

# **GENDER BASED VIOLENCE A IN THE INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLES CAMPS.**

## ***INTRODUCTION***

The post election violence in Kenya which was caused by the unprecedented disputed presidential elections in 2007 made the victims to leave their homes and converge in Internally Displaced Persons' Camps (IDPs) around the country. The victims faced several social, economic and psychological problems. At the time, the government had no operational disaster preparedness system in place which worsened the plight of the displaced persons. Whereas the registered refugees have their welfare being looked into by International Organizations, like the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the Kenyan locally internally displaced persons had no formal body to look into their welfare. This rendered the IDPs helpless and the already bad situation was worsened especially for the women and young girls. People in the IDP camps were visited by several atrocities among them sexual exploitation. IRIN (2008) reported that by the second day of the post election violence 56 women had been treated for rape with some being admitted to hospitals. The study therefore set out to examine the types and extents of gender based violence which was visited on female victims, how governmental and non-governmental agencies responded to the situation and the role of the counselling community in the whole tragedy. Eyes on Kenya (2008) reported that Kenyan health fraternity had expressed fear and concern that women and children could be at a risk of sexual attacks in the poorly protected camps, especially given the fact that referral systems that existed had been rendered useless as people ran for their dear lives. Since the International Humanitarian Law (IHL) had rightly put it, people have a right to life with dignity during displacement this however was not the case in Kenya during the 2007 post election violence. Given what had happened the study gave one of the recommendations as active involvement of the counselling fraternity in the healing process of the victims especially those who suffered Gender based sexual violations.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study set out to answer three research questions which were generated from the research objectives. The questions were:-

- (i) What was the nature and magnitude of gender based violence among females in the Internally Displaced Peoples' Camps.
- (ii) How did the governmental, non-governmental and professional counselling fraternity respond to the situation?
- (iii) How should the professional counselling fraternity assist in the healing process of the country, the victims and their families in particular?

1000 women victims of post election violence victims in camps were purposively selected for the study. This group was divided into age sets which was the basis of the sampling procedure. The procedure realised four categories depending on age groups namely 250 participants aged between 12-19 years. Secondly 250 participants aged between ages 20-29; thirdly 250 participants aged between ages 30-39 years and lastly 250 participants aged between ages 40-49 years. All the age

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groups were given equal chances and the three main camps from Eldoret Municipality were given equal opportunity of participation. A survey study design was conducted in order to obtain information regarding sexual violence experiences starting from the day of the post election violence to the period of resettlement which was ongoing by the time of the study. The sampling frame was derived from identification records maintained by the camp management officials. The victims were divided into four age sets namely ages 12-19 years age bracket, 20-29 age bracket, 30-39 age bracket and finally 40-49 age bracket each of whom had 250 representatives. The main reason for choosing Eldoret Municipality was because it was the epicentre of post election violence and also home to several internally displaced peoples camps.

The target population was 5,000 therefore less than 10,000. The number of respondents was adjusted using the formula here below;

$$n = (N \times n) / (N + n)$$

Where N is the total number of potential participants in the IDP camps.

$$n = (1000 \times 5000) / (1000 + 5000)$$

n (Total) = 833 participants responded to the interviewer administered questionnaires.

Data was coded in the statistical package for social scientists (SPSS 12). Measures of central tendency frequency and cross tabulations were run to get descriptive data. The data was then subjected to inferential statistics where chi square tests were performed to determine their relationship with SGBV magnitude reporting. The level of statistical significance was kept at 0.05 level of confidence which is used in social sciences. The areas that particular attention was paid to were:- reporting patterns, nature and magnitude of sexual Gender-Based Violence in the camps, measures taken by the governmental agencies, non-governmental agencies and professional counselling bodies against the culprits.

## **RESULTS**

The first research question was to find out the nature and magnitude of sexual violence that was visited on the female post election violence victims in the IDP camps. Of the 833 respondents 41% (n =342) had engaged in a non-consensual sex in exchange of favours which ranged from basic needs like food, shelter, and even protection from other men. 34% (283) had been forced to have sex. 10% (n=84) had had consensual sex while on 15% (n=124) had not engaged in sexual encounter by the time the research was being conducted. The study also revealed that out of the 75% non consensual encounters 35% (n=212) were strangers not known to the respondents while 40% (n=248) were law enforcers. 10% (n=71) were known to them while 6% (n=35) engaged in consensual sexual encounters. It is strange to note that the law enforcers were the majority of the culprits followed by the strangers. As far as age group was concerned the magnitude of non-consensual sex was highest among the females aged 20-29 years sexual exploitation was next and finally rape. As far as marital status was concerned, the magnitude of sexual exploitation was highest among single females at 25% (n=177) and least among widows at 3.4% (n=25). Another

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discovery that the research came up with was the fact that the least educated females were the most vulnerable while the highly educated were the least affected at 49.4% and 2/8% respectively. The results therefore revealed that knowledge could have saved the highly educated by giving them life skills in the face of adversity.

Camp managements' response to Sexually Gender Based Violence was done by studying the reporting patterns as well as the actions taken by the Camp Management and other relevant authorities. 76% of the cases had been reported while 24% were yet to be reported. Hindrances to reporting ranged from stigma or fear of rejection, ignorance, mistrust of authorities to being threatened by the perpetrators and denial or withdrawal of favours offered by the perpetrators. If the victims knew their rights and were empowered with knowledge then maybe the victims suffering could have been drastically reduced.

Measures that were taken after reporting included the following:

- (i) 15% (n=81) were apprehended by the security forces.
- (ii) 28% (n=151) were investigated
- (iii) 57% (n=308) action not taken.

## **RESULTS FROM QUANTITATIVE DATA**

Oral interviews which was one form of data collection and documents from the Camp Management were analysed. From the interviews, it was discovered that most married victims (n=50) who had been raped feared reporting their ordeals for fear of their husbands whom they thought would divorce them on knowing. Others feared stigmatization from the community. They would do everything possible even persuading those who had witnessed the atrocities not to tell their spouses. One account was given to us of a lady whose husband was not in the Camp and had been raped by a group of young men at the camp. She pleaded with her neighbour not to tell the husband of the ordeal for fear of being rejected. Others felt that the camp authorities would hit back on them if they reported them to the security personnel.

Some victims reported that they feared reporting to the police because the police demanded bribes. Basically though ignorance seemed to have been the major factor for under-reporting, the victims seemed unaware and ignorant of the sexually Gender Based Violence policies and the procedure to be followed when reporting the offences. Attitudinally the SGBV victims felt that they were lesser Kenyan citizens and thus were not cared for and nobody would listen to them. This is a gap that professional bodies like this can and should address.

## **HOW VARIOUS BODIES RESPONDED TO SEXUALLY GENDER BASED VIOLENCE**

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Assumptions and precedence had been set by UNHCR (2002) to the effect that many international representatives of the humanitarian aid community consider the acts of Gender Based Violence as a preserve of culture and therefore outside the humanitarian intervention scope.

This rendered the non-governmental organizations helpless in the face of no policy on their part touching on Gender Based Violence. Moreover during crises, situations of scarce food, water or shelter human, rights which is a secondary factor is usually perceived as a non-essential luxury (UNHCR 2002). The local governmental agencies were overwhelmed and in the absence of well articulated policies could not help much either. Self professed counsellors most of whom were faith based could be seen distributing clothes and food but lacked the trauma counselling techniques and methodology to professionally assist the victims to do self disclosure of what they were psychologically going through at the time. Moreover most of them were driven by the humaneness and not their counselling knowledge or techniques. These therefore calls for appropriate measures which will include policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation a role well suited for professional counsellors, capacity building and multi-sectoral approach in dealing with Sexually Gender Based Violence in emergency settings (UNHCR 2003).

## **CONCLUSION**

From the study, it emerged that there were cases of consensual and non-consensual sexual encounters during the displacement. Of all the sexual ills sexual exploitation and rape were the most used forms of sexual violence on the displaced women. Though not much talked of, there was also the existence of defilement of minors and the elderly mostly menopausal women. The magnitude of non-consensual sex was highest among the females aged 20 – 29 years .This was mainly because these are the women who walked far from the camps to look for odd jobs and could sometimes come back very late in the evening.

As the situation has now changed from rehabilitation to development the focus now should be on the healing process especially of the emotional wounds. The professional counsellors Association should come in to reconcile families, counsel the aggrieved so that they can pick up pieces of their lives and continue and put up interventions in place.