



**MINISTRY OF GENDER EQUALITY, POVERTY ERADICATION AND
SOCIAL WELFARE**

**CONTRIBUTION BY HONOURABLE BERNADETTE MARIA JAGGER
ON THE MOTION BY HON. MIKE R VENAANI FOR THE HOUSE TO
DEBATE THE CAUSES OF THE HIGH CRIME RATES IN NAMIBIA AND
URGENT INTERVENTIONS REQUIRED TO REDUCE IT**

Honourable Speaker

Honourable Members

1. I stand here and concur with all the previous speakers who addressed the motion at hand, which calls on this August House to debate the causes of the high crime rates in Namibia, and seek urgent interventions to reduce these high crime rates. The laws and policies the country has in place to address various crimes are commendable but a mind-set of moving from a rhetoric approach to action oriented should be instilled in all people, especially those implementing the law and those in decision making positions to ensure that laws are applied in a manner that effectively makes impact.
2. There are many crimes that are reportedly committed in Namibia but the scourge of Gender Based Violence (GBV) has been increasing. GBV has been perpetrated especially against women, girls, and boys but rarely against men.

3. At this point, I will not press deeper into the crime of GBV but I would rather discuss the strategies, policies, programmes that the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare has in place that address GBV as well as how we can strengthen this initiatives in order to further intensify efforts to address GBV.

Honourable Speaker

4. As a point of departure, allow me to remind this August House of the 2nd National Conference on GBV which was held in 2014 under the theme "*Unifying Action against Gender Based Violence in Namibia*". The aim of the conference was to dialogue on the crisis the country was facing with regard to continuous killing of women and children, to strengthen and develop strategies to effectively fight GBV. The government recognised that a multi-sectoral approach is of essence because a single institution will not be able to fight this scourge of GBV on its own. Thus, the conference brought together representatives of Government Institutions, Traditional Leaders, Non-Governmental Organizations, Faith Based Organizations, Development Partners and the Youth. During the conference, **the following key root causes of GBV were identified**; low socio-economic status accorded to women and girls; unequal power relations between women and men; alcohol and drug abuse; disintegrated services; weak moral and value system within the traditional and religious settings; weak implementation of relevant laws and limited capacity to prevent and manage GBV.
5. After the conference, recommendations were drafted and approved by Cabinet. All representatives were urged to cost and make budgetary provisions for the implementation of their activities as per the recommendations. All lead OMAs were expected to have done what was recommended to their institution since 2014 to date. But, it has regrettably been noted that many institutions have failed to heed to this recommendations, thus compelling the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare to hold the fort and run with its recommendations because of the desire to see change and have a peaceful nation.

6. At this particular juncture, I would like to highlight the word “**PEACE**”, peace is not defined as the absence of war, because even though there is no war in our country, many factors have affected the peace of many which forces them to resort to other means of survival, problem solving techniques, communication etc., and this is the peace the Ministry intends to restore as a response to combating and reducing GBV related crimes.

Honourable Members

7. As a response to curbing GBV, the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare has various programmes in place that are continuously implemented. These programmes are aimed at creating awareness in order to widen the knowledge of the people in terms of GBV; to sensitize– In order to ensure that people are sensitive to the crime of GBV thus encouraging them to report this crime and also not end as perpetrators of this crime. Further, there are also programmes that help address the root causes of GBV, to help eliminate them by empowering those who are victims.

7.1. The programmes are as follows:

- a. The Ministry developed the **National Coordination Mechanism Structure** for the implementation of the National Gender Policy. Under this structure, there are established clusters at the regional and constituency levels where constituency members discuss gender issues within their respective constituencies.

The clusters are essentially local task forces or working groups established in 14 Regions. These clusters were created to focus on raising awareness and addressing GBV issues at the regional level. In doing so, they became an integral component of the National Coordination Mechanism, which is a wider framework designed to coordinate and streamline efforts in combating GBV on a national level.

- b. **GBV Campaign called Zero Tolerance for GBV**; in 2009, the Ministry implemented a Zero Tolerance GBV campaign aimed at creating awareness

on GBV issues and educate the public on identifying warning signs. Furthermore, it focused on empowering service providers and the public to prevent, detect, protect, report, and refer GBV cases, including Trafficking in Persons, promoting the existing GBV services in the country, and promoting the 10111 Toll-Free police number.

- c. **Legal engagement with Traditional Authorities;** The Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare (MGEPESW) in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Ministry of Urban and Rural Development (MURD) and Women Action for Development (WAD) hosts legal engagement programmes to engage and capacitate Traditional Authorities on Gender related laws that address GBV as a punishable crime, in order to enhance the effectiveness of multi- sectorial response to GBV, Violence Against Children (VAC) and Trafficking in Persons (TIP).

Honourable Members, we cannot deny that, traditional Leaders are custodians of cultural practices, customs, norms and traditions, additionally, they are integral members of the Namibian societal fabric and have a big positive role to play in addressing socio-economic factors that can either fuel or mitigate violence against women, men, girls and boys in Namibia, especially in rural areas. That is way this programme is of significance and a best approach to targeting and addressing the root causes of the crime of GBV.

- d. **Male engagement Programme;** The aim of the programme is to promote greater involvement of men in prevention of HIV and GBV, safe motherhood, fatherhood initiatives, family planning, reaching boys and young men and promote positive gender norms and positive change as well as covering men's issues of Sexual Reproductive Health. As a step to further intensify efforts to fight against GBV, this programme introduced an initiative called the men's Conference which took place in November 2022.

Notably, there has been some achievements which were recorded from this conference. The conference created a platform for men and boys to engage *each* others, to mobilize others to take a stand against GBV and advocate for gender equality. Furthermore, it also motivated them to seek for help from various service providers instead of resorting to violence or suicide and increase

awareness that fosters a reduction or eradication in men and boys' acceptability of GBV practices.

- e. **Social Protection Programmes;** The government developed the Blueprint on Wealth Redistribution and Poverty Reduction with the aim of laying a foundation for achieving prosperity for all through implementing measures that will eradicate poverty and reduce inequality. In addition to this, the National Rural Development Policy and Strategy and the Zero Hunger Road Map (ZHRM) were established through nationwide consultative processes. The vision of the ZHRM was premised on achieving Zero Hunger and was aligned to the goal of the Harambee Prosperity Plan (HPP) and the Sustainable Development Agenda – particularly SDG2 whose objective is to “End hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture”. The broad-based Poverty Reduction Strategies are set out to drastically reduce the proportion of severely poor individuals and households living in improvised houses and includes a focus on social protection, especially with regards to reducing child poverty.
- f. **Other social protection programmes;** implemented to address poverty at national level and to reduce vulnerability, social exclusion and marginalisation included the Old Age Pension, Disability Grant; Children's Social Grants; War Veterans' Grant; Maternity and Death Benefits; and the Food Bank Programme. In 2022, Namibia revised and converted in-kind food assistance programmes for Food Bank and Marginalised special feeding programmes into a monthly cash transfer, as a first step to phase in a Conditional Basic Income Grant, in line with the HPP II.
- g. **In and Out of School Youth programme;** Regional staff conduct awareness sessions with the in and out of school youth on topics such as attitudes, gender based violence, understanding sexuality, men as victims of gender based violence, harmful cultural practices, sexual reproductive health, human rights and responsibilities, violence and socialization. The Ministry of Health and Social Services, Ministry of Sport, Youth and National Service are some of the stakeholders that accompany the Ministry during these engagements.

Honourable Speaker,

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8. The Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare recognises that a multi-sectoral approach is of essence, the Ministry has trained other stakeholders to strengthen their capacity in the area of GBV. The following trainings have been conducted:
 - 8.1. Capacity strengthening: All regional CCLOs, CLOs, Social Workers were trained on the use of the male engagement training manual and the GBV toolkit. Trainings also included stakeholders such as Ministry of Defence and Veterans Affairs, Ministry Home Affairs, Immigration Safety and Security, Namibia Correctional Services, Health Extension Workers, CSOs, FBOs, NGOs.
 - 8.2. Awareness raising on male involvement in the prevention of GBV, and HIV/AIDS is being conducted in all 14 regions continuously targeting men and boys. Through this programme over 10,235 men and boys were reached over the past 2 to 3 years.
9. Additionally, in order to reach a wider audience, the Ministry developed various materials in English with some, translated into local languages. This information is disseminated through various media outlets, including NBC radio drama series, NBC TV, One Africa Television, local newspapers, and billboards. This information can also be found on the Ministry's Website and its resource centres in some regions.

Honourable Members

10. In conclusion, there is absolutely no doubt that something is currently being done to address the crime of GBV, however we will not deny that a lot still has to be done in order to see the impact of implementing the laws in place as well as the impact from carrying out the different programmes aimed at transforming the mind-sets of people. We are urged to be our brother's keepers and also know that when it comes to the crime of GBV, everyone is expected to play a part, ranging from the legislatures, the officers of the court, the law enforcement

officers, the family members of the victims and perpetrators, the friends and neighbours. It is the responsibility of each one of us to come out and report the crime of GBV.

I therefore support this motion as moved by the Honourable Mike Rapuika Venaani.

I so submit.