

UNODC supports Namibia Police in addressing Violence against Women and Children

Police record 200 GBV cases per month

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by Namibia Press Agency



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THE police Gender-based Violence Protection Unit in Windhoek gets more than 200 reports of cases under the Domestic Violence Act on a monthly basis.

(<https://www.namibian.com.na/83236/read/Police-record-200-GBV-cases--per-month>)

WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA – Violence against women has been a continuous challenge in Namibia. Back in 2015 the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) expressed concern over the high prevalence of violence against women and girls such as rape and murder committed by intimate partners. The Committee was also concerned at the low rate of prosecution of perpetrators of violence against women and the frequent withdrawal of cases by women victims of violence. (CEDAW/C/NAM/CO/4-5). Indeed, 1 in 4 Namibian women are survivors of intimate partner violence and only 14.9% of survivors sought help from the police (Namibia Demographic and Health Survey 2013). The UNODC-supported NGO called Lifeline/Childline recorded 50,143 calls on the national tollfree line in 2018. It is only a small fraction of the calls from potential victims of GBV lead to actual lodging a case with Police.

The GBVPU in Namibia was established in 1993 in response to widespread prevalence of violence against children, especially sexual violence. Such units are intended to provide timely and coordinated response services from a multi-disciplinary team to sexual and or gender-based violence cases. Namibia has 17 such units, with at least one in every region. Most of them are located at hospitals.

In order to strengthen capacity of Police officers as first respondents to provide victim-friendly services and ensure interagency cooperation among Police, Health and Social Service authorities in supporting victims of GBV the UNODC, in cooperation with UNICEF and UK National Crime Agency supported renovation of the GBVPU facility in Windhoek. The renovated facility was launched in September 2019.

Photo of ribbon cutting

Speaking at the launching ceremony, Lieutenant-General Sebastian Ndeitunga, Inspector-General of the Namibian Police Force, highlighted the commitment of Police to Improve service delivery and responses to GBV. The renovated centre, he said, would become a centre of excellence for similar establishment in the country to learn from.

He attributed GBV to substance abuse, harmful cultural and religious practices and encouraged everyone to denounce and stop it. He confirmed that the analysis of data over the past three years indicated that girls were more frequently victimized as compared to males. He cited statistics of rape cases of minors, indicating the increase in rape cases over the last 3 years.

The renovated OSC provides a conducive working environment for police officers and other professionals deployed to the GBV Protection Unit. Trained police officers, medical doctors and social workers provide “victim-centred”, age and gender sensitive services to survivors of violence against children and GBV. These include gender and child-sensitive criminal investigation, court preparation, psycho-social support (PSS), and assistance to survivors and witnesses. Shelter, medical treatment and Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) are all provided under one roof. Expectations are that if the unit is successful the victims will be encouraged to report cases and get the support they require.

In addition, the upgraded model also seeks to boost the morale of the staff and prevent burnout. A staff recreation area has been developed. Effective violence prevention as well as the appropriate protection and support of survivors requires a holistic multi-disciplinary approach, which is under-pinned by dignity, respect and confidentiality.

Zhuldyz Akisheva, UNODC Regional Representative, speaking on behalf of the UN Resident Coordinator in Namibia, highlighted that Violence Against Children (VAC) and GBV has been considered by UN as the major obstacles to justice, peace and the elimination of poverty. She said VAC and GBV ultimately puts at risk the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. She cited a 2018 study done by UNODC showing that approximately 3.1 survivors per 100,000 females were being killed by an intimate partner or family member. She said the UN System in Namibia has provided support to the GBVPU in Windhoek for the Government to upscale work in addressing GBV, especially in law enforcement and criminal justice areas.

H.E. Ms. Kate Airey, UK High Commissioner to Namibia, handed over two cars and equipment which was donated by the UK National Crime Agency to GBVPU.

Other notable dignitaries present at the event were Mrs. Laura McLeod-Katjirua, Governor of Khomas Region, Mrs. Wilhencia Uiras - Executive Director, Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, representatives of Police and other national authorities

UNODC expresses appreciation to the Austrian Development Assistance for the support to GBV work in Namibia.



1RELAUNCH: Lieutenant-General Sebastian Ndeitunga, Inspector-General of the Namibian Police Force, prepares to cut the ribbon at the official relaunch the Gender Based Violence Protection Unit (GBVPU) in Windhoek



2PHOTOGRAPHS OF FACILITIES BEFORE AND AFTER THE RENOVATIONS OF THE GENDER BASED VIOLENCE PROTECTION UNIT IN KHOMAS