Gender-Based Violence 6



Activists take part in a 16 Days of Activism event dubbed the "Silent March" in Port Louis, Mauritius in November 2019. Photo: Sheistah Bundhoo

KEY POINTS

- COVID-19 lockdowns could have a "catastrophic impact" on women, leading to a 20% surge in domestic violence cases.[1]
- Restrictions linked to the pandemic have worsened existing gender inequalities and left many women and girls without options to escape violent settings as governments across the region shuttered clinics and shelters and limited response mechanisms.
- 57% of women surveyed in Zimbabwe said men had forced them to offer sexual favours in exchange for jobs, medical care, and even when seeking placements at schools for their children.
- Following a spike in violence against women during the pandemic, South Africa announced a R1.6 billion Emergency Response Plan to fight GBV and femicide.
- Some countries still lack critical data on intimate partner violence (IPV) and violence against men.
- Globally, traffickers rob a staggering 24.6 million people of their freedoms and basic human dignity.[2]
- In September 2019, the SADC Parliamentary Forum convened to discuss ways of harmonising and implementing GBV legislation to establish a GBV Model Law for SADC.
- "Hashtag advocacy" has gained tremendous momentum as a social media campaign tool across the region, although researchers warn its successes could be short-lived.
- A global UN Women study in 2019 found that 84% of respondents believe it is essential for society to treat women as equal to men.[3]



1 "Africa: Coronavirus to Have 'Catastrophic' Impact on Women With Domestic Abuse Up 20 Percent - AllAfrica.Com."
2 https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/2019-Trafficking-in-Persons-Report.pdf
3 https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/gender-equality-attitudes-study-2019

Introduction

Research reveals extremely high rates of violence in Southern African countries, with intimate partner violence (IPV) particularly widespread.[4] As highlighted in numerous studies, acceptance of violence against women and girls (VAWG) remains high in the region.[5] The SADC Regional Strategy and Framework of Action for Addressing Gender Based Violence, 2018-2030 attempts to chart a way forward for the region in addressing this most glaring of human rights abuses. Globally, governments, civil society, and international organisations have collectively called for increased efforts to end VAWG.

In September 2019, the SADC Secretariat collaborated with the SADC Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF) to conduct a consultative workshop on GBV. It aimed to sensitise MPs on the 2018-2030 SADC Regional Strategy and discuss ways to harmonise and implement legislation on GBV, including consultation on establishing a GBV Model Law for SADC.[6]

Member states have made progress in addressing GBV by implementing multisectoral approaches that include legislative and criminal justice responses; measuring incidence and costing of GBV; awareness-raising; women's empowerment programmes; community-based social norm programmes; and health-based interventions.[7] However, some countries still lack critical GBV data.

A year after the GBV and femicide summit in South Africa in 2018, a spate of xenophobic attacks and horrendous murders of women and girls rocked the nation. In September 2019, thousands of women marched in protest throughout the country, using the hashtag #AmINext in their activism. The protests prompted South Africa President Cyril Ramaphosa to renew his pledge to fight GBV. The President, who is also currently the chairperson on the African Union (AU) made one of his strongest statements on GBV during the COVID-19 lockdown, sending home the strong message that GBV is now being taken as a serious political issue.

By the end of the decade, Gender Links (GL) had successfully conducted seven VAWG and/or GBV baseline studies (in Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe), with Botswana conducting a comprehensive follow-up study in 2018. GL continues to collaborate with national statistical offices and regional gender ministries to bolster efforts to collect robust data, track indicators, and encourage the utilisation of data in GBV interventions.

SADC plans to establish a model law on GBV legislation

[4] García-Moreno et al. (2013). Global and regional estimates of violence against women: Prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence. World Health Organisation
[5] Lowe Morna, C. Dube S and Makamure, L (2017). SADC Gender Protocol Barometer 2017 Southern Africa. SADC Gender Protocol Alliance, Tran, T. D., Nguyen, H., & Fisher, J. (2016). Attitudes towards intimate partner violence against women among women and men in 39 low-and-middle-income countries. PloS one, 11(11), e0167438
[6] https://www.sadc.int/news-events/news/sadc-secretariat-engages-members-parliament-regional-gbv-legislative-response/
[7] Lowe Morna, C. Dube S and Makamure, L (2017). SADC Gender Protocol Barometer 2017 Southern Africa. SADC Gender Protocol Alliance

Table 6.1: Key data on extent, response, support, and prevention of GBV in SADC

INDICATORS	Region	Angola	Botswana	Comoros	DRC	Eswatini	Lesotho	Madagascar	Malawi	Mauritius	Mozambique	Namibia	Seychelles	South Africa	Tanzania	Zambia	Zimbabwe
Proportion (%) of women and girls aged 15-49 who experienced intimate partner violence (IPV) in the previous 12 months (2016)[8]	All 16 countries	50	35	40	58	43	41	42	43	25	48	39	30	31	47	47	43
Proportion (%) of ever-partnered women aged 15-49 years experiencing intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime (2013)[9, 10]	Eight countries	N/A	N/A	6	64	N/A	N/A	N/A	31	N/A	33	N/A	N/A	26	43	49	42
Proportion (%) of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical and sexual violence by a partner in the previous 12 months (2013)[11]	Ten countries	32	N/A	5	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	14	N/A	7	6	N/A	10	12	9	18
Proportion (%) of women aged 15-49 years experiencing physical and/ sexual violence perpetrated by someone other than an intimate partner at least once in their lifetime (1995-2013)[12]	Five countries	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	3	1
Laws on domestic violence[13]	13 countries	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Laws on sexual assault[14]	14 countries	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Human trafficking laws[15]	All 16 countries	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sexual harassment laws[16]	15 countries	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Integrated approaches: national action plans[17]	All 16 countries	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accessible, affordable, and specialised services, including legal aid, to survivors[18]	All 16 countries	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Specialised facilities, including places of shelter and safety[19]	14 countries	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Comprehensive treatment, including post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)[20]	All 16 countries	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: Gender Links, 2020.

8 https://sdg-tracker.org/gender-equality [accessed 14 April 2020;(last updated 2016]
9 https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/downloads/WorldsWomen2015_chapter6_t.pdf
10 https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/africa/comoros#1 (accessed 16 April 2020)
11 IBID
12 https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/downloads/WorldsWomen2015_chapter6_t.pdf
13 GL Audit of SRHR Policies and Laws in SADC, 2020.
14 IBID
15 Department of State, USA. (2016). Trafficking in persons 2016 report. (0nline) available at https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/258876.pdf (accessed 14 April 2020).
16 GL Audit of SRHR Policies and Laws in SADC, 2020.
17 https://genderlinks.org.za/what-we-do/justice/policy-and-action-plans/ [accessed 30 April 2020].
18 Status of DHS Surveys in SADC countries.
19 IBID
20 SADC Gender Barometer 2019



Activists take part in the 2019 Young Women's Alliance #WalkInHerShoes march in Eswatini. Photo: Thandokuhle Dlamini

Table 6.1 shows that regional progress has not shifted much since previous barometers, partly owing to a lack of data. However, researchers have added new data here for Comoros as well as updates in Zambia thanks to a Demographic and Healthy Survey (DHS) study there. The table shows that:

- Thirteen SADC countries now have domestic violence legislation and 14 have sexual assault legislation.
- The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Lesotho, and Tanzania have yet to enact specific domestic violence laws.
- Only eight countries have data on proportion of women aged 15-49 who have experienced IPV and/or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime. Of those, DRC ranks highest at 64% of women, followed by Zambia at 49%.
- Only ten countries have data on the proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical and sexual violence by a partner in the previous 12 months.
- All SADC countries but Angola now have legislation on sexual harassment and all 16 have human trafficking laws.
- Several sections in Table 6.1 have irregular data across the SADC countries. These represent critical data indicators that activists have urged decision makers to collect regularly to track the extent of IPV. This is more important than ever as worries mount that COVID-19 lockdowns will exacerbate violence.

Persistent gaps in data, combined with laws and policies dating back as far as 15 years, hamper regional progress in combating GBV.

This chapter assesses progress on the extent, prevention, response, and support of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) across all 16 SADC countries. It tracks performance of member states against normative frameworks, which include the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) +20 Africa Declaration, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Maputo Protocol, International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) Resolution 60/2 on Women, the Girl Child, and HIV. This 2020 edition is a continuation of the #VoiceandChoice campaign, building on regional advancements on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). It also analyses the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the region, looking at how it may threaten fragile gains made in recent years toward ending GBV.

Impact of COVID-19 on GBV

The COVID-19 pandemic presented an unprecedented global health emergency in 2020. It had already led to the deaths of more than half a million people worldwide at the time of publication. The virus left many countries in a perilous state, as world leaders struggled to contain both the socio-economic effects and the dire health consequences of the outbreak. In SADC, the crisis continues to present a threat to work that addresses GBV, with early reports noting that lockdowns to contain the virus resulted in increased violence in homes throughout the region.

In almost every country, governments implemented measures to reduce the spread of COVID-

19, including mandatory lockdowns with varying degrees of restrictions. In some countries, like Botswana, governments invoked states of emergency. Unfortunately, mandatory lockdowns may make millions of women and children less safe. The United Nations has warned that the pandemic will have a "catastrophic impact" on women, predicting that lockdowns could lead to a 20% surge in domestic violence as it forces victims to remain trapped at home with their abusers.[21]



Police in Dobsonville, Soweto, arrest a street vendor on 23 April 2020 for working during the lockdown without a permit. Photo: Themba Hadebe

Many women and girls now face an increased risk of exposure to IPV as family members spend more time in close contact and cope with additional stresses, including financial strain and job loss.[22] A 2019 UN Women gender equality attitudes study found that only 53% of women (compared to 66% of men) feel moderately safe or very safe in their home.[23] These unusual circumstances due to the pandemic mean that women have less contact with family and friends who may provide support and protection from violence. Many women and girls also have limited access to phones and helplines, and the pandemic has also disrupted or led to the suspension of public services like police, justice, and social services. This compromises the care and support that survivors need, such as clinical management of rape, as well as mental health and psychosocial support.

Across the region, GBV service providers reported a surge in cases within the first week of lockdowns and over subsequent days. In Zimbabwe, Musasa, an agency that normally provides support to about 500 GBV survivors each month, recorded more than 700 GBV cases in the first week of lockdowns. Meanwhile, the Lesotho Mobile Police Service (LMPS) handled 18 cases of sexual violence in the first two weeks of lockdown, an unusually high number, according to senior inspector 'Malebohang Nepo from the LMPS child and gender protection unit.[24] Between 19 March and 7 April 2020, Botswana recorded 27 cases of rape.[25] The increase in the number of GBV cases represents a dire unintended consequence of the lockdowns, which leaders implemented to protect SADC citizens. UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka (also former Deputy President of South Africa) has called VAWG the "shadow" pandemic stalking the COVID-19 lockdowns.

The COVID-19 crisis brought existing gender inequalities into focus, underscoring the need for crisis mitigation strategies that assess the different impacts faced by men, women, boys, and girls. While case fatality rates show that more men die from COVID-19, the unpaid burden of care rests with women and girls, who make up 70% of the world's healthcare workers.[26] In many SADC settings, communities expect women to care for the sick as well as deal with regular household chores, many of which have increased due to the pandemic, including fetching water and queuing for mealie meal or food hampers. In many instances, lockdowns affected women's livelihoods. This includes both documented and undocumented immigrant women in South Africa, who work in markets to sell their wares so they can put food on the table for their families.

As countries move to ease lockdown restrictions and re-open their economies, leaders have announced several economic stimulus packages. It will be important for SADC countries to

[21] https://allafrica.com/stories/202004290002.html?utm_campaign=allafrica%3Aeditor&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter&utm_content=promote%3Aaans%3Aacbllp
[22] https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/COVID-19_Preparedness_and_Response_-_UNFPA_Interim_Technical_Briefs_Gender_Equality_and_GBV_23_March_2020_.pdf
[23] https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/gender-equality-attitudes-study-2019
[24] "Efforts Made to Counter GBV in COVID-19 Crisis."
[25] "GBV during Covid-19."
[26] https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/women-female-leadership-gender-coronavirus-covid19-response/

prioritise gender-responsive budgeting and approaches to enhance women's economic empowerment at this time as well as in the post COVID-19 recovery period.

In a statement in late April 2020, SADC Executive Secretary Stergomena Lawrence Tax expressed worries about increases in GBV during the pandemic, noting spikes in domestic violence illustrated in police reports.[27] "Clearly, the SADC region has not been spared," said Tax. "The UN Women report shows that some countries around the world, particularly those highly affected by COVID-19, have registered up to 30% increase in reported domestic violence cases and around 33% increase in emergency calls for gender-based violence, with women and girls being the victims of these acts."

Tax reminded SADC leaders of their commitment to address the issue collectively with civil society under the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, Regional Strategy and Framework of Action for Addressing GBV (2018-2030), and the Regional Strategy on Women, Peace and Security (2018-2022).



SADC Executive Secretary Stergomena Lawrence Tax has expressed worries about increases in GBV during the pandemic. Photo courtesy of Twitter

"While it is very important for governments and stakeholders to focus on measures to contain COVID-19... domestic violence should not be neglected," she said, noting that SADC member states must have flexible tools for reporting, counselling services, and supports for victims. "These tools must be clearly communicated to enable those affected to access and utilise them... in response to this crisis, particularly during lockdown, shelters and places of safety for victims of abuse must be considered an essential service and should be expanded as needed."

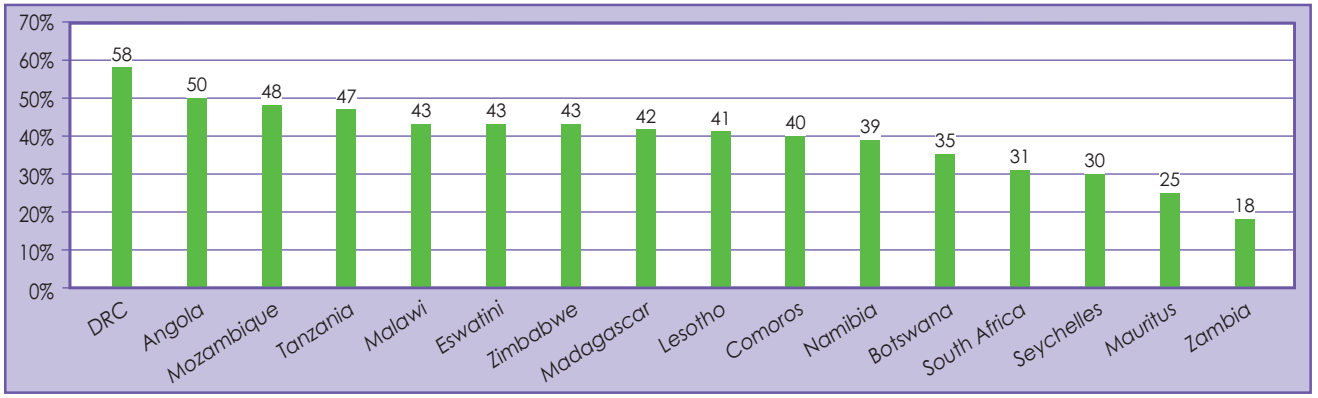
The extent of GBV



GBV has long been recognised as a widespread human rights violation in all countries, yet it remains sensitive, hidden, and stigmatised in many places. For more than a decade, GL has represented a leading voice in the fight against GBV in SADC, spearheading seven dedicated surveys across the region to help address data gaps. Researchers and activists note that collecting data for all SADC countries is even more important now, with the advent of the COVID-19 crisis, which increases the vulnerability of women and girls to abuse.

[27] https://www.sadc.int/news-events/news/statement-sadc-executive-secretary-he-dr-stergomena-lawrence-tax-covid-19-and-gender-based-violence-and-domestic-violence/

Figure 6.1: IPV in SADC



Source: https://sdg-tracker.org/gender-equality

Figure 6.1 shows experience of IPV among respondents in the 12 months prior to the research for women aged 15 to 49. The most recent data comes from a 2016 study in all countries except Zambia, where a DHS study in 2018 supplied more current information. The data shows that experience of IPV ranged from a low of 18% in Zambia to 58% in the DRC. Despite inherent challenges in collecting GBV data, the UN Economic Commission continues to work with governments and civil society to harmonise GBV indicators and enhance the collection and comparability of GBV data across countries. In the meantime, many countries depend on DHS statistics, while others use both GBV baseline studies and the DHS figures.

Table 6.2: Difference between the DHS and GBV Baseline Studies

DHS	GBV Baseline Studies
Scope	
30 questions	More than 150 indicators that seek to measure the prevalence, effects and drivers of violence.
Source	
	Several standard, globally accepted and tested measurement tools, including the UN's Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence, Gender Equitable Men (GEM) scale and the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ).
Measures	
Physical, emotional and sexual abuse in intimate relationships	Physical, sexual, psychological and economic intimate partner violence.
Physical abuse by stranger	The VAW/GBV Indicators only looked at physical abuse within intimate relationships, not by strangers. DHS has specific questions on physical abuse by non-partners.
Physical abuse in pregnancy	Physical, sexual, psychological and economic intimate partner violence in pregnancy.
Physical violence perpetration and alcohol	GBV violence perpetration and alcohol, child abuse, attitudes, and demographic factors.
Rape by non-partner	Rape by non-partner.
	Rape and sexual assault by a partner, stranger, acquaintance or family member, experienced by adults and in childhood.
Help-seeking behaviour	Help-seeking behaviour (medical, legal, police, shelter and family) and reporting and conviction patterns.
Witnessing domestic violence of parents	Witnessing domestic violence in the home and community.
	Sexual harassment in schools, workplace and public places.
	The study also has output indicators focusing on the response mechanisms and some prevention strategies, such as campaigns.
	Effects, including reproductive health (HIV, sexually transmitted infections) mental (post-traumatic stress disorder and Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression scales), physical and economic.

Source: GBV Indicators Questionnaire and DHS Domestic Violence Module.

Table 6.2 illustrates the differences and similarities between the DHS studies and GBV baseline studies. This chapter features data from both.

The latter studies tend to be more in depth than DHS research on this topic, which falls into existing larger surveys measuring various health indicators.

Prevalence of GBV and intimate partner violence (IPV)

Of the seven countries where GL conducted GBV Baseline Studies, only Botswana and Seychelles have carried out a follow-up study that included a module on violence against men. The results show that GBV transcends boundaries and the abusers of women are people that they know and live with, in their homes.

Table 6.3: Proportions of women experiencing and men perpetrating GBV and IPV in lifetime

Country	Lifetime GBV (%)				Lifetime IPV (%)			
	Women experiencing	Men perpetrating	Men experiencing	Women perpetrating	Women experiencing	Men perpetrating	Men experiencing	Women perpetrating
Lesotho	86	41	-	-	62	37	-	-
Selected provinces Zambia	77	66	-	-	79	74	-	-
Zimbabwe	68	46	-	-	69	41	-	-
Seychelles	58	43	43	31	54	42	35	40
South Africa (four provinces)	50	39	-	-	49	40	-	-
Botswana	37	30	21	12	37	28	18	18
Mauritius	24	23	-	-	23	22	-	-

Source: GBV/VAW Baseline Studies, Gender Links.

Table 6.3 shows that lifetime experience of GBV among women ranges from a high of 86% in Lesotho to 24% in Mauritius. A higher proportion of women reported experiencing violence than the proportion of men who reported perpetrating violence in all seven countries. However, the extent to which men report such behaviour is high in all countries and is almost equal in Mauritius.

Findings by GL in the two countries (Botswana and Seychelles) that have included a violence against men module show that high numbers of men also reported experiencing both GBV and IPV: 43% of men in Seychelles and 21% in Botswana reported experiencing GBV. Additionally, 35% of men in Seychelles and 18% in Botswana reported experiencing IPV at least once in their lifetime. Many more (40%) women interviewed in Seychelles reported perpetrating IPV compared to 18% of women in Botswana.

Why VAM

Violence against men is generally hidden and not recognised in many countries. In order to effectively tackle it, policy makers require more and better quality information, to guide legislative and policy reforms; to ensure adequate provision of targeted and effective services.

Getting data on VAM poses challenges due to traditional gender roles in society and the stigma of the perceived weakness of any man who admits to falling victim to a woman. In most cases VAM is foreshadowed by actions that may not seem like domestic violence on the surface, but do, in fact, represent a series of abuses against the men.

Trafficking in persons (TIP)



SADC Gender Protocol Article 20.5: State parties shall:

(a) Enact and adopt specific legislative provisions to prevent trafficking in persons and provide holistic services to the victims, with the aim of re-integrating them into society;

(b) Put in place mechanisms by which all relevant law enforcement authorities and institutions should eradicate national, regional and international trafficking in persons' syndicates;

(c)Put in place harmonised data collection mechanisms to improve research and reporting on the types and modes of trafficking to ensure effective programming and monitoring;

(d) Establish bilateral and multilateral agreements to run joint actions against trafficking in persons among origin, transit and destination countries; and

(e) Ensure capacity-building, awareness-raising and sensitisation campaigns on trafficking in persons are put in place for law enforcement officials.

SDGs 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation; and **16.1** Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

A US State Department report in 2019 found that, globally, "traffickers are robbing a staggering 24.9 million people of their freedom and basic human dignity."[28] In SADC, where human trafficking has long been an issue because of porous borders and poverty, activists worry that it may be on the rise due to COVID-19, especially following a June 2020 report on the issue from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). It notes that already vulnerable populations have "now become even more exposed to the risk of severe exploitation as they try to identify means to secure their livelihoods."[29]

[28] https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=826408
[29] https://www.unodc.org/documents/Advocacy-Section/HTMSS_Thematic_Brief_on_COVID-19.pdf

Challenging human trafficking

The Palermo Protocol defines human trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.[30]

> Traffickers rob 24.6 million people globally of their freedoms and basic human dignity

Cultural norms and practices remain important in shaping societies and countries. Yet traffickers often take advantage of certain practices and religious beliefs to coerce victims into servitude and forced commercial sex activities.[31] In line with the SDG 5.2 and the Palermo Protocol, there should be no exceptions when it comes to criminalisation based on cultural variations. Especially during the time of a pandemic, governments must continue to examine and understand how traffickers exploit certain cultural practices to conduct criminal activity and abuse women and girls in the region.

In response to concern regarding increased trafficking due to the pandemic, UNODC released the following recommendations in its June 2020 report, *Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Trafficking in Persons*:

- ***COVID-19 responses must be continuously monitored.*** Where such measures unintentionally negatively impact vulnerable groups, such as trafficking victims, adjustments must be made to minimise harm and to ensure the needs of such groups are adequately addressed.
- ***While prioritising public health, a culture of rule of law needs to prevail.*** Anti-trafficking responses must continue to be based on human rights, while access to health care and social support without discrimination should be guaranteed.
- ***Access to justice must be safeguarded.*** Where feasible, technology should be utilised to facilitate access to judicial processes and enable the collection and provision of evidence, the submission of documents, and the filing or adjudicating of motions or petitions to courts.
- ***Law enforcement:*** officials must remain vigilant in addressing new and evolving crime patterns and adapt their responses to prevent human traffickers from acting with impunity during the pandemic.
- ***Despite the anticipated slowing down of economies because of COVID-19 and the resulting pressures on national budgets***, countries must continue supporting anti-trafficking work and adapt their assistance programmes to the new and extraordinary circumstances created by the pandemic and its aftermath.
- ***Service providers:*** must remain flexible and adapt to an evolving environment to meet the needs of their communities.
- ***There is a need for systematic data collection and analysis*** on the impact of COVID-19 on trafficking in persons. There is no country immune to the pandemic and as COVID-19 does not affect all regions at the same time, experience from one country could be vital to others.[32]

[30] https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/protocoltraffickinginpersons.aspx
[31] https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/2019-Trafficking-in-Persons-Report.pdf
[32] https://www.unodc.org/documents/Advocacy-Section/HTMSS_Thematic_Brief_on_COVID-19.pdf



Malawi: Trafficking survivors face delays in seeking justice

Activists in Malawi are sounding the alarm about delays in justice for survivors of sex trafficking.Like in many countries, criminals traffic women and girls for the purposes of sexual exploitation in Malawi. They operate in well-connected groups and capitalise on several factors. Key among them: poverty, lack of awareness about sex trafficking, and weak enforcement of laws. COVID-19 has worsened all these factors. Traffickers collaborate with pimps and collude with other criminal networks to evade justice. They use money to connect to powerful people in society, and most evade justice and courts of law in the region.

One brazen incident that involved three young women has exposed a need for political leaders to devote more resources to fight trafficking and improve justice for survivors. In 2018, traffickers recruited three girls from a remote village in Neno District in southern Malawi, promising them work in Blantyre as child minders, only to then take them to work in a brothel. After being forced to work as sex workers for three months, the young women eventually managed to escape.

Thanks to the efforts of a local organisation, People Serving Girls at Risk (PSGR), rescuers located the girls and took them to PSGR for rehabilitation. One of the young women suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and took medication for a year following the incident to fight depression, nightmares, and stress. As part of the rehabilitation process, PSGR linked the girls to expert psychologists,



Young women take part in a training workshop hosted by People Serving Girls at Risk, a group that fights trafficking and exploitation of young women in Malawi, in March 2016. Photo courtesy of PSGR

and took them to recreational events to play games and engage their minds. Additionally, PSGR facilitated community reintegration. Another organisation, the Justice for Girls Project, helps these and other girls access justice.

Activists told Voice of America that they face many obstacles in seeking justice for survivors. "Lack of enforcement of laws is affecting us in so many ways," PSGR director Caleb Ng'ombo said, noting that the group deals with about 200 trafficking cases each year. "For example, for an institution to take a case to court, requires a lot of resources. And for you just to lose on a technicality is a major setback not only for us as an organisation, but also to the girls who are searching for justice."[33]

Source: SADC Protocol@Work Gender Links Summit, Malawi, 2019

[33] https://www.voanews.com/africa/charity-helps-fight-child-trafficking-malawi-country-grapples-end-vice

Sexual harassment

SADC Gender Protocol Article 22.1: State parties shall enact legislative provisions and adopt and implement policies, strategies and programmes which define and prohibit sexual harassment in all spheres and provide deterrent sanctions for perpetrators of sexual harassment.

SADC Protocol Article 22.2: State parties shall ensure equal representation of women and men in adjudicating bodies hearing sexual harassment cases.

Sexual harassment legislation: All SADC countries except Angola have legislation on sexual harassment covered in labour laws and penal codes, but many still lack specific laws that outlaw the practice.[34] Researchers have long documented the detrimental effects of sexual harassment, but SADC lawmakers have been slow to address the issue. Sexual harassment is often hidden and even normalised by the victims themselves.[35]



Sextortion increasing due to COVID-19: Sextortion, an emerging form of sexual harassment, urgently needs deterrent laws to abate it. The US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defines it as a "crime that occurs when someone threatens to distribute your private and sensitive material if you don't provide them images of a sexual nature, sexual favours, or money."[36] Sex, rather than money, is the currency of the bribe.[37] With more people staying home due to the pandemic, the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center has said it has seen a spike in reports of online sextortion scams.

Figure 6.2: Understanding sextortion

For sextortion to happen

- **Sexual activity:** Sextortion involves an implicit or explicit request to engage in any kind of unwanted sexual activity, which can range from sexual intercourse to exposing parts of the body.
- **Corruption:** The persons who demand the sexual activity must occupy a positio of authority, which they abuse by seeking to extract, or by accepting, a sexual act in exchange for exercising the power entrusted to them.

To differentiate sextortion & other forms of sexual abuse

- **Abuse of authority:** The perpetrator uses the power entrusted to them for personal benefit.
- **Quid pro quo or "this-for-that":** The perpetrator demands or accepts a sexual favour in exchange for a benefit that they are empowered to withhold or confer.
- **Psychological coercion:** Sextortion relies on coercive pressure rather than physical violence to obtain sexual favours.

Source: adapted from Transparency International 2020: Breaking the silence around sextortion. The links between power, sex and corruption.

[34] Lowe-Morna, C., Makamure, L., Dube, S. (2016) SADC Gender Protocol Barometer (online) available at http://genderlinks.org.za/shop/sadc-gender-protocol-barometer-2016/
[35] Hinde, 2017. #MeToo: All Sexual Harassment Experiences Are Worth Reporting, But Don't Feel Pressured To ShareOpinion piece https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/sexual-harassment-experiences-me-too-hashtag-pressure-to-share-stories_uk_59e5dbf1e4b0a2324d1d825e
[36] https://www.fbi.gov/video-repository/newss-what-is-sextortion/view
[37] https://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/breaking_the_silence_around_sextortion

Figure 6.2 summarises the differences between sextortion and other forms of abuse, noting that sextortion relies on coercive pressure instead of physical violence.

Sextortion is part of a culture of bribery in Zimbabwe



A recent study by Transparency International in **Zimbabwe** has shown that more than 57% of women surveyed reported that they had been forced to offer sexual favours in exchange for jobs, medical care, and even when seeking placements at schools for their children. The report shows that sextortion is thus part of a culture of bribery in Zimbabwe. While there is positive momentum to understand it, sextortion remains largely invisible. It is essential that activists and policymakers develop more research projects, laws, and strategies to address it.



In **Tanzania**, according to the Tanzania Media Women Association (TAMWA), up to 89% of women in the public sector have experienced sextortion while looking for a job, a promotion, or while requesting a service. Meanwhile, nine in every ten women in the public sector has faced sexual harassment. Salome Kaganda, commissioner of Tanzania's independent ethics secretariat, has called for a crackdown on sextortion, "especially against officials who exercise power to sexually exploit someone for a service in his or her authority." In October 2018, a sextortion scandal concerning a lecturer from University of Dodoma made the news after students alleged the professor manipulated them for sexual favours. The story prompted debates around the definition of sextortion in the country. Sextortion affects women and girls of all ages. Indeed, some perpetrators exploit children and teens in primary and secondary schools. In Tanzania, female students complain about lecturers demanding sex from them in exchange for good grades. Catherine Olomi spoke about sextortion at the University of Dar es Salaam, noting, "Many female students get pressure from tutors to have sex for good grades. You have to be very bold to resist temptation; it involves a lot of risks such as failing exams or seating for supplementary examinations."[38] Sextortion victims can experience longlasting psychological effects. Often, they do not report the crime or do not know where to seek help as most existing SADC laws remain inadequate to prosecute sextortion. Governments need to amend or reform laws to specifically address this issue.



Salome Kaganda, commissioner of Tanzania's independent ethics secretariat, wants to see government address sextortion. Photo courtesy of Habarileo

[38] https://genderlinks.org.za/news/tanzania-say-no-to-sextortion/

Tanzania: Sexual abuse of housemaids in Mwanza



A young Masai woman in Tanzania. Photo courtesy of Child Protection Forum

In 2019, a documentary by Tanzania's Saut FM highlighted the story of young women exposed to sexual harassment in domestic housework settings and the need for structures to allow for reporting to police gender desks and known experts to deal with the cases.

The story featured young women in Mwanza who work as maids and child minders. These young women faced molestation, rape, and abuse from their employers.

In one case, a young woman whom they called "Marina," using a pseudonym, said her boss repeatedly raped her and impregnated her, later forcing her to undergo an abortion. Whilst laws and protections exist under the Child Rights and Welfare Act, young women often do not know about their rights or where to report abuse. If they do, they fear further harm from their abusers. They also told the journalists that they want to avoid humiliation, which they worry will occur if others find out about the sexual abuse.

A 2018 report by the Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) noted that from January to June 2018, Tanzanians had reported 6376 incidents of violence against young girls compared to 1648 from the same period in 2017. According to the report, reasons for the increase include lack of proper care and parental guidance, household poverty, witchcraft-beliefs, and lack of awareness about child rights and family disintegration.

Journalists in Tanzania amplified this story using social media, with other NGOs and GBV organisations joining them. During the programme, Saut FM encouraged the audience to send messages to a telephone number and to follow up with a local help desk to report cases of abuse. The police desk of Igogo in Mwanza District followed up on the cases and made referrals to partner organisations. This illustrates the importance of social media as a tool in increasing public awareness and community reach on issues of violence against children and GBV.

Source: Ahimidiwe Olotu, radio presenter on Radio Saut FM Stereo, Tanzania. Prepared as part of the SADC Gender Protocol @ Work 2019

GBV in emergency situations

Large-scale emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic leave women and children even more vulnerable, as GBV prevention and response coordination mechanisms weaken during these times. Unlike the Cyclone Idai and Kenneth crises, whose effects (though devastating) remained localised to specific regions of the affected countries, the COVID-19 public health emergency has disrupted the entire SADC region. In such situations, the need for (and lack of) stronger coordination and efficient referral pathways becomes even more apparent than in normal times.

It is well documented that weak and corrupt governments use GBV, torture, and rape as a weapon of war against women in times of crisis.[39] Activists worry that such incidences may increase as SADC governments scramble to deflect attention from their lack of preparedness for a crisis like the pandemic, as well as their inconsistent responses to it.

Confronting a GBV scourge in the time of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic found many governments wanting in their preparedness as they faced a huge challenge to contain its spread and the many other related issues, including the lockdown-induced surge in GBV cases. Complications arose when shelters could not admit victims until they had received a test for COVID-19. The crisis underscored the urgent need for better emergency planning at shelters and other facilities for the vulnerable, as well as for more testing. COVID-19 test results take at least 48 hours and in some parts of the region, delays to even receive testing stretched to 14 days. NGOs and other organisations with shelters have struggled to keep up and to house and care for new arrivals during the crisis, including while they waited for test results.

Outside of shelters, women face many additional burdens at this time of crisis, including increased household chores and responsibilities, food insecurity and rising food prices, lack of access to information, and abuse in different forms, among others.



Abductions, torture, sexual abuse, and degrading activities against women activists in **Zimbabwe** have been notoriously common for decades. The most glaring of these illegal actions in recent times is the alleged abduction, torture, and sexual assault in May 2020 of three women members of the country's main opposition party. Cecilia Chimbiri, Netsai Marova, and Zimbabwe's youngest MP, Joanna Mamombe, reported that their abductors physically and sexually harassed them after taking them from a police station. Police had detained the three women following their participation in a demonstration to protest food insecurity during the COVID-19 lockdown in Harare. News reports claim that abductors working for the state took the three women from police custody and violently raped and tortured them over two days.[40] The police have made no arrests in the case at the time of publication. Instead, police arrested the women on charges of allegedly falsifying their abduction. In her open letter to the country's president, Beatrice Mtetwa, the country's top human rights lawyer

[39] "Rape - Rape as a Weapon of War."
[40] Moyo, "Maverick Citizen Op-Ed."

said, "I also wish to point out the gendered nature of these violations where it is clear that these women were targeted for these violations because they are women who have chosen to participate in the country's politics. The attack on them is therefore clearly designed to dissuade young women from engaging in politics outside of the ruling party." The Zimbabwe Human rights Commission[41] and the Zimbabwe Gender Commission[42] also strongly condemned the abductions but the state has denied any involvement, choosing to call it "stage-managed theatre." This belittling of the situation raises concerns about political commitment to gender equality and GBV elimination in Zimbabwe, especially considering the country's international commitments.

Emerging GBV hotspot: Cabo Delgado political crisis



While the focus for much of 2020 has so far been directed at stopping the spread of COVID-19 and mitigating the other social repercussions from it, activists note growing concern about insurgent activities in the Cabo Delgado region of northern **Mozambique**. To date, fighting has killed more than 900 people in the crisis since it began in since October 2017. The conflict has also displaced more than 200 000 people.[43] In a country where more than 54% of women endure physical and sexual violence and exploitation,[44] gender activists worry that the ongoing instability could weaken existing coordination mechanisms for GBV interventions and further heighten the vulnerability of women and girls to GBV.

GBV among women with disabilities

Globally, research shows that women with disabilities face a higher risk of GBV.[45, 46] These findings have led to concern among SADC activists about VAW against women with disabilities in the region. Literature from the SADC region reveals that harmful individual attitudes and values, negative cultural and social norms related to gender and disability, and a lack of access to services and public resources drives violence against this group. Evidence also shows that violence against this group leads to inability to access SRHR and increased risk of acquiring HIV.[47]

According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), while disability may lead to increased violence, violence in turn may cause a new disability or aggravate an existing disability and increase the severity of one's vulnerability. Limited awareness about SRHR, low educational attainment, lack of resources, and dependence on others all increase women's vulnerability.[48]

However, few global or regional studies have examined the specific vulnerabilities for women with disabilities. An ethnographic study[49] and an academic paper[50] in the region looked at inter-

[41] Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission, "Statement on the Abduction and Torture of Movement for Democratic Change-Alliance (MDC-A) Officials."
[42] "Advisory Statement by ZGC on Violence against Women."
[43] "Mozambique Admits Presence of ISIL-Affiliated Fighters."
[44] "Millions More Cases of Violence, Child Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation, Unintended Pregnancy Expected Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic."
[45] https://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report.pdf (accessed 16 June 2020)
[46] https://www.samrc.ac.za/sites/default/files/attachments/2018-11-09/ALIGHTSItuationAnalsys.pdf (accessed 16 June 2020)
[47] ibid
[48] https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/women-and-girls-disabilities-needs-survivors-gender-based
[49] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227223945_Interweaving_Conceptualizations_of_Gender_and_Disability_in_the_Context_of_Vulnerability_to_HIVAIDS_in_KwaZulu-Natal_South_Africa (accessed 16 June 2020)
[50] Yoshida et al 2014

sectionality, disability, and HIV among women and men in Zambia. They highlighted the intersection of gender, disability, and SRHR/HIV, revealing higher risk of violence for women with disabilities but also linkages to worse SRHR and HIV outcomes for these women due to violence. A 2018 USAID study in Botswana[51] found that the country's policies and programmes to address violence (SRHR, HIV, and GBV) do not link with policies or programmes focusing on disability. This could leave this vulnerable group without protection from abuse. The region urgently needs specific guidelines for inclusion and accessibility to clarify how to provide access to SRHR, HIV, and GBV services for diverse groups, including women with disabilities.



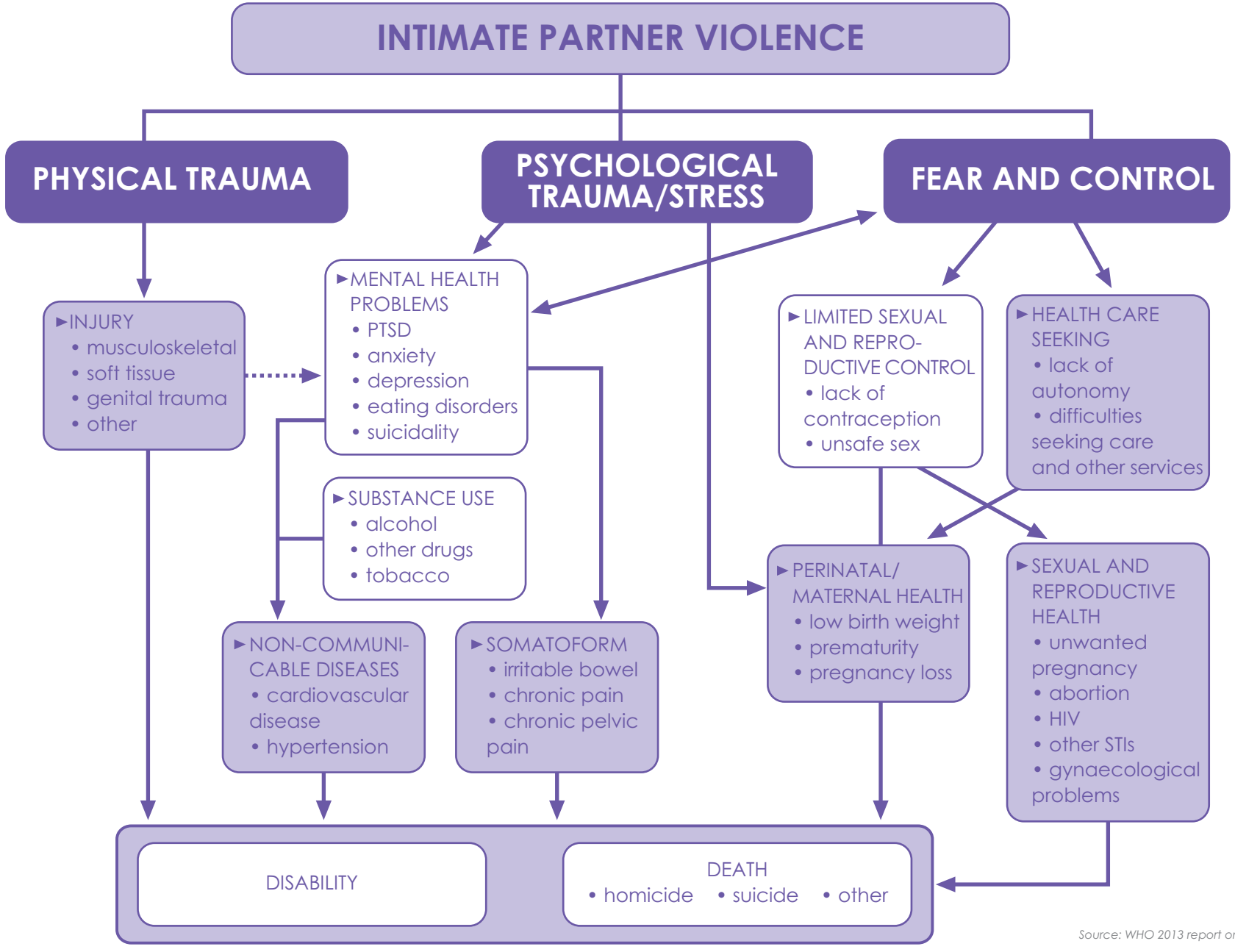
Religious leaders join gender activists in Zibagwe rural district in Zimbabwe to march for an end to GBV during the 2019 16 Days of Activism campaign.
Photo: Grace Nyikavaranda

Effects of GBV

Most population-based surveys have shown the devastating effects of GBV on women and men and society at large. Studies show that GBV leads to adverse health outcomes,[52] including physical injury; mental health challenges such as depression and suicidal tendencies; negative SRH outcomes including HIV and AIDS; economic incapacity; alcohol and substance abuse; and even death.[53] SDG 16.1 urges all countries to significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates.

[51] https://www.samrc.ac.za/sites/default/files/attachments/2018-11-09/ALIGHTSItuationAnalsys.pdf
[52] https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/85239/9789241564625_eng.pdf;jsessionid=5E8EDB690C8331FBBEABB76CDEF62BA8?sequence=1 (accessed 24/04/2020)
[53] https://www.unfpa.org/gender-based-violence

Figure 6.3 Pathways and health effects of GBV



Source: WHO 2013 report on IPV.



Figure 6.3 illustrates the health effects of GBV, specifically IPV. These include the multitude of physical and psychological effects, as well as challenges linked to SRHR. For many women, these will end in death or disability.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, research has identified GBV as a major determinant of HIV infection among women. Thus, several interventions focus on the eradication of VAW to fight the spread of the HIV. Where GL has conducted GBV baseline studies and gathered "I" Stories, it has found unimaginable traumatic experiences, often made even worse when intimate partners perpetrate the abuse. Activists worry that such abuse will increase due to the COVID-19 lockdowns, as well as the effects stemming from it. A recent UNFPA analysis revealed that significant levels of lockdown-related disruption over six months could leave 47 million women in low- and middle-income countries unable to use modern contraceptives, leading to a projected seven million more unintended pregnancies and an additional 31 million GBV cases.[54]

Six months of lockdowns could result in an additional 31 million cases of GBV

The economics of violence

GBV presents a substantial barrier to sustainable development and achievement of the SDGs.[55] According to the World Bank, GBV costs an estimated 1.2% - 3.7% of GDP in some countries due to lost productivity, equivalent to the average spending of low- and middle-income countries on primary education.[56] Three prominent studies conducted in Southern Africa show a similar trend.

Table 6.4: Studies to measure the costs of GBV in SADC

Country and study	Findings	Health expenditure as proportion of GDP (%)	Health expenditure as proportion of total government expenditure (%)
Seychelles (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2018)	Seychelles loses more than US $65 million each year to VAWG. This is equivalent to 1.2% of local GDP in direct costs, and 4.6% of GDP in overall economic impact.[57]	3.9	10
South Africa (KPMG, 2014)	South Africa loses an estimated R28.4 to 42.4 billion (US $2-3 billion) per year,[58] equivalent to 0.9%-1.3% of annual GDP.	8.1	13.3
Zimbabwe (SIDA, 2009)	The Zimbabwe government spends close to $2 billion annually on direct and indirect costs of GBV.[59]	9.4	14.5

Source: Commonwealth Secretariat, KPMG, and SIDA reports.

[54] https://www.unfpa.org/news/millions-more-cases-violence-child-marriage-female-genital-mutilation-unintended-pregnancies
[55] https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/9/speech-by-lakshmi-puri-on-economic-costs-of-violence-against-women
[56] https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/factsheet/2018/08/30/fact-sheet-update-on-addressing-gender-based-violence-in-development-projects (accessed 24/04/2020)
[57] http://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/new-commonwealth-study-reveal-true-cost-violence-against-women-and-girls
[58] KPMG, 2014. Too costly to ignore the economic impact of gender based violence in South Africa available at https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/za/pdf/2017/01/za-Too-costly-to-ignore.pdf
[59] "Gender Violence Costs Zim $2billion Annually."

Table 6.4 show that countries have huge expenditures related GBV. These include resources that governments could dedicate to social development, including achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls. By highlighting health expenditure as a proportion of GDP and total government expenditure, Table 6.3 seeks to illustrate the impact of GBV and make a business case about the importance of addressing it to the overall health of countries and their citizens: economic and physical. This is especially notable because the countries analysed still fall short of meeting key health financing goals, such as the Abuja Declaration target of allocating 15% of the government budget to health.[60]

On the ground in each country, women's lack of economic independence remains a persistent challenge, affecting many other aspects of their lives. Without much-needed economic emancipation, women remain entangled in abusive relationships. To address this imbalance, activists have urged governments to consider gender-sensitive budgeting, especially as the region looks to stimulate economic recovery following the COVID-19 crisis. Now, local governments must focus on attaining more resources and ensuring strategies to serve women's needs now and beyond the crisis period.

A global ten-country study by UN Women found that 87% of respondents believe the overall success of a country rests on creating more opportunities for women in business.[61] As schools prepare to re-open following the pandemic lockdowns, emerging evidence shows the importance of focusing on empowering women and girls through work and education opportunities. Both public and private institutions need to provide financing and support.[62] While SADC countries like Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe have announced economic stimulus packages of $400 million, R500 billion, and 18 billion (Zimbabwe dollars) respectively, it remains to be seen how much of these funds they will channel towards enhancing the economic independence of vulnerable women and girls.



Local government in the Murewa community in **Zimbabwe** has been rolling out sensitisation on gender issues and assisting GBV survivors through entrepreneurship trainings and financial assistance. The Sunrise campaign to empower women and end violence spurred this work, including the local council's income generating project (revolving fund) for women. Council's other GBV interventions include construction of a one-stop GBV victim friendly centre at the Murewa District Hospital and offering free land to a partner (Rozaria Memorial Trust) to develop an education and information centre for women in 2018. The centre now provides safe shelter for GBV survivors and a special counselling room for girls.[63]



Following the GBV summit in 2018, and the nationwide campaigns in **South Africa** led by the #Totalshutdown, #MyBodyNotYourCrimeScene, and #24Demands campaigns, civil society organisations presented suggested amendments to parliament linked to specific policies and laws. This included the request to develop a National Strategic Plan. As part of government and civil society's multi-sectoral strategic framework, this initiative aims to work with government to help the country address economic inequalities and achieve freedom from GBV and femicide. The Ministry of Women has set up a COVID-19 Emergency Response Action Plan, which includes the appointment of a steering committee of government and civil society representatives.

SADC countries have begun easing lockdown restrictions to allow economic activities to commence, but the region will feel the effects of the lockdowns for some time, including in relation to the costs of increased GBV during these months. While South Africa has announced specific support measures to women-led businesses, it is clear there will be further need for new investments to mitigate the pandemic's disproportionate impact on women and girls.

[60] https://www.afro.who.int/sites/default/files/2017-06/state-of-health-financing-afro.pdf
[61] https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/gender-equality-attitudes-study-2019
[62] "The Sunrise Campaign - Gender Links."
[63] SADC Gender Protocol @ Work Summit, Zimbabwe, 2020.

Response

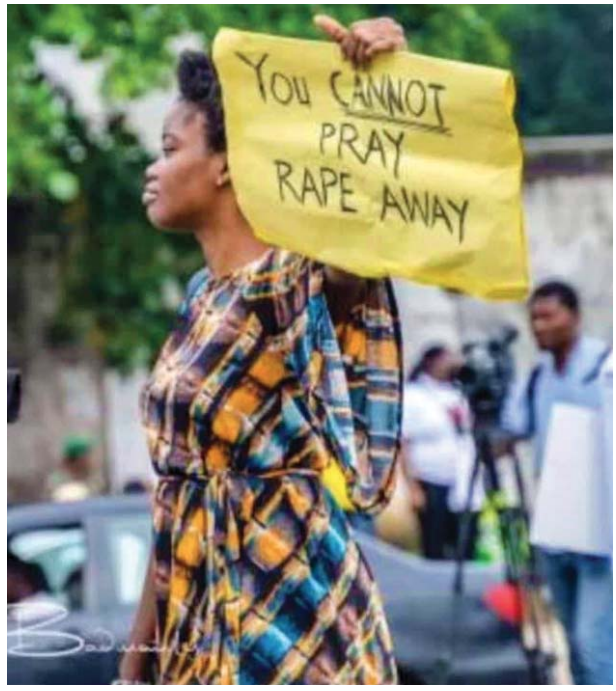
SADC Gender Protocol Article 20.1: States parties shall:
(a) Enact and enforce legislation prohibiting all forms of gender-based violence;
(b) Develop strategies to prevent and eliminate all harmful social and cultural practices, such as child marriage, forced marriage, teenage pregnancies, slavery and female genital mutilation; and
(c) Ensure that perpetrators of GBV, including domestic violence, rape, femicide, sexual harassment, female genital mutilation and all other forms of GBV are tried by a court of competent jurisdiction.
(d) **SADC Gender Protocol Article 20.6:** State parties shall ensure that cases of gender-based violence are conducted in a gender sensitive environment.
(e) **SADC Gender Protocol Article 20.7:** State parties shall establish special counselling services, legal and police units to provide dedicated and sensitive services to survivors of gender violence.

SADC Gender Protocol Article 20.3: States parties shall review, reform and strengthen their laws and procedures applicable to cases of sexual offences and GBV to:
(a) Eliminate gender bias; and
(b) Ensure justice and fairness are accorded to survivors of gender-based violence in a manner that ensures dignity, protection and respect.

SADC SRHR Strategy Outcome 10: Remove barriers - including policy, cultural, social and economic - that serve as an impediment to the realization of SRHR in the region (SDGs 5.1 and 5c).
Maputo Protocol 2(a): States parties shall take appropriate and effective measures to: Enact and enforce laws to prohibit all forms of violence against women including unwanted or forced sex whether the violence takes place in private or public.

The SADC regional strategy and 2018-2030 Framework of Action for Addressing Gender Based Violence confirm that the region has made progress around legislation dealing with GBV, either through specific laws or penal codes. However, activists have been calling for more reviews to expand the scope of legislation to respond.

The COVID-19 crisis accentuated this need, highlighting gaps throughout the region that have life-threatening consequences for its citizens. For instance, government leaders need to strengthen laws to deal with police brutality and abuse in emergency situations. Reports from across the region have shown that, in addition to domestic violence, a great deal of women and children suffer physical and sexual violence at the hands of law enforcement. A crisis like COVID-19 worsens these abuses, giving licence to perpetuate abuses against the backdrop of curfews and



An activist in Bitou, South Africa, protests against GBV in September 2019.
Photo: Vinthi Neufeld

lockdowns. Sometimes it takes a crisis to change deeply ingrained gender attitudes and norms.



With several plans and policies under review, **South Africa** provides a positive example for the region. Laws under review there include the National Development Plan (NDP) Vision 2030; National Gender Policy Framework; Social Development Guidelines on Services for Victims of Domestic Violence (2010); National Sexual Assault Policy (Department of Health); a civil union bill; a criminal law (sexual offences and related matters) amendment bill; and the domestic violence amendment bill 2020.[64] These welcome adjustments to current legislation will allow the country to respond better to its high rates of GBV.

The Judicial Services Commission (JSC) updated and launched the revised Protocol on the Multi-Sectoral Management of Sexual Abuse and Violence in **Zimbabwe** in November 2019.[65] Various groups developed the protocol as a toolkit to give guidance in the referral pathway for those handling sexual abuse. It also stipulates the minimum care package required by survivors of sexual violence. The protocol seeks to safeguard the rights of survivors of sexual and GBV and abuse, guaranteeing that the welfare and justice systems provide them with a holistic package of age- and gender-sensitive, survivor-centred services for their psychosocial well-being and protection. It also focuses on providing a standard set of procedures to ensure a holistic response for all survivors. Further, it aims to strengthen and clarify the roles and responsibilities between service providers and agencies that have legal and thus obligatory responsibilities in the delivery of survivor-centred services, thereby enhancing their accountability and credibility.[66]





Eswatini: New protections for women prove controversial

In a major step toward curbing domestic violence in the country, legislators in Eswatini enacted the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Bill in 2018.

The new law aims to, among other things, promote the realisation of the rights of women and girls in Eswatini; include all sexual crimes into one law; and make all forms of sexual abuse or exploitation a crime in order to protect both men and women.

While the Coordinating Assembly of Non-Governmental Organisations (CANGO) said the new SODV act will help tackle VAWG and GBV in the country, others, including some governing politicians, have come out against it.



MP Princess Phumelele has spoken out against the new SODV act.
Photo courtesy of Swazi Observer

MP Princess Phumelele, a member of the country's royal family, has slammed the SODV, saying it could spark domestic violence because men might not accept that their wives can refuse

[64] GL Audit of SRHR Policies and Laws in SADC, 2020
[65] https://musasa.co.zw/gender-based-violence-in-any-form-is-never-acceptable/ (accessed 24/04/2020)
[66] Multi-sectoral Protocol on the Management of Sexual Abuse and Violence in Zimbabwe, 2019

to engage in sexual relations. Others said they worried that the act might only protect women so it could be unconstitutional.

These comments sparked outrage among human rights activists, who have defended the new act. Nkosingiphile Myeni, CANGO's communications officer, said the act is one of the most comprehensive laws made in the country, noting that various groups, including MPs, had engaged in country-wide consultations before the bill became law.

Myeni encouraged people to read the SODV Act so that they can speak about it from a place of knowledge, noting that it sets out to protect all citizens in Eswatini.

Source: Sifisiso Nhlabatsi is a journalist from Eswatini. This story is part of the Gender Links 16 Days News series. https://genderlinks.org.za/news/sodv-act-most-comprehensive-law-in-gbv-fight-cango/

Support



SADC Gender Protocol Article 23.2: State parties shall ensure accessible, effective and responsive police, prosecutorial, health, social welfare and other services to redress cases of gender-based violence.

SADC Gender Protocol Article 23.3: State parties shall provide accessible, affordable, and specialised legal services, including legal aid, to survivors of gender-based violence.

SADC Gender Protocol Article 23.4: State parties shall provide specialised facilities including support mechanisms for survivors of gender-based violence.

Despite all SADC countries having accessible, affordable, and specialised services for survivors of GBV, legal aid stands out as a big gap in most countries. The 2016 Global Study on Legal Aid by UNODC, which included five SADC countries from the SADC region - Angola, DRC, Mauritius, Seychelles, and South Africa[67] - shows that one-third of 153 countries have not yet enacted specific legislation on legal aid and only half offered legal aid to GBV survivors.

GL studies in seven countries show a similar trend but observed that some NGOs provide these services, albeit with funding constraints. For South Africa alone, civil society oversees 60% of social services that support women. These findings leave most women who cannot afford justice to look to men for support. These barriers also force women to use alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and avoid litigation. The costs of travel to access justice, costs of engaging lawyers, as well as the subjective costs that come from religion, stigma, and tradition all delay and consequentially deny justice to GBV survivors.

In the wake of the COVID-19 lockdowns, activists raised critical concerns about the accessibility of specialised GBV units during the pandemic. Movement restrictions left many women unable to access shelters, along with justice and health services, which restrictions also disrupted. Agencies across the region encouraged SADC leaders to consider GBV services as essential services throughout the pandemic period to enable

[67] UNODC Report (2016) available https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/LegalAid/Global_Study_on_Legal_Aid_-_FINAL.pdf (cited in SADC Barometer 2019).

women to access them at any given time without violating lockdown restrictions.

GBV service providers also struggled to secure essential resources, such as rape kits and materials needed for clinical management of rape survivors, as governments closed borders to control the spread of the virus. Another concern for many involved the question of whether governments had provided adequate resources to support GBV service providers and women and girls who seek services such as alternative accommodation away from homes where they have isolated with their abusers. GBV service providers also need personal protective equipment to assist women, as many feared COVID-19 infection could spread at shelters.

The pandemic has illustrated that it is important not to rely on only one form of service provision. GBV service providers should therefore invest in a variety of delivery options, including low-tech responses like SMS-based solutions that cater for women who may not have access to android phones and internet data. Countries like France have set up GBV pop-in centres in grocery stores where women often shop.[68] SADC should replicate successful programmes like this.

Training of service providers

SADC Gender Protocol Article 24: State parties shall introduce, promote and provide:
(a) Gender education and training to service providers involved in gender-based violence, including the police, the judiciary, health and social workers;
(b) Community sensitisation programmes regarding available services and resources for survivors of gender-based violence; and
(c) Training of all service providers to enable them to offer services to people with special needs.
BPFA +20 Africa Declaration (4.1): Enact and strengthen the enforcement of laws addressing and punishing all forms of violence against women and girls through adequate resource allocation and targeted capacity-building of law enforcement agencies, including the judiciary.

Pre-service and on-the-job training remains a crucial element of GBV response and agencies should integrate it into all training for GBV services providers. Research in the region has shown that the attitudes of police officers and health workers toward GBV survivors discourage women and girls from reporting violence.[69] To achieve the SADC Gender Protocol Article 24 and the BPFA +20 Africa Declaration targets, service providers need to be well trained, have a positive and caring attitude, and offer quality service.



Puleng Khosi asks a question during a training session on essential GBV services in Quthing, Lesotho, in October 2019. Photo: Ntolo Lekau

[68] Erskine, "Not Just Hotlines and Mobile Phones:"
[69] GL GBV Baseline studies in seven SADC countries

Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA) reports that women complain about the service from justice institutions and providers who have not received proper training. One example involved a pregnant woman whose husband stabbed her. She explained how the police came to take a statement while she was in hospital. "My first problem with police is they came to take a statement while I was on oxygen [on a respirator machine]," she said. "Then the court said I was absconding at least three or more times. They also were not considering my condition, my operation [from surgery] had not even healed, my wounds were fresh. The magistrate was also saying this woman is not serious as she is absconding."

Violence against men studies have found that men shy away from reporting as they also face ridicule from police and other service providers.[70] Emerging evidence shows that the establishment of victim support units within police stations helps mitigate this and has resulted in increased training of police officers throughout the region.[71]

Prevention



SADC Gender Protocol Article 21.2: State parties shall, in all sectors of society, introduce and support gender sensitisation and public awareness programmes aimed at changing behaviour and eradicating gender-based violence.

While prevention is often put at the end of the chain in GBV management, efforts to address social norms, structures of gender inequality, and the general acceptance of VAWG should be at the centre of all such strategies. Activists see primary prevention efforts as particularly crucial since response services by themselves, albeit crucially important, are unlikely to yield a significant reduction in the perpetration of violence.[72] Primary prevention initiatives play vita role to response and care services for survivors.[73]

Recognising this role, researchers, civil society, and international organisations have increasingly promoted primary prevention efforts and engaged in research on their effectiveness. Because GBV response remains the focus in large parts of the world - including many SADC member states, which see fierce competition for funding - these various actors also advocate for increased investments in primary prevention.[74]

The attitudes of police officers and health workers toward GBV survivors discourage women and girls from reporting violence

[70] https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/NAM/UNAM%20Research%20GBV%20Report%202015.pdf
[71] "SADC Gender Protocol Barometer 2017 - Gender Links."
[72] García-Moreno et al., "Addressing Violence against Women."
[73] Jewkes and Abrahams, "The Epidemiology of Rape and Sexual Coercion in South Africa."
[74] Jewkes and Abrahams, "The Epidemiology of Rape and Sexual Coercion in South Africa."

GBV campaigns

To date, all SADC countries have implemented prevention strategies to raise awareness and advocate for GBV prevention. These include engaging in coordinated campaigns such as the annual 16 Days of Activism and One Billion Rising, themed "Raise the Vibration Rise for Revolution 2020." Regionally, the NGO sector, governments, academia, and international development partners continue to emphasise the need for evidence-based, theoretically grounded, and technology-based interventions.



In August 2018, the World Bank committed $100 million to help prevent GBV in the **DRC**.[75] Its Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Project will reach 795 000 direct beneficiaries over the course of four years. The project will provide help to survivors of GBV and aim to shift social norms by promoting gender equality and behavioural change through strong partnerships with civil society organisations.

Elsewhere in the region, SADC first ladies have taken up the issue, highlighting their commitment to fighting GBV and using their influence and platform to underscore political commitment in their countries.



In **Madagascar**, the nomination of First lady Mialy Rajoelina as the UNFPA ambassador on the fight against GBV and child marriage provided a renewed incentive for government to engage in the issue.[76] Many activists welcomed the appointment, which came at the same time as the 50th anniversary of the UNPFA's presence in Madagascar. A first lady fighting for the cause provides an opportunity to influence government and other decision-makers. Indeed, many saw the appointment as the catalyst that sparked government's interest in GBV. It also led to the passage of a new bill that caused a public outcry for a different reason: critics said the law would pave the way for same sex marriage. However, the government clarified its intent, noting through a spokesperson that, "This law was designed to protect women and children who are the main targets of violence in the home, in the family or at the level of society, because they are too often still considered vulnerable and easy to abuse... No article of the said law favours the marriage of two persons of the same sex."[77]



In her role as the country's health ambassador, **Zimbabwe**'s First Lady Auxillia Mnangagwa took time while speaking at a pandemic awareness programme to also mention the rising cases of GBV during the COVID-19 lockdown. She raised concerns about Zimbabweans who had been spending time in each other's homes fighting during the crisis. "Now if the elderly fight, what sort of example are we setting? *Vana vanozodzidzei?* [what do the children learn?]... Because of the lockdown, young couples are spending more time together and I am told some are using this to fight."[78] She then encouraged the elderly to counsel young couples and encouraged all citizens to report violence to the police and courts so that victims do not suffer in silence.

All SADC countries have implemented prevention strategies to raise awareness and advocate for GBV prevention

[75] "DRC - Gender Based Violence Prevention and Response Project."
[76] Utilisateur, "50ème Anniversaire Du Fonds Des Nations Unies Pour La Population41 Années de Son Implication à Madagascar."
[77] "Polémique Stérile Sur La Loi Sur La Lutte Contre Le VBG - Le Gouvernement Siffle La Fin."
[78] Rupapa, "Zimbabwe."



Malawi: New funds will spotlight GBV



Former Malawi Gender Minister Mary Navicha. Photo courtesy of YouTube

The European Union selected Malawi and seven other African countries in 2019 to receive part of a global grant of €500 million to implement the Spotlight Initiative, which focuses on eliminating VAWG, including SGBV and harmful practices.

For Malawi's minister of gender, it means the country's battle against GBV will go beyond the annual 16 Days of Activism.

Former Gender Minister Mary Navicha said Malawians must join hands and condemn violence against women all the time and bring perpetrators into the open to face the law and deter others from committing similar offences.

"Let us put GBV into the spotlight and end all forms of violence against women and girls," said Navicha, noting the initiative will help women and girls to speak out on issues of GBV.

According to a press release from the government, "In addition to enabling a holistic approach to end violence against women and girls, the initiative will promote Agenda 2030's guiding principle of 'leaving no one behind' and build on the momentum of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) efforts, especially Goal 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment."

Navicha said government will work with civil society, including through its NAP, to eliminate GBV and trafficking. "All we are trying to do is to make sure that no woman or girl is left behind or should continue to suffer in silence. We are taking a new direction that empowers women to talk about their rights and take issues of violence head on," she said.

The Spotlight Initiative has partnered with faith-based institutions on GBV advocacy campaigns. Their work together engaged more than 1000 women faith-based leaders and influencers through a partnership with the Seventh Day Adventist Church's "End It Now" campaign. Through these efforts, the religious and community leaders committed to address norms that promote harmful attitudes and behaviours around VAWG in churches and other spaces where they have influence.[79]

Source: SADC Protocol@Work Summit, Malawi, 2019

[79] https://endvawnow.org/uploads/browser/files/spotlight_initiative_early_results_report_-_november_2019.pdf

Religious groups campaign against GBV

Spiritual leaders across SADC have stepped up their campaigns against GBV through an inter-faith initiative that brings together leaders from African (traditional religion), Christian, Islamic, and Bahai faiths. Some religious groups actively participate in the 16 Days of Activism annual campaigns. Group members have sought to deepen awareness of GBV and religion. Further, the group engages in the interfaith "Thursdays in Black" campaign against GBV, which has been gaining momentum. The World Council of Churches campaign looks to mobilise the faith community to recognise the urgency of addressing GBV. It challenges people of faith to prioritise response to GBV within their communities.[80]

THURSDAYS IN BLACK: RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE

The campaign is simple but profound. Wear Black on Thursdays. Wear a pin to declare you are part of the global movement resisting attitudes and practices that permit rape and violence. Show your respect for women who are resilient in the face of injustice and violence. Encourage others to join you. Often black has been used with negative racial connotations. In this campaign Black is used as a colour of resistance and resilience.

Role of the media

SADC Gender Protocol Article 29.7: State parties shall take appropriate measures to encourage the media to play a constructive role in the eradication of gender-based violence by adopting guidelines which ensure gender sensitive coverage.

The Protocol urges the media to ensure gender equality in and through the media and to challenge gender stereotypes. The Protocol also discourages media from promoting pornography and violence against all persons, especially women and children.[81]

The media continues to play a key role in raising public awareness and contributing to the discourse on GBV prevention, response, and support activities.[82] Social media has emerged as a crucial tool for sharing news and information, both accurate and false. In today's world - awash with fake news and leaders who refer to genuine news as fake news - the media remains more critical than ever in counteracting myths and negative attitudes that may perpetuate violence. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored this need, as citizens across SADC relied on local news and social media for updates about health issues and government response measures.

[80] https://genderlinks.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Interfaith-Brief-on-Gender-Based-Violence.pdf
[81] SADC Protocol on Gender and Development Article 29 (1-7).
[82] Chiramba, K. Musariri, L and Rasesigo G, (2018). Botswana Relationship Study. MNIGA.



Botswana: Survivors' message resonates around the world

Over a few months in 2018 and 2019, seven young women embarked on a project in Botswana that led to both digital and personal transformations.

The project, led by Women Against Rape (WAR), an organisation based in Maun, in northwest Botswana, identified young women who had experienced violence and travelled far enough along in their healing journeys that they could revisit and re-tell their stories without experiencing further trauma.

The seven girl champions produced digital stories about the abuse they had experienced, which WAR then shared via Facebook and Twitter.

Through the exercise, the girls gained confidence and felt heard and validated by other GBV survivors and the public.

Meanwhile, community members, professionals, and family members read the digital stories and saw the impact and power of listening to survivors simply to hear their stories rather than to fulfil a separate agenda.

More than 565 community members viewed the powerful digital stories and videos, which reached more than one million others on social media, hopefully increasing awareness and reducing instances of violence as well as the fear of reporting.



Gofileone Gontle Samakabadi, a Botswana gender activist, worked with Women Against Rape to raise awareness about GBV in Maun, Botswana, in September 2017. Photo: Bangwe Chalebgwa

Through this strategy, WAR aimed to give survivors a voice and a safe platform to share their stories, empowering the survivors to be open and honest about their experiences, while keeping their identities confidential. By creating these digital stories for social media, people heard the messages of the survivors all around the world.

Source: Gofileone Gontle Samakabadi from WoMen Against Rape Botswana as part of the SADC Protocol@Work Summit 2019

Social media

Its ability to disseminate content far and wide has made social media an effective campaign tool in raising awareness around GBV laws and GBV in general. Twitter and Facebook campaigns represent the leading social media platforms, and activists in the region increasingly use both to share country-specific and global campaigns such as, #24Demands, #AmINext, #MeToo, #TotalShutDown, #NotInMyName, and #NotOurLeaders, to name but a few. The momentum towards a change in thinking, from response to prevention, has intensified as more

voices speak out at various levels and on various platforms. A 2018 study in Botswana shows a notable increase in awareness of both GBV laws and campaigns from 2012 to 2018 thanks to social media.[83]

Social media proved useful during COVID-19 lockdowns to promote materials on a broad array of GBV topics and inform men and women about service availability across the region. This enhanced knowledge on several issues, including awareness about increases in sexual violence, rape, and mental health. Social media also provides an effective tool for crowdfunding against GBV. To fundraise for female students against GBV over the past year, students at the University of Cape Town used the hashtag #IWillNotBeNext on BackaBuddy, a crowdfunding platform that helps create campaigns to raise funds for positive impact on individuals, communities, and the environment.[84]

Social media also plays a significant role in perpetuating gender stereotypes and many men still use it to share derogatory comments and content that perpetuate ideas of women as sex objects. This makes social media a valuable tool for activists to also transform negative perceptions.[85] As the world continues to move in the digital direction, organisations must devise innovative ways of tapping into the many advantages of digital technology to protect women and girls at risk of GBV.

SADC: Growing role for "hashtag advocacy"

A recent study of social media datasets found a marked increase in online advocacy against GBV due to "hashtag advocacy," but researchers note that this change may be short-lived and connected to targeted campaigns. The research, carried out by MEASURE (Monitoring and Evaluation to ASsess and Use REsults) Evaluation, an agency that provides technical leadership to advance the field of global health monitoring and evaluation, assessed sexual relationships between younger women and older men and attitudes on GBV against women and girls.

The study looked at ten countries in Sub-Saharan African, including eight in SADC (Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). All have programmes funded under the umbrella of USAID's Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored and Safe (DREAMS) programme, which focuses on adolescent girls and young women.



A recent study found that "viral" events, like the 16 days of Activism campaign, influence online discussion. Photo courtesy of MEASURE Evaluation

DREAMS aims to curtail HIV transmission among young women in countries with the highest HIV burden. Results show that social media data can be useful. The study obtained a picture of the conversations around popular hashtags and discovered how hashtags change quickly. Because the data is 100% user-generated, it removed most researcher bias.

The study observed how news articles and "viral" events, like the 16 days of Activism campaign, influence online discussion. Data collection in 2017 overlapped with this cam-

[83] Chiramba, K, Musariri, L. and Rasesigo, G. (2018). Botswana Relationship Study, MNIGA.
[84] "UCT Students Crowdfund to Retaliate against Gender-Based Violence."
[85] https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/gender-equality-attitudes-study-2019 (accessed 17 June 2020)

paign and showed a decrease in social media posts defending GBV and a spike in comments decrying violence.

However, shortly after the campaign, sentiments expressed about GBV returned to the original, less impassioned attitude.

Evidence shows that "hashtag advocacy" can be fleeting in its success at changing opinion and that follow-on work will be needed to fan the flames of change that may begin during social media campaigns.

Adapted from: https://www.measureevaluation.org/resources/newsroom/news/can-analysis-of-tweets-inform-interventions-to-prevent-gender-based-violence

Restorative justice



SADC Gender Protocol Article 20.4: State parties shall put in place mechanisms for the social and psychological rehabilitation of perpetrators of gender-based violence. **SADC Gender Protocol Article 23.5:** State parties shall provide effective rehabilitation and re-integration programmes for perpetrators of gender-based violence.

Emerging evidence suggests that achieving SADC Gender Protocol Article 20.4 and 23.5 means working more meaningfully with the perpetrators of violence. In this instance, men represent the main perpetrators due to several factors, including negative constructions of masculinity in the region. Countries can only manage to prevent violence if they invest in programmes to change attitudes, identities, and relations that encourage violence. One way of achieving this is by altering the perceptions of those involved. The SADC GBV strategy framework 2018-2030, notes that regional GBV prevention and response has seen limited male involvement and few programmes to support rehabilitation and integration of GBV perpetrators into the community.[86]

While anecdotal evidence suggests the existence of psychological rehabilitation for perpetrators of GBV in the region, governments must continue to both scale up this important work and document it for effective monitoring and learning of best practices. Analysis of national action plans shows that Malawi has planned to increase perpetrator accountability and rehabilitation. A stronger network of relevant agencies and actors needs to support this work, including working with men at all levels in communities.

Countries can only manage to prevent violence if they invest in programmes to change attitudes, identities, and relations that encourage violence

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

Engaging men and boys in the fight against GBV



Men take part in the 16 Days of Activism campaign in Siteki, Eswatini, in November 2019. Photo: Thandokuhle Dlamini

As activists continue to understand the magnitude of GBV in the region, especially during the COVID-19 lockdowns, the need to work with men becomes even more apparent. Through its GBV strategy framework 2018-2030, SADC leaders identified men and boys as key change agents in the fight against GBV. Work has already begun with local civil society organisations and regional networks that link to global alliances such as the Men Engage network, which promotes gender equality through transforming masculinities.[87] Given the power that traditional and religious leaders have in local communities across the region, it is especially important to work with them on setting positive examples in the fight against VAWG.[88]

Based in Gaborone but with a wider reach in all corners of the country, Men and Boys for Gender Equality (MBGE) engages men and boys to address GBV and promote gender equality in **Botswana**. The organisation partners with GL to advance gender justice. MBGE uses a robust public education programme through various media, including radio and television shows, adverts, social media, and community presentations in *kgotlas* (public meetings) and workshops. It offers the following programmes: "One man can," which focuses on training men on issues around GBV; "Men care," which trains expectant fathers about their responsibilities during the pregnancy period, birthing, and in child rearing; and "Love to Live," an alcohol rehabilitation intervention project funded by the Ministry of Health and wellness that targets youth in an attempt to decrease substance abuse and rehabilitate former addicts in their societies and families. MBGE has recently been at the forefront of demands for justice during the COVID-19 lockdown following accusations against a Botswana MP who allegedly raped a minor.[89]

Changing narratives on GBV

GBV is gradually entering mainstream political discourse in SADC. Many leaders now publicly acknowledge the scourge of GBV, including the huge financial strain it presents. However, the bold actions required to address widespread GBV in the region require a concerted commitment and long-term investment - something that has often been lacking. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted this lack of vision and regional incoherence, as leaders signed off on restrictions that endangered women, shuttered essential GBV services, and possibly set the region back

[87] "MenEngage."
[88] Machisa & Chiramba (2013)
[89] https://genderlinks.org.za/casestudies/botswana-men-and-boys-for-equality/

after years of progress to reduce GBV. Social media has also provided new opportunities for activism, forcing politicians to respond.



South Africa, still in the grips of the #TotalShutdown campaign reported in last year's #VoiceandChoice Barometer is an example of how feminist action has forced the matter onto the political agenda. A new cycle of horrendous acts of VAWG made headlines in 2019. This included the rape and murder of several women, Uyinene Mrwetyana, Leighandre Jegels, Janika Mallo, and Ayakha Jiyane, as well as the murder of Jiyane's three little siblings. Following a series of street and online protests employing the hashtag #AmInext, the government made seven pledges to end violence against women: 1) Establishing dedicated sexual offences courts (South Africa has had 92 courts established since 2013 and it will now add 11 more); 2) A fully accessible register of sexual offenders; 3) Stricter jail sentences and focus on rehabilitation programmes; 4) Strengthened response to GBV; 5) Strategic partnerships to end GBV by 2030; 6) Fighting xenophobia; and 7) Improved justice for victims and survivors. GBV again came into focus during the COVID-19 lock down - this time prompting an impassioned plea from the President, who devoted half of a nation-wide speech on easing lockdown restrictions to the twin pandemic of GBV.



South Africa: President commits funds to fight GBV pandemic



In a speech announcing the easing of COVID-19 restrictions in June, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa pledged R1.6 billion to fight GBV in the country. Photo courtesy of Times Live

As South African President Cyril Ramaphosa eased the restrictions put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19, he reminded citizens in a nationwide televised address on 17 June that the nation continues to deal with another deadly pandemic: "the killing of women and children by men in the country."

Ramaphosa signalled the government's commitment to end GBV in South Africa, which has some of the highest rates of violence against women and children in the world. "As a man, as a husband and as a father, I am appalled at what is no less than a war being waged against the women and children of our country," he said.

In a move that gender activists celebrated as game-changing - even if long overdue - the government committed R1.6 billion to its Emergency Response Plan to combat GBV and femicide in South Africa.

Ramaphosa named some of the victims of GBV, including the elderly, and bemoaned the killings of 21 women and children during the COVID-19 lockdowns. He also commended the South African Police Service for their work in arresting almost all of the alleged perpetrators.

Along with the new funding, the president announced that the government now has a National Strategic Plan to guide the country's effort to fight GBV in place. This includes increasing support to the GBV hotline and shelters and providing new supports for victims of sexual violence.

Other measures announced include:

- The Department of Social Development will now use 10 government-owned buildings as shelters, addressing one of the biggest challenges facing survivors who want to leave abusive relationships;
- Government has upgraded 13 regional courts into sexual offences courts to support the work of law-enforcement;
- Government agencies will distribute 7000 evidence collection kits to every police station in the country and South Africa now has more than 1000 survivor friendly rooms at police stations;
- Many police, prosecutors, magistrates, and policymakers have undergone sensitivity and awareness training, and more than 3000 government employees who work with children and mentally disabled persons have been checked against the National Register of Sex Offenders; and
- The government has prepared legislative amendments around, among other things, minimum sentencing in cases of GBV, bail conditions for suspects, and greater protection for victims of IPV.

In a nod to gender activists who have coined the hashtag #FemaleLivesMatter, Ramaphosa noted an urgent need to speak out against GBV, noting that, by looking away, by discouraging victims from laying charges, by shaming women for their lifestyle choices or their style of dress, we become complicit in these crimes.

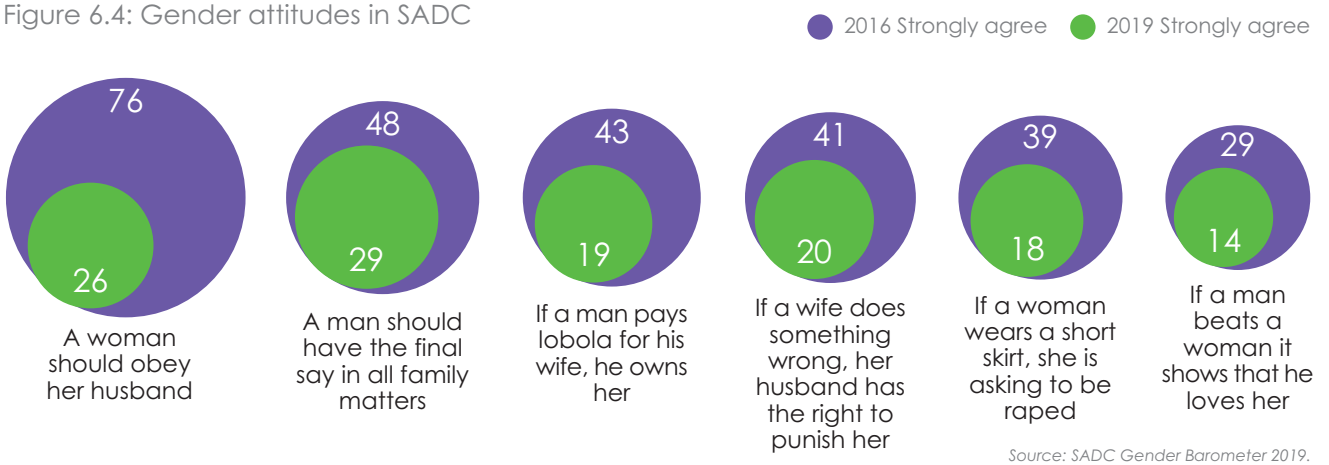
Source: various news reports, including News24 and CNN. https://www.news24.com/news24/SouthAfrica/News/full-text-these-are-the-new-changes-to-level-3-lockdown-as-ramaphosa-eases-restrictions-20200617?isapp=true

Attitudes

Social norms that promote gender inequality can increase violence and compromise women's sexual and reproductive health. Transforming inequitable gender norms (i.e., societal messages that dictate appropriate or expected behaviour for males and females) remains an important strategy to eliminate GBV, counter the spread of HIV, and generally improve reproductive health.[90]

Over the years, GL has asked survey participants for their attitudes on several provocative statements and questions. The responses obtained between 2016 and 2019 show deep patriarchal and sexist attitudes remain in some areas, but overall demonstrate a significant shifting of views that could highlight a broad positive societal shift in attitudes.

Figure 6.4: Gender attitudes in SADC



Source: SADC Gender Barometer 2019.

Figure 6.4 illustrates (without significant changes from the 2019 edition), a clear shift in attitudes in a short time. Between 2016 and 2019, the percentage point of those who strongly agree with the problematic statements ticked downward - in some cases quite substantially. For example, the number of respondents who said a woman should obey her husband dropped from 76% in 2016 to 26% in 2019. However, activists recognise that a lot of work remains to transform attitudes in the elderly cohorts. For example, during a COVID-19 awareness programme led by Zimbabwe's first lady, some elderly women revealed that they would never report their husband to the police, even when he severely beat them.[91]

In 2019, UN Women released a *Gender Attitudes Study* that showed that, beyond biases in attitudes today, most people see gender equality as essential. More than 90% of respondents believe more respect for women's rights in all areas is important to their country's future success. Similarly, more than 90% of respondents believe in equal pay for equal work, and 87% believe more opportunities for women in business are important for the overall success of their country.[92]

Integrated approaches

SADC Gender Protocol Article 25: State parties shall adopt integrated approaches including institutional cross-sector structures, with the aim of eliminating gender-based violence.

All SADC countries have created national action plans (NAPs) to end GBV, but some have become outdated while others await approval, with only some marginal action accomplished in recent months due to resource constraints. In the countries in which GL conducted GBV baseline studies, it continues to work with national and local governments to develop action plans to end GBV.

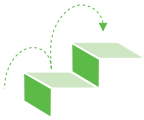
In **Lesotho**, a 2018 report on the prevention of violence against women and girls by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) notes that lawmakers drafted a gender and development policy in 2003, reviewed it in 2016, and finally adopted it in July 2018. Based on efforts by the Ministry of Gender and Youth, Sports and Recreation (MGYSR), Lesotho adopted the 2011-2016 National Action Plan to End Violence Against Women in 2011,[93] but it now needs a new action plan to operationalise the new gender policy. Furthermore, lawmakers have been working on a Domestic Violence Bill. While all three instruments would be central for coordinating and guiding efforts to combat VAWG in Lesotho, their revision or approval remains pending, and legislators have yet to pass the Domestic Violence Bill.[94]

[90] https://www.measureevaluation.org/prh/rh_indicators/mens-health/me/percent-of-men-who-hold-gender-equitable-beliefs
[91] https://allafrica.com/stories/202005220677.html
[92] UNWOMEN https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/gender-equality-attitudes-study-2019
[93] https://aidsfree.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/aidstar-one_prc-lesotho_lr_web.pdf (accessed 29/04/2020)
[94] Gender Links (2018). Lesotho: Domestic Violence Bill, hope to ending GBV. https://genderlinks.org.za/news/lesotho-domestic-violence-bill-2018-beacon-hope-ending-gbv/

As noted earlier, GBV survivors often experience prolonged mental health and poor reproductive health problems. They are also at higher risk of acquiring HIV and becoming intensive long-term users of health services.[95] However, countries continue to lack capacity in providing adequate and well-coordinated essential services.



Research by GL established that women prefer informal or traditional support to formal support. This is true for **Comoros**, where, under the Comorian legal system (which rests on Islamic law and an inherited French legal code[96]), women often do not report violence to the courts but to the extended family and village elders, who address most cases.[97]



Next steps

- **GBV in emergencies:** Governments and other actors should continue to document and assess the impact of emergencies such as COVID-19 on GBV. This will provide lessons to inform concrete action plans and long-term strategies to prevent, respond, and support GBV actions and service provision.
- **Prevention:** Member states must pay special attention to the rising cases of domestic violence and GBV during the COVID-19 pandemic by, among others, ensuring they protect women and girls from all forms of abuse. Further, governments must incorporate gender perspectives in all responses to COVID-19 and the recovery phases to ensure that actions during and after the crisis build more equal, inclusive, and sustainable economies and societies.[98]
- **Media coverage:** There is a need to continue to assess the impact of hashtag advocacy and social media and understand how this can be integrated with traditional media approaches to increase the reach and impact of advocacy campaigns.
- **Legal:** Member states should urgently review legislation dealing with movement restrictions, essential services, and law enforcement conduct during public health pandemics.
- **Support:** It is essential to continue to scale up rehabilitation of GBV perpetrators and their reintegration in communities to reduce repeat offenses. Governments and donors should provide new resources to civil society organisations to enable them to continue their advocacy and service provision to end VAW.
- **Integrated approaches:** Collaboration and collective working together between governments and civil society must continue to ensure smooth coordination of GBV responses, especially during emergencies like COVID-19.
- **Inter-sectoral funding:** The costs of GBV remain far higher than the funding available to eliminate it. Member states should adopt the funding approach they used for HIV. This should include increases in private sector funding.
- **Diverse groups:** The region urgently needs specific guidelines for inclusion and accessibility to clarify how to provide access to SRHR, HIV, and GBV services for diverse groups, including women with disabilities.

SADC countries should ensure that actions during and after the COVID-19 crisis aim to build more equal, inclusive, and sustainable economies and societies

[95] Lowe-Morna, C., Makamure, L., Dube, S. (2016) SADC Gender Protocol Barometer (online) available at http://genderlinks.org.za/shop/sadc-gender-protocol-barometer-2016/
[96] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_of_Comoros accessed 01/05/2020
[97] "Comoros - United States Department of State."
[98] "Southern African Development Community: Bulletin 2: SADC Regional Response to COVID-19 An Analysis of the Regional Situation and Impact."