

Renewed calls for concerted efforts to combat Gender Based Violence

Gender-based Violence (GBV) remains one of the most widespread, persistent and devastating human rights violations and a major obstacle to the fulfilment of women's and girls' human rights, as well as to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG).

At the recently concluded 28th Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPJ) in Vienna, at a side-event on the 24th May entitled, "Towards a Regional Response to Violence Against Women in the Southern Africa Region", speaker after speaker called for more to be done to combat GBV. Some developments in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) were further highlighted.

Namibia's Deputy Minister for Justice, Hon. Lidwina Shapwa, expressed her gratitude to UNODC for the partnership in the production of the mock trial video. She expressed optimism that the video would serve as an important resource in enhancing the capacity and sensitization of service providers in curbing GBV. Furthermore, she indicated her confidence in the video being useful in educating the public on the reporting of cases of GBV.

Ms. Kealeboga Dambuzza from the Gender Unit of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), spoke about the recently approved Regional Gender-Based Violence Strategy. She further cited a current SADC study on GBV that would serve as a baseline for the GBV Strategy and provide data on the prevalence of GBV. She indicated some key findings and challenges from the study, such as the low reporting of GBV in SADC; the lack of interpretation and application of legislation by member states; the acute shortage of shelters; the gender inequalities and persistent discriminatory cultural practices that marginalize women.

SADC and UNODC jointly developed a Regional Programme in *Making the Southern African Development Community Region Safer from Crime and Drugs for the period 2013 to 2020. Cooperation in addressing Violence against Women and Children is a key priority for SADC and UNODC.*

Mr. Martin Ledolter, Managing Director of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), which is a key development partner in supporting the Regional Programme's focus on GBV, indicated that



In Namibia, a documentary mock trial video on gender-based violence, starring actual service providers from different agencies and depicting gaps in the criminal justice system, was recently launched. It seeks to embolden survivors of GBV to report the crime and offers service providers guidance on the effective management of reported cases.

many GBV cases were not reported mainly due to inadequate services, support, stigma and shame.

“The Austrian Development Agency advocates for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls whenever and wherever we can,” he said.

He highlighted the importance of UNODC work, supported by ADA, in optimising Namibian national tollfree GBV line, which in 2018 alone recorded a total of 50.143 calls on GBV cases (approximately 137 calls per day), most of which were from callers between the ages of 10 and 24 years. UNODC, with ADA funding, contribute to renovation of the multidisciplinary Gender-Based Violence Unit at the Katutura State Hospital in Windhoek, Namibia. The latter provides a comprehensive one stop service for victims and survivors of gender-based violence. The facility offers psychosocial consultation, forensic and medical services, amongst others.

Dr. Miwa Kato, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)’s Director for the Division of Operations, noted that GBV had become a global phenomenon and called for concerted effort to eradicate it. “GBV occurs worldwide, cutting across all generations, nationalities, communities and spheres of our societies, irrespective of age, ethnicity, disability or other background. Our collective effort is required to address this phenomenon,” Miwa said in keynote remarks.



Ms. Dambuza, SADC Gender Unit; Mr. Ledolter, Austrian Development Agency; Dr. Kato, Director, Division for Operations, Vienna; the Deputy Director of Justice of Namibia, Hon. Shapwa; and Ms. Akisheva, UNODC ROSAF Representative.

Cooperation in addressing GBV together with creating empowering environment for women and girls is critical in achieving Sustainable Development Goals. She referred to the UNODC research conducted in 2018, which shows that globally, 87,000 women were killed annually, more than half of them by intimate partners or family members. According to the research, the situation in Africa is of particular concern and requires urgent action to address it. In order to support an integrated UN response at the field level UNODC works with UN Women, UNFPA, UNDP and the World Health Organisation in piloting the *UN Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence Package*“. It can be used as one of the main tools to support countries in designing, implementing and reviewing services for survivors of violence”, she said in conclusion.

Ms. Zhuldyz Akisheva, UNODC Regional Representative for Southern Africa, summarised that collective efforts are required to address the problem of such a scope and dimension. UNODC in Southern Africa will continue partnering with SADC Secretariat and SADC member states to improve victim-centered law enforcement and Criminal Justice response to violence against women and children in the Region of Southern Africa. As part of the UN family, UNODC will contribute to a more integrated and upscaled UN response to gender issues.

The download link to the GBV drama documentary is:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6vd0gHJ3hQ> the link to the trailer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7cSogNCc2s> Male's story

<https://youtu.be/lgM4FpRR1-k> Female's story

The download link to the SADC GBV Strategy is:

https://www.unodc.org/documents/southernafrica//Stories/2019/SADC_Regional_Strategy_and_Framework_for_Action_on_GBV_-_FINAL_September_2018_-_ENGLISH_VERSION.pdf