

16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence

DECEMBER 2007

Message by Elizabeth Mataka, UN Special Envoy on AIDS



Inside this issue:

Message by Elizabeth Mataka, UN Special Envoy on AIDS	1
The cycle of violence is a vicious one	2
Rasuge remembered at start of 16 Days of Activism	3
New UN Internet Campaign to Eradicate Violence against Women Launched	4
Hundreds march against gender violence	5
Message by Elizabeth Mataka, UN Special Envoy on AIDS—continued from page 1	5
Who are the perpetrators of gender based violence?	6
The cycle of violence is a vicious one - continued	7

25 November, 2007
 In the days leading up to the International Day Against Violence Against Women I have been reflecting on exactly what violence against women means. The more I thought about the subject, the more I realised that violence now has many shapes and colours, it has transcended the violence of physical, sexual and psychological assault, touched down on political and economic harm and now moved into the space of complicity by silence. We need not look further than the recent epidemiological data released this week by UNAIDS, it illustrates that approximately 60% of HIV infected adults in sub-Saharan Africa are women. This information, I am aware, is not new – women in our region have for many years been what has been coined ‘the face of the epidemic’ - but what this new data has done is bring home the realisation that nothing has changed for women. The HIV estimates in Africa have shown a leveling off and in some instances, a decline and this is hopeful news. But

the situation of women has not changed. And so I ask, when it comes to women, why are we so slow to act? With statistics such as these, we are facing a critical emergency, we are rapidly moving towards an Africa without women. Allowing this to happen is violence against women. You may not conduct a physical assault, but being silent is being complicit and non-action is now a violent act. I have made a personal stand not to be complicit or be a silent aid to any form of violence against women. Strengthening the rights of women and girls is a priority area for me during my tenure as the UN Special Envoy on AIDS in Africa. I have decided to move beyond the lip service of discussions on the empowerment of women and work closely with governments and legal groups, lobbying them, to make sure that legislation and policy is reformed to actually support the empowerment of women. However, as we know, we can change policy and legislation, but nothing will change unless we change our cultural practices and our personal attitudes that support this violence against women. For example, am I wrong to

say that in some of our cultures here in Africa, a well brought up daughter is one who is submissive and obedient? Doesn't this well mannered daughter reflect well on her family? But doesn't this very same education in submissiveness and obedience create a dependency, which in turn disempowers our daughters? Am I wrong in saying that some of our cultures here in Africa condemn divorce; and our societies are quick to denounce marriage separation, even a marriage with high risk and abuse? Evidence shows that a massive number of new infections in women here occur in the context of marriage or long term relationships. With this kind of information, it is a violent act to hide behind ‘culture’ to justify leading our women to an early grave. This is why in my tenure as the UN Special Envoy on AIDS, I will talk publicly and honestly about the cultural practices that are harmful to women. We need to break the silence on this. We need to ask ourselves about the kind of legacy we will leave for our daughters and

Continued on page 5

The cycle of violence is a vicious one

By Beatrice Tonhodzayi—
ZIMBABWE

THE majority of murder cases that were brought before Zimbabwean courts last year were a result of domestic violence and the victims were largely women, reports show.

In most instances the fatalities occurred within the domestic sphere with the women and men who died having done so as a result of jealousy, money disputes, a failure to accept that a relationship is over, among others. There were many suicides with men killing their wives and girlfriends and then later killing themselves.

Such shocking statistics cannot go unmentioned as Zimbabwe joins the rest of the world in commemorating 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence, a time set aside to lobby policy makers and communities at large to stop gender based violence, to ensure that adequate resources are allocated towards fighting it and to make sure that all sexes enjoy basic human rights.

For us today, talk of upholding women's rights should never be a 16 Days issue but an everyday one. Yes the calendar dates were the 25th of November to the 10th of December but each of the 365 days that make a year should be one of activism against GBV because if violence of any sort persists in any community, there will be no progress in that community. Zimbabwe is under threat if gender based violence continues to take place.

Picture this: a man who always punches his wife in front of this 13-year old daughter, 11-year old son and five year old son. He will not allow here to go anywhere unless he accompanies her, he will never be satisfied with any of the meals

she cooks, in fact the minute his family hear the sound of his vehicle at the gate, they all scurry off to bed.

What sort of daughter does this kind of man raise?

What about the son?

In another home let's picture the woman who always screams at her husband for never doing enough for the family, the woman who raises her voice each time the husband or partner ever opens her mouth to say anything saying "if he were a man, he would make enough money for the family, the type of woman who ridicules her partner or husband for earning less than her.

What legacy would she leave within her children?

What would she do to her man's emotional well-being?

Psychologists say children in such homes often suffer from all sorts of problems. They fail to interact well with others, to perform to the best of their ability in school and other spheres as well as to enter into and keep healthy relationships later on in life.

It is highly likely that the man's children: both son and daughter will find themselves repeating the same cycle of violence in their own homes. The daughter might believe that by being highly intolerant of her partners or husband's opinion, she would protect herself from being treated like her mother and end up emotionally abusing him while the son could find himself also punching his wife even though deep down he detested it when his father was doing it to the mother.

I have many colleagues who have often engaged in violence without ever having a good explanation for it except that "I just

cannot seem to help it." Does it not make sense now why some do it?

In other instances it is the children themselves that suffer within the domestic sphere: they get sexually abused by their own fathers, uncles and grandfathers while boys are also molested by female relatives or even their minders.

The disturbing thing about all this is that these children's futures are destroyed as some of them never manage to live normal lives after this sort of abuse.

Some carry with them lasting scars like HIV and AIDS, all because an adult within their home, community or society did not think to uphold their human rights.

If a woman is being punched day in, day out, how feasible is it that we expect that she will ever be safe from her partner, even in the bedroom. Her chances of demanding or advocating that she be protected even when she is unsure of her protection are almost nil.

A friend of mine whose boyfriend thinks hitting her is his prerogative as and when he feels she has not behaved in an appropriate manner, will not allow any talk of condoms in their relationship.

She is not the only one. Thousands of women across the globe are facing the same predicament where protecting themselves from HIV is something they cannot ever dream of doing because "even when a man is evidently suffering from a sexually transmitted infection, he will demand sex and will not use or allow the
Continued on the last page

Rasuge remembered at start of 16 Days of Activism

Johannesburg, South Africa
Constable Francis Rasuge was murdered due to her refusal to be a slave in a relationship she no longer wanted, North West Premier Edna Molewa said on Sunday. Speaking at the launch of the 16 Days of Activism campaign against abuse in Maboloka near Brits, Molewa said Rasuge typified the pain of being a woman in South Africa.

Rasuge was last seen alive on August 27 2004 with William Nkuna, her boyfriend, outside a hair salon in Temba, north of Pretoria. Nkuna was sentenced to life imprisonment for her murder. Rasuge's body has never been found.

Molewa said some men continued to believe that women should either die or vanish from the face of the earth if they did not submit to them. "I call upon that person to remember that he or she is also a human being ... I call upon that person to rise to the occasion and let the humanity coursing through his or her veins dictate the right course of action, and that is to expose those who have deprived Francis Rasuge of her rights as a South African." Molewa said the country would never be free until women and children could walk, talk and dress

freely without any fear of rape or molestation. "South Africa will never be free until women and children can express themselves in song and dance, not worried that they shall be inviting unwanted approaches and belligerent advances," the premier said.

She said however that there was hope. "There is hope in that we are now seeing men leading the battle against the harassment, abuse and oppression of women.

In Mpumalanga thousands of men marched to hand a memorandum to the provincial safety and security minister at the Nelspruit Magistrate's Court. In the memorandum, the marchers demanded that all police stations be equipped to deal with domestic violence and that police officers be trained to deal with its complexities. They also demanded that perpetrators of domestic violence not be granted bail. Limpopo Premier Sello Moloto was among the men who marched through the streets of Polokwane to mark the beginning of the campaign.

In his speech Moloto highlighted challenges facing the government regarding violence against women and children. The province was battling with assault, rape and murder.

Seven of 13 children who had gone missing in Modimolle in the last four years were recently found raped and murdered. The Young Communist League challenged women, men and children to actively play a role against abuse aimed at vulnerable sections of society, especially women and children. Spokesperson Castro Ngobese said abusers had been "shaped" by apartheid to treat and think of women and children as second-class citizens.

"Violence against women and children should be located and understood against the background of socio-economic conditions in our country and the growing gap between the rich and the poor." – Sapa

http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=325946&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news_national/

The Media Resource Desk wishes you

a Merry Christmas

and a Prosperous

New Year.

New UN Internet Campaign to Eradicate Violence against Women

26 November 2007

United Nations, New York — United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Goodwill Ambassador and Academy Award-winning actress Nicole Kidman became the first today to add her name to a new [Internet campaign](#) aimed at eliminating violence against women.

“One in three women may suffer from abuse and violence in her lifetime,” she said in a [statement](#). “This is an appalling human rights violation, yet it remains one of the invisible and under-recognized pandemics of our time.”

Despite the pervasiveness of the issue, Ms. Kidman said that “it is not inevitable. We can put a stop to this.”

She urged people to add their names to the campaign — which will run until 8 March 2008, International Women’s Day — and say “no” to violence against women.

“The more names we collect, the stronger our case to make ending violence against women a top priority for governments everywhere.”

Today’s launch follows yesterday’s [International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women](#), commemorated annually on 25 November.

While nearly 90 countries have laws on domestic violence and many more have national

Action plans or strategies to bring an end to the pandemic, “implementation of these laws is often insufficient,” UNIFEM Acting Executive Director Joanne Sandler said in New York.

“Impunity for perpetrators is the rule rather than the exception; so many women still fear to speak out because they know that justice remains elusive,” she added.

Ms. Sandler highlighted the work of the [UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women](#), which is administered by UNIFEM and has supported over 250 innovative programmes in more than 100 countries in the past decade.

Recipients of the Fund’s grants “are showing how to address the interlinkages of violence against women and HIV and AIDS, how to involve men and boys in ending violence against women and how to reach marginalized groups — such as rural indigenous women — so that they, too, can benefit from improved laws and policies on ending violence against women,” she said.

Despite the problem’s scope, the Fund has received in excess of \$100 million in requests, but was only able to secure \$5 million for grant-making last year, unlike the Trust Fund to End HIV and AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which draws on billions of dollars.

Also launched today was a UNIFEM report on gender-based violence entitled “NO

MORE!!!! The right of women to live a Life Free from Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The new study noted that between 1990 and 2007, nearly 900 Chilean women were killed, mostly by their partners or ex-partners, while in Bahamas in 2000, almost half of all murders committed were feminicides — women being killed at the hands of their partners or because of their gender status — and rose to 44 per cent in 2001 and 53 per cent in 2002.

“The negative synergy between institutional weakness and patriarchal culture favour and provoke impunity,” the report noted. “These factors are causes and consequences of the lack of power of women and girls.”

The scope of the problem detailed in the report “represents only the tip of the iceberg of the many women affected who remain hidden behind silent statistics, social tolerance and impunity,” Marijke Velzeboer-Salcedo, Chief of the Latin American and Caribbean Section at UNIFEM, said at a press briefing today.

Calling on governments to take greater action, the report also appealed to international organizations, civil society and the media to promote the eradication of violence against women and an end to impunity for those who commit such crimes.

http://www.unifem.org/news_events/story_detail.php?StoryID=645

Hundreds march against gender violence

Neo Semono - Pretoria, South Africa

Hundreds of men and women, including Cabinet ministers, marched in Pretoria on Wednesday in support of the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children campaign. The crowd, wearing white T-shirts bearing the words "50/50 No compromise/no going back", marched from Sammy Marks Square to the Union Buildings to hand over a memorandum calling for more to be done for gender equality.

The memorandum, which acknowledged the government's efforts in advancing gender equality, was received by Minister in the Presidency Essop Pahad and signed by Deputy Minister of Provincial and Local Government Nomatyala Hangana.

Hangana was joined in the march by Minerals and Energy Minister Buyelwa Sonjica, Agriculture and Land Affairs Minister Lulu Xingwana and members of Gender Links and the African National

Congress (ANC) Women's League.

Singer Yvonne Chaka Chaka entertained the crowd gathered at the Union Buildings. Bafana Khumalo of the Sonke Gender Justice Network said he was attending the march to reassert the principle of the 50/50 campaign for equal representation of men and women in the ruling party.

Khumalo said many men and young people had responded positively to the 16 Days of Activism campaign.

"We are concerned for the ruling party... there is a worrying trend that the majority of nominees [for the party presidency] are men. We need capable women in the presidency," Khumalo said.

After delivering the memorandum, Hangana said: "To curb the levels of violence against women and children, we'd like to see children be taught against women abuse."

At the Union Buildings, Public Service and Administration Minister Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi

said she was hoping that a person with a consistent track record would be elected. "I'm voting for someone with a consistent track record with no fear to develop and implement the ANC's strategic policies to ensure that we have a unified country," she said.

The ANC Women's League's Mavivi Mayakayaka-Manzini said it is important for women to continue fighting for gender equity.

Pahad said: "There is no reason why there shouldn't be a 50/50 balance in government," adding that legislation of 50/50 representation should be passed at all spheres, including political parties and trade unions. – Sapa

http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=326951&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news_national/

Continued from the front page

granddaughters, unless we stand up to some of these harmful practices, all they will inherit is a certain death before they have actually lived.

Again I ask, when it comes to women, why are we so slow to act?

It is still astounding that over 25 years into the HIV epidemic, and in the context of sexual relations, for the most part a woman is still made dependent on her male sexual partner to protect herself. The statistics show that time has run out, women need products, now, that they can control – without negotiation and with discretion - to protect

themselves against HIV. More political commitment and resources need to go to the research agenda around women controlled HIV prevention products, like microbicides.

The needs and the rights of women need to move from the empty discussions in the margins and given the necessary resources, attention and action the urgency requires. However, absolutely nothing will change for women unless men and boys are involved and educated towards an understanding of equality – this will help them understand, better, the advantages of true gender equality.

Today, the International Day

Against Violence Against Women and the first day of the 16 days of activism against gender violence, I ask that non-action is included as a definition of violence. It is our collective responsibility to take a stand against violence against women, if we remain silent, we become complicit, we become an obstacle.

I conclude by asking again, when it comes to women, why are we so slow to act?

http://www.kubatana.net/html/archive/women/071125un.asp?sec-tor=WOMEN&year=0&range_start=1

Who are the perpetrators of gender based violence?

**By Gloria Ganyani (SAfAIDS)
ZIMBABWE**

“A house wife is locked inside a room and heavily beaten by her husband. While this is happening, her mother-in-law sits on the floor listening to the beatings and offering no assistance or making any effort to stop her son from beating his wife.

Angered by this kind of abuse and behavior the daughter in law takes rat poison and also gives some to her two-year-old child so that they die together.

Unfortunately the child dies and the mother survives and is arrested and eventually brought before the courts. She is charged with murder and punished according to the law.

Is she such a bad person and isn't the mother-in-law just as much a perpetrator of GBV in the incident described above?”

Zimbabwe's Judge President, Justice Rita Makarau, the guest of honour during the national launch of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence, recently held at the Rainbow Towers in Harare, Zimbabwe, posed this question to the thousands of women and men who gathered to commemorate this important launch.

While gender based violence (GBV) is synonymous with violence against women the story left many people wondering who the real perpetrators of violence are.

In relating the story, Justice Makarau showed that gender based violence is not perpetrated by men only but in some cases by women against other women. It

also shows that there are many forms of violence, which range from physical to emotional abuse.

A woman can also perpetrate violence against another woman. “If a mother-in-law asks her daughter-in-law to stay in the rural areas to assist her to do some chores like tilling the land and uses her like a slave while her husband is alone in town, that is gender based violence,” echoed the Minister of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development, Opah Muchinguri.

Justice Makarau said women were sometimes tried for murders which have occurred as a result of an emotional reaction to some form of abuse.

“We need assistance on how such issues should be handled,” she said. “There is need to educate and change the attitudes of police officers, magistrates, prosecutors and nurses in order to end gender based violence.”

Before the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) was passed, violence in the home, especially against women, was not treated with the seriousness it deserved and was regarded as a “domestic issue”, which meant it should be solved by the concerned parties at home.

Justice Makarau said the patriarchal nature of our society had a lot to do with the GBV perpetrated against women.

There are many stereotypes associated with feminine behavior. For example, women are regarded as people with less education, low reasoning capacity who are weak and less

economically empowered, Justice Makarau said.

These stereotypes need to be challenged because there exist many women who are more intelligent, economically empowered and powerful in society compared to men.

Highlighting the mandate of the Domestic Violence Council, Bishop Manhanga appealed to everyone to be more open about domestic violence issues. “We are not asking for a reduction in GBV but we are advocating for an end to it,” he said.

He added that, “HIV prevalence in Zimbabwe declined because we began to do things that were not done before. We started to talk about sex openly, and the same should be done with GBV.”

Although a large percentage of the perpetrators of violence are men, there is growing evidence that women also perpetrate violence.

While men often use physical violence, women are more likely to abuse their partners emotionally. Men are often subjected to emotional violence if they fail to fend for their families or if they have a lower social status than their partner. In most cases men do not report their encounters of violence as much as women do.

Everyone needs to be aware and familiarise themselves with the different kinds of violence and make sure that the DVA becomes a law which is just not on paper but makes a difference in people's lives.

The cycle of violence is a vicious one

Continued from page 2

woman to wear a condom.

A gender and advocacy officer with Southern Africa HIV and AIDS Information Dissemination Service (SAfAIDS) Ms Dominica Mudota who has worked extensively with



News in Focus is a publication of the SAfAIDS Media Resource Desk (MRD) and is produced to evaluate topical HIV and AIDS events and conferences in southern Africa.

For more information please contact :

Beatrice Tonhodzayi
SAfAIDS

Media Resource Desk
17 Beveridge road
Avondale, Harare
Zimbabwe

Phone: +263 4 336193/4 307098

Fax: +263 4 336195

Email:

mediadesk@safaids.org.zw

Website :

www. mediaresourcedesk.org

Please visit our website
<http://www.safaids.org.zw>

*HIV/AIDS Information: The power
to make a difference.*



women in different spheres says the issues are far more complex than they seem because women by virtue of being women were failing to even demand to enjoy their own good health in violent settings.

"This has nothing with how much money a woman has or what job she does. These issues are deeply embedded within our communities with some women even fuelling violence against other women. There is much we need to do to empower women and to make their partners and communities more gender sensitive so that people can be respected as people not as women or men," she said.

It is important to note that it is not men only who abuse women. Haven't we heard of mothers in law and aunts who advise their sons to leave their wives because they are not "obedient enough, falling pregnant, bringing sons into the family and many other such issues. They encourage their sons and brothers to change partners without giving any thought to the implications regarding their health in this era of HIV and AIDS.

There are again many people who do not allow people living with disabilities to enjoy their human rights along with everyone else. These include the men who rape women living with disabilities and societies who never think of people living with disabilities when designing programmes and messages.

By not including them: a disservice is being done and around this time, we need to look at what we have done and see how much further we still need to go.

If you are the type of man who wants to know everyone your wife speaks to on his or her phone, if you must know every place she passes through in a day, if you will not allow her to decide how many children she wants, if she cannot decide when she wants to have sex, if she cannot go out with friends once in a while, you are abusing her rights. Every human being has or rather should have the freedom to association and expression.

While men and women can both have their rights infringed on by the other, it is mostly women who suffer this the most.

It is even more shocking that communities are watching these things happen because according to them "it is all part of our culture."

Women who fail to conceive are replaced because its part of culture, according to some women who fall ill are sent back home to their families because "that is what has always been done" some men are still inheriting wives in certain communities whether the women are willing or not because "it is their culture."

As 16 Days passes, let us look at our lives and ask ourselves this: Is violence part of our culture?

To women or men who are being violated against, be it physically, emotionally, economics, sexually, among others, you should know that the Government of Zimbabwe does not tolerate GBV and now has a law in place to deal with perpetrators of GBV.

Do not be afraid to use the law, you do not have to protect an abuser because "you love them"; after all if they loved you enough, they would not be violent towards you."