybody was preparing for elections. Fortunately I am back and serving as the chair of Gender, cultural heritage and community services committee and the chair of the GTWG which now gives me a head start to push for the enactment of the bill,” says Chelegat.

The good news is that after the new Members of County Assembly were sworn in, CCGD managed to get the County Heritage, Gender, Culture and Community Services Committee

to mobilize and sensitize them on the content and importance of the Bill. They gave the Bill unanimous support. Chelegat exudes confidence that the bill will sail through. “The only challenge is finances. If funds are available we will be able to stick to the set timelines.”

In addition to the law, Jamii Thabiti helped Baringo County to craft a health policy on Gender Based Violence.

Some of the highlights of the policy is provision of a waiver on all medical fee previously charged when filling the P3 form for SGBV cases. This was a major breakthrough given the huge challenges the charges were posing to women survivors of violence in their attempt to access justice.

It is instructive to note that the development of the county specific Bills was preceded by trainings that were designed to enhance the capacity of County government officials and other stakeholders that handle VAWG issues.

The counties were tasked with identifying their own capacity building needs based on the challenges, information, and knowledge gaps they faced at the community level. This was to help empower the communities and establish a critical mass of people supportive of the laws.

A programme was then designed to offer trainings on women’s rights, legal and policy issues. The County Executives

and Assembly Members were the first group to attend these trainings to prepare them for the drafting of their County Specific Bills.

Later on, similar trainings were done targeting the Gender Technical Working Groups and other stakeholders. These training focused on developing their capacities in formulating laws and policy responses to VAWG from an informed point of view.

Both the MCAs and County Executive officials were roped in to help them appreciate the challenges facing women and therefore develop commitment to the cause and support efforts to legislate against oppressive structures and practices.

CCGD further adopted a coordinated multi-pronged response approach to VAWG that brought on board key segments of the society among them major stakeholders in education, health and security sectors as well as the GBV working groups.

The engagement with the county gender based violence working groups was part of a strategy to strengthen VAWG response by identifying and addressing challenges as well as building on the lessons learnt.

### **Dealing with challenges**

This progressive intervention has however faced some challenges that

sometimes resulted in delays in the implementation of the project and meeting of milestones.

“Bureaucracy was a major challenge in implementing the programme because most senior county officers delegated duties to junior staff who were not able to respond to our questions adequately or make decisions,” says Owegi.

There were also logistical challenges in accessing and holding meetings in some of the far-flung counties like Wajir. For instance, the security situation in the county frustrated the timelines and milestones set in the implementation of the interventions.

Notes Owegi: “Insecurity due to fear of terrorist attacks, cattle rustlers and/or ordinary crime also remains a challenge. We had to take an insurance policy for

members of our staff before they could travel to Northern Kenya.”

Culture also posed a challenge especially in the counties of Wajir and Baringo, where it was difficult to discuss in public certain issues like violence against women and girls. For instance, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a taboo subject that the lowly and the mighty in these counties avoid discussing.

The other challenge was the capacity deficit among some Members of County Assembly, especially in regard to drafting of policy papers and legislations. But the future looks bright, with the county government receptive to capacity building initiatives and willingness to partners with non-state actors to advance justice for women and girls survivors of violence. **CL**



CCGD'S John Owegi

## *What Jamii Thabiti supported law say*

**M**ary Chebon \* (name withheld) is in despair as she grapples with the reality of being defiled by her father.

Unlike other children in Baringo County, Chebon, who is only seven years old, has been committed to a children's home in Nakuru County, away from the care, love and warmth of her family. Her father who repeatedly defiled her is serving a life sentence for this crime - thanks to the intense pressure by the Gender Technical Working Group working under the Jamii Thabiti Programme.

Chebon is at least lucky for getting a shelter in Nakuru County, more than 50 kilometres away from her Baringo County, where most of the survivors of sexual violence have no access to such services. As result of this gap, many survivors prefer to end such matters through alternative systems that do guarantee justice.

According to the Saphina Chelegat, a Member of County Assembly (MCA) in Baringo County, the community prefers alternative dispute resolution mechanisms for various reasons. Some want to guard family relationships; others prefer traditional way of compensation, while others are compromised with money to do so. "Sometimes families are torn between following up cases or putting food on the table," she says.

Statistics available at the Baringo County Gender office show that 85 per cent of women and girls experience various forms of violence, although majority of the cases are not reported due to lack of service providers and stigma. Cases of FGM, early marriages and wife battering remain high with survivors

being inflicted with life threatening injuries and living with psycholog-ical trauma.

The shocking statistics scream towards one agenda; the need to protect and empower women and girls. This is exactly what CCGD with support from Jamii Thabiti set out to do. The organization helped the formulation of a new legislation in Baringo County to aid in the provision of more effective, accountable and responsive services to SGBV survivors.

The Sexual and Gender Based Violence Bill is designed to create appropriate protection mechanisms for SGBV survivors including providing for medical, security, legal aid, shelters and support services all under one roof. The Bill establishes Gender Recovery Centres both at the County and Sub-county levels to offer specialised free and comprehensive medical support to the survivors of SGBV.

The centres are also tasked with creating awareness on the existence of the free gender based violence services and on the 72 hour window for survivors to seek services. The awareness campaigns also targets men and schools to facilitate behaviour change.

The Bill, which was crafted in 2016, calls for the establishment of shelters and safe houses where survivors in need of protection can be accommodated. "We need safe spaces where people who feel threatened can seek refuge. This can be established by either faith based organisations, civil society groups, or the county government.

The safe houses as contemplated in the Bill will offer SGBV survivors temporary shelter, psychosocial support, and post trauma care

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## What Jamii Thabiti supported law say

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facilities. It will also maintain a functional referral pathway.

Ideally, a safe house, in the context of gender based violence (GBV), is a home that provides an alternative shelter to survivors of violence. The intended purpose of a safe house is to keep the survivor away from their perpetrator, with the aim of supporting her in dealing with the traumatic experience, as well as preparation for the legal process.

An ideal safe house should offer comprehensive services including psycho-social and legal support as well as follow-up care and ensure access to justice. They should also provide economic or vocational empowerment to equip survivors with the necessary skills to lead independent lives in future.

“The lack of safe houses in Baringo County has made some of the cases to be compromised and others thrown out,” laments Chelegat. Other important highlights of the Bill is the establishment of a board mandated to work closely with County Executive Committee (CEC) members for Health to ensure sufficient budgetary allocation to the Board and institutions involved in the protection of SGBV survivors.

The board will also oversight all SGBV

institutions in the County and advise the CEC on activities that aim at protecting SGBV survivors. The Bill also vests the board with powers to support Traditional Dispute Resolution Mechanisms aimed at facilitating resolution of disputes between perpetrators and survivors of SGBV.

Further, the board will train the traditional dispute resolution mechanisms within the county on the disputes that may be handled within the traditional setting and those that will require to go through the legal process in line with the laws of the country. This law provides for the creation of Sexual and Gender Technical Working Groups at the Sub County level. The GTWG will coordinate response and prevent victimisation of survivors. The group will also take charge of and support the SGBV recovery centre.

In addition, the GTWG will act as the first point of reference for survivors and a link between them and the justice system. Yvonne Rotich, a clerk attached to the Baringo County Assembly committee on Heritage, Gender, Culture and Community Services says she hopes that the proposed law will help curb retrogressive cultural practices such Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and early marriages that are prevalent in the County. **CL**



Police officers during a community-police engagement forum in Cheptais organised by AWCFS

**CHAPTER 4**



Virginia Nduta, Executive Director Women Empowerment Link.

## **Standard operating procedures: *The key to justice for survivors SGBV***

**J**ustice for many women and girls who survive sexual and gender based violence has remained a pipe dream. Poor investigations, handling of evidence, corruption, and lack of support systems for survivors have been highlighted as contributing factors to this sorry state of affairs.

So concerned was the country about this trend that in mid 2000, a process

was started to come up with a framework to fix some of these problems. This process culminated in the development of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that provide a clear roadmap for prevention and response to sexual violence.

Developed in 2014, the procedures outline the roles and responsibilities of the different service providers and the

cross sectoral referral linkages. Further the procedures expressly underscore the need for quality and proper responses to SGBV.

But for many years, the good intentions of these SOPs have never been actualized. Women and girls continue to struggle to get justice and enjoy support that is supposed to come their way when they report a violation. Stories from the police stations indicate not much has changed. The police officers who are expected to respond to these issues have complained of lack of requisite tools, support and guidelines to address sexual and gender based violence in an effective manner.

The biggest problem has been failure to get the very police officers who handle violence against women and girls cases use SOPs as a blueprint when it comes to responding to these violations. As result, management of the problem has experienced regular systematic failures as the officers attempt to secure justice for survivors of sexual violence.

Compounding the situation was the failure of the National Police Service (NPS) to operationalize its action plan for the prevention of and response to Sexual Violence as outlined in the SOPs. It is this state of affairs that made Women Empowerment Link (WEL), with support of Jamii Thabiti, to come up with a strategic response to help address this gap.

Said Virginia Nduta, WEL's Executive

Director: "It is almost five years after the SOPs were developed, survivors were still grappling to access quality services. Police stations which play a central role in SGBV are still regarded as an intimidating place for a woman who has gone through violence. Further, there are still a lot of complaints around how cases of VAWG are handled at the station level."

### **Approach used**

To address these gaps, WEL started a process that entailed meeting stakeholders to come up with a plan to respond to the prevailing situation. A steering committee was formed with representatives from the Ministry of Health, Office of the Directorate of Public Prosecution, the National Gender and Equality Commission, the Judiciary and the National Police Service. This steering committee was responsible for implementation of the SOPs.

The other strategy entailed a high level buy in from the National Police Service. "We engaged senior police officers to help register sustainable changes under the programme. We noted that at the police station level we may register some immediate change but it might not be sustainable."

During these strategic meetings, WEL identified the areas of concern and responses that needed to be addressed to make SOPs functional. A total of 32 police stations distributed in eight

counties—Kilifi, Kwale, Kisumu, Nakuru, Baringo, Bungoma, Wajir and Mandera – targeted under Jamii Thabiti programme, were selected to go through the trainings on SOPs. Police officers, especially on the gender desk and crime unit, were chosen as the primary beneficiaries of the trainings.

“Our focus was mainly to sensitize police officers on the SOPs, and to hear their feedback and challenges faced in responding to VAWG survivors.”

During the training, survivors were brought in to share their experiences of how they were handled at the police station, establish difficulties experienced while reporting the cases, and whether their cases were acted upon. This helped the officers to relate the SOPs to reality.

The trainings were also used as opportunities to get the officers to provide feedback on the SOPs, which was then used to improve the document prior to validation.

“Before the NPS adopts a document, there have to be several stages of validation because of the various Directorates in the police service. The Directors must come together and commit themselves to the process and document.

The service board comprising of the Assistant Inspector Generals and the Inspector General must agree with the content of the document,” says Nduta. Once the validation process is complete, then the police service can adopt the document.

### **Intervention record success**

Several months down the line, anecdotal evidence started emerging of how the training on SOPs was positively affecting the handling of violence against women and girls cases.

“We have seen senior police officers take up cases that have stalled for years,” said Nduta, and cited the case of a woman who was gang raped in Kisumu, but the case had stalled for five years.

“We have also recorded progress in terms of how survivors are being received at the police stations. In stations where gender units are ill-equipped, officers have been able to create spaces to interview survivors and uphold privacy notwithstanding limited resources.”

WEL’s proposal for creation of a gender unit, a gap identified during these trainings, has been adopted by the Directorate of Reforms. “We are currently awaiting an approval by the Inspector General,” says an elated Nduta.

The other area that was also addressed was gaps in the training curricular. The police have agreed to have it revised . “All these trainings have happened at the police station and thus we have managed to garner support from police commanders who are also beneficiaries of the trainings.”

### **Challenges that need attention**

Still, there were challenges that WEL felt needed to be addressed. These

included negative attitudes that are entrenched in the NPS.

The other challenge was transfers of the police officers. “During the 2017 general elections, there were a lot of transfers and therefore most police officers who had benefited from the trainings were moved to other stations.

In addition, the new appointments at the police headquarters were a threat to the goodwill the programme had. The programme had been anchored on the buy in approach that targets senior-most police officers. As a result of this reshuffle, the adoption process of SOPs slowed down as WEL familiarized itself with the new bosses. “It will require another round of sensitization of senior police officers before the revised document can be rolled out nationally,” said Nduta.

WEL had to also deal with high demand for the trainings. The numbers anticipated at the onset of the training went up exponentially and thus the organization had to readjust resources to respond to the challenge. We also had to adjust to changes to accommodate police commanders and involve directors in the validation process despite the fact that they were not factored in the initial plan,” Nduta explains.

### **Process offers useful lessons**

These experiences were however a source of useful lessons for WEL. The organization learnt that it can save on resources by tapping on available resources

of the beneficiaries. For instance, the steering committee sits in the boardroom of the National Police Service. “Most of these meetings would have been held in a hotel but we utilized the facility free of charge,” says Nduta.

“We also learnt to undertake risk analysis prior to our travels, especially in Wajir and Mandera counties that have been affected by terrorism,” notes Nduta.

“For instance,” she adds, “we were heading to Mandera when we received information that a police station had just been bombed. Through risk analysis, we were able to come up with safety measures. We ended up using a lot of resources from the police.”

The project has taught WEL the importance of adopting a buy-in approach to strategic interventions prior to their implementation.

“It took us a longer period to get a buy in to constitute the steering committee. The meetings are no longer called by WEL, but the secretary of the steering committee who is a police officer at the Directorate of reforms,” says Nduta.

“Even when training police officers at the county level, we remained as collaborating partners as opposed to leading the process.”

Negotiation is a strong tool when seeking to operationalize policies, notes WEL. “The SOPs which were developed in 2014 had never been implemented by



Police officers from Muhoroni Police Station during a Jamii Thabiti activity implemented by AWCFS.

the NPS but in one year, they managed to do so much.

### **The next steps**

Having achieved so much, WEL believes there is a lot that remains to be done in the next coming months and years. There is need to strengthen the weak referral pathway. This requires adequate linkage and feedback mechanisms between service providers, and harmonization of protocols and procedures for proper referrals across different sectors involved in service delivery.

Currently, adherence to provisions

outlined in the Standard Operating Procedure is still wanting. Survivors are still grappling with inadequate support system to enable them go through their experience of pain and suffering.

Data too remained a problem. It was a big challenge to follow trends especially in defilement cases. There is need to provide a more accurate and comprehensive sexual violence data to help inform future programming on the prevention and response to sexual violence. One area that needs urgent attention is the management of Forensic evidence as a key prerequisite to ensuring justice for survivors. **CL**



Nyatete Nyakundi a police officer at the Nakuru Central Police Station.

## Passion of one police officer to secure justice for survivors of VAWG



Nyatete Nyakundi ( standing) and his colleagues at the Nakuru gender desk.

**N**yatete Nyakundi is among the few police officers at the Nakuru Central Police Station inspiring change in the fight against sexual and gender based violence of women and girls. The passion and professionalism with which he approaches his work has impressed many people served by the station.

At the time of this interview, he was making frantic efforts to unite a 15 year old girl, who was defiled by a boda boda operator, with her family. "I first took her to hospital and after examination and treatment, I wanted to reunite the girl with

her family as we proceed with case. "The suspect had been arrested by other boda boda operators when they found him in the act at 10pm."

Nyakundi is among police officers trained on the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) by the Women Empowerment Link under the Jamii Thabiti programme. "After the training I decided to use every public forum to create awareness on VAWG cases. I have also shared the skills acquired from the training with fellow officers," he adds.

He has been able to rope in his

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colleagues within the gender desk and together, they have been making regular visits to schools where they talk to the pupils about various form of violence. “We have been educating pupils on the different forms of violence, what to do when violated and the alternative support system.”

He says that this has helped to yield returns as levels of reporting have gone up. According to Nyakundi, there is also an element of gender responsiveness in the way VAWG cases are handled. “The officers have done a commendable job, thanks to the series of trainings organized under Jamii Thabiti Programme.”

Nyakundi, who is also a member of the Nakuru West Gender Technical working group says that he has been able to pick up cases that come through the forum. He cites the case of a 16 year old girl who was gang raped in Kaptembwa, but died while undergoing treatment. Angered by this case, key players launched a Rapid Result Initiative for 20 days to end GBV cases in Kaptembwa.

“We focused our energies to ensuring the perpetrators were brought to book. The media was also involved. The suspects were arrested during this period and the matter is currently pending before court.”

Through the working group, Nyakundi says they were able to arrest a gang that used to operate in Ronda area. The gang would attack young girls on their way to school, abduct and gang rape them.

“With the help of the public, we managed

to arrest the suspects who are now serving twenty five years imprisonment.”

He says the gender working group is key in helping them address challenges in relation to SGBV. “Accusations of interference in cases are addressed at the cluster level. Through the forum, most service providers have become accountable and the element of interference minimized as many people are monitoring and sharing public concerns.”

According to Nyakundi, by 2018, defilement cases accounted up to 70 percent of all sexual and gender based violence cases reported at the Nakuru Central Police Station. The biggest challenge was the conviction rate, which he lamented remained very low.

Another challenge was in the area of documentation. “Some of the medical personnel lacked capacity to fill in the Post-Rape Care (PRC) forms. Others left out key information in this forms which more often than not weakened the cases and led to their high attrition in courts.” He said that they were able to correct mistakes in PRC forms in cases that had not gone to court to remedy the situation. But the same could not happen for those already in court.

“What we did was to sensitize the public and the community about this matter. Besides doing a follow up of the cases and making sure the perpetrators faced full force of law, we always asked survivors to ensure no documentation was missing,” equips Nyakundi. **CL**

## Testimony of Jamii Thabiti beneficiary

It is Wednesday afternoon and the gender desk at the Elementaita police station is a beehive of activities. A group of members of the Community Policing Committee have gathered under a tamarind tree. They have just brought in a defilement suspect who escaped death by a whisker when the public got him defiling a seven year-old-girl.

Seated at the edge of a piece of wood suspended on several rocks, James Mugo, a police officer attached to the gender desk at the police station records their statements. The survivor is accompanied by her mother. The police officer listens pensively as she recounted the details of what happened.

“My daughter was waylaid by this man on her way to school and defiled,” she narrates with pain written all over her face, wiping away tears. Mugo tries to build a rapport with the survivor. But this does not assuage the agony of the 42-year-old mother.

He then links the survivor to a female colleague who will issue her with a P3 form, accompany her to hospital and record her statement. The motions Mugo is taking the compliant through are part of the procedures and approaches he learnt through trainings offered under the Jamii Thabiti Programme.

According to Mugo, after the training, survivors are being attended to by officers of the same sex. “Further survivors are being interviewed in a private office where confidentiality is guaranteed. Something



James Mugo- Gender Desk Elementaita police station.

we learnt was critical during these trainings.”

He says that police officers now escort survivors to hospitals. “In addition only a few police officers can be assigned to escort exhibits to the government chemist.” Mugo has been instrumental in making sure the police station registers high conviction rates on defilement cases. “I have made sure that the knowledge acquired from the training trickles down to other police officers.

He takes credit for the conviction of two men aged between 75 and 85 years old respectively to life imprisonment after they defiled a nine-year-old girl. In another case, Mugo was elated when a defilement suspect admitted to the offense even before he could be arraigned in court.

“I wanted to establish if he was actually

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guilty. Before obtaining a sample of his urine, I decide to jog his mind and asked him to tell me the truth as a friend. I told him if he actually committed the offense and we take his urine, he is going to be jailed.”

The suspect then advised me to take urine of another person as he had actually committed the offense. “Fortunately he was jailed and I was happy because he was jailed for life.”

Mugo is among a critical mass of police officers in Nakuru County who have benefited from training undertaken by Women Empowerment Link (WEL), one of the partners under the Jamii Thabiti Programme. Other counties targeted under this intervention included Kisumu, Bungoma, Baringo, Kwale, Kilifi, Mandera and Wajir.

Virginia Nduta, WEL’s Executive Director said that the police officers in the eight counties are now able to identify and offer the appropriate assistance to, and ensure justice for victims and survivors of sexual and gender based violence.

The Officer Commanding Station (OCS), Elementaita police station, Everlyne Owona however says that their work is full of challenges. “While there have been efforts to prevent and better respond to incidents of VAWG, we do not have a room or building to handle these cases. Our officers are forced to operate under a tree.”

“Besides, the unit suffers from lack of adequate facilities to render efficient



**Everlyne Owona, The Officer Commanding Station (OCS), Elementaita police station.**

service especially to the victims,” she said.

The OCS added that the police station did not have a permanent cell. “We need a secure cell to place the perpetrator if justice is to be realized. Currently all suspects are detained in an open space and can flee if not guarded.”

Further, there was no functional medical facility in Elementaita and survivors in defilement cases had to be rushed to Nakuru Provincial General Hospital, over 20 kilometers away. She called for the establishment of safe spaces where people who feel threatened can be accommodated.

“Most defilement cases are lost when a child is taken back to the community, said Mugo. He cited the case of a girl who was coached to renounce the identity of the perpetrator, who she had initially positively identified as the teacher who had defiled her.

“I had to take the parents and the survivor

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### FROM PG 47

to the Director of Public Prosecutions for interview. That is when the survivor told the truth saying she was fearing because this was her first time in court.”

But even as she told the truth, the teacher was acquitted after the magistrate who was hearing the case was transferred. “The new magistrate ruled that according to the court file, the survivor had denied identifying the accused, she later changed and identified him. He was acquitted on benefit of doubt.”

These are some of the many cases Mugo and her officers had to deal with. To address some of these challenges, Mugo felt that there is need to convene a Court Users

Committee, where prosecutors will also be represented. This is a forum that will help police officers express their frustrations when handling VAWG cases. “There is nothing as demoralizing as having a strong case, only for the perpetrator to be acquitted.”

He felt that stakeholders needed to find a solution on how to facilitate costs that are required to be met by poor clients. “Most of us use our own money before the case proceeds to court. Majority of the survivors come from poor families and we really go out of our way to help including feeding them and giving them fare and buying pampers for the mothers who come with infants.” **CL**











