This is a powerful book, a wonderful piece of literature whose time is long overdue. The voices, the narratives in these pages are crisp, clear and true. *Caroline Mutoko*

"Do Not Let It Break You": Personal Stories on Gender Based Violence

A publication by the GIZ Health Sector Programme in Kenya in collaboration with the Gender Violence Recovery Centre at the Nairobi Women's Hospital, Kenya.

GVRC
GENDER VIOLENCE RECOVERY CENTRE

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

ISBN: 978-9966-69-015-9

Foreword by Caroline Mutoko

Reading through this book has been difficult for me, very difficult. There have been many times I felt, I can't, I simply can't write this foreword. Where do I start? What do I say and why is my heart so broken? How do you expect me to type and cry? And how is it that through my tears and sobs, I still catch myself smiling?

However, over four weeks I read each story, sometimes twice, and with every tear I shed, I understood better what I wanted to say, what needed to be said.

This book will reach inside you, into your very heart and squeeze hard and just when you think it can't possibly hurt any more, it will hurt you all-over again. You will gasp for air, get up and take a walk and maybe, just maybe, put it down and only pick it up after several days, maybe weeks – but pick it up and read to the very last line you will. I promise you.

Because for all the grief and incomprehension I have felt, take it from me, this has been so rewarding and enriching. I have been walking around with my eye wide shut – thinking I knew, assuming I understood, the psychosis, the philosophy and physiology of gender based violence. I have been blind, nay, ignorant.

I want you to know that as you look through every picture and every story; the aim is not to anger or shock you (although it will) but to inform you, where necessary empower and equip you to recognize and deal with GBV in your life or around you.

Here's what I know for sure about gender-based violence: it can happen to anyone. I grew up thinking it happened to poor women, girls from rural settings, women who had no jobs and hence no way out. Over time however, I have learnt it can happen to anyone. And it doesn't always manifest itself in brutal force that leaves behind visible scars and bruises. No, you will learn it takes many forms and emanates from all sorts of people. This book does away with the stereotype of the violent drunken man and the meek woman who is battered for sport.

There is no 'profile' for people affected by GBV; it can happen to anyone, anywhere, regardless of class, education, race, or even gender. The profile for victims of GBV is more diverse than we dare to think or say. It takes many forms.

Every page, every line has taught me something new. The annoying practice of some men who "scratch" your palm as they shake your hand is a violation worth noting. It is despicable, horrid and degrading and it violates your very being, your mind and your esteem.

When I was growing up, GBV was rarely discussed in the open and even then, as a woman, I believed we had no part to play in inflicting pain of this nature. I know better now and I understand that for each time I curse one who hurts another I also must ask myself "and what can I to change it, prevent it?"

This is a powerful book, a wonderful piece of literature whose time is long overdue. The voices, the narratives in these pages are crisp, clear and true. As I turned to the very last page and rested my head on the back of my reading chair, I knew why I couldn't put it down or walk away from writing this foreword; this book has been begging to be written and now that it is here, we will never be the same again. I'm an avid reader and I must say of all the books you have ever read and are probably going to read in the future, this is the one book that will change you. It has changed me and I know I will never be the same again; and this is a good thing.

Short Biographies

Ursula Meissner, photographer

Ursula began her career as a journalist for the German TV company ZDF and was made responsible for South Asia in 1984. In 1989 she swapped her typewriter for a camera and took up photojournalism. After many small projects, her first public exhibition was in Sarajevo in August 1992. Since then, she has spent 20 years as a freelance photographer of war and areas of unrest worldwide, from Afghanistan to Sierra Leone, from Kosovo to Iraq. Her work has been published internationally and has received worldwide recognition.

Boniface Mwangi, photographer

Boniface says that photography is his life. He is a Kenya-based freelance photographer and a 2011 Magnum Photography Fellow. He has worked as a photojournalist for The Standard newspaper, the AFP, Reuters and the Boston Globe as well as a number of other media outlets. He has been recognized as a TED Fellow, Acumen Fellow and twice as the CNN Multichoice Africa Photojournalist of the Year, in 2008 and 2010.

Sarah Forde, interviewer and editor

Sarah is the founder of Moving the Goalposts, an NGO in Kenya, set up for girls and young women. It uses football to reach out to over 3,000 girls, giving them opportunities to realize their rights and fulfill their potential. Building on her earlier career in journalism, Sarah authored Playing by Their Rules: Coastal Teenage Girls in Kenya on Life, Love and Football. She spends most of her time involved in things she is passionate about: girls and women's rights, football, writing and her family.

Margaret Ogola, interviewer

Margaret was a paediatrician and the Medical Director of Cottolengo Hospice, a hospice for HIV/AIDS orphans. She helped found and manage the SOS HIV/AIDS Clinic in Kenya, was the National Executive Secretary for the Commission for Health and Family Life and a member of the National Council for Child Services. Dr. Ogola was the author of the celebrated novel, The River and the Source, which won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize in 1995 and has been on the KCSE syllabus for many years. She was married with four children and two foster children. Margaret was diagnosed with breast cancer and was undergoing chemotherapy whilst contributing to the development of this book. She eventually lost her battle against cancer and died on September 22nd, 2011.

Contents

Map of Kenya

Introduction by Dr Klaus Hornetz

Gender Based Violence (GBV) is a deeply pervasive problem found throughout society in both private and public spaces. It affects everyone but is particularly prevalent against women and girls. There are many causes that fuel GBV in Kenya such as power relations, cultural practices and traditions, lack of access to economic resources, lack of political will to eradicate it and poorly implemented legislation.

Looking at GBV as a traumatic event that affects the body of the victim falls short of understanding its complexity. GBV affects the most intimate aspect of human life and behavior. Besides the physical damage inflicted, the damage caused to the psychological, emotional and social life of the individual can be devastating. GBV, therefore, is a highly traumatic experience. As this book shows, individuals affected by GBV can experience breakdowns, which affects their aspirations and cripples their future hopes and personal development.

The aim of this book, through individual stories and photographs, is to give a face and voice to the problem of gender based violence in Kenya. We recognize that we could never paint the whole picture and that we may have missed some valuable stories; but we hope that through the words of the people in this book, we begin to develop a greater understanding of how GBV touches our lives, what we could do to help prevent it and how to support people whose lives have been affected by it.

The Story of this Book

All over the world there is a tendency for society to banish GBV from its consciousness. It is often found on the agenda of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the civil society, and human rights groups and through the United Nations at an international level. But making it a priority at a national level is complicated as it concerns many sensitive issues such as sexuality, rape-within-marriage and harmful traditional practices. It is not impossible, though, for a nation to actively address such issues as former Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi proved when declaring AIDS a national disaster in 1999.

The idea for this book was first discussed in the aftermath of the post-election violence in Kenya in early 2008. In response to the gender-based violence during this period, GIZ was involved in developing a project that would guarantee free treatment of all survivors in the country's two major GBV treatment centers; (Nairobi Women's Hospital and Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital, Eldoret). In reflecting on our contribution to this project, Lucy Kiama (Executive Director of Refugee Consortium of Kenya), Ann Njogu (Executive Director of CREAW) and I discussed the need to document stories. What we wanted to produce were materials to help establish and maintain dialogue about GBV in Kenyan society and to tell the stories that would have remained untold. We also wanted recognition of the fact that GBV does not just happen during times of national crisis but that it is an unfortunate reality in the daily lives of many Kenyans.

As the partnership between GIZ and Nairobi Women's Hospital expanded, the idea of the publication of a book on GBV was born. It felt like a good alternative to a dry NGO-type report, presented in a hotel seminar room to a small group of people already working around the issue. In other words "preaching to the converted". While dialogue about GBV in Kenya and the international community mostly happens through experts, ministerial and donor bureaucrats, we felt that we needed to capture the voices of those affected, their families and their communities. We also wanted to give a platform to people trying to help those affected to overcome the physical, social, economic and structural problems associated with GBV.

But, speaking, even when it embarrassed me,
also slowly freed me from the shame I felt.
The more I struggled to speak, the less power
the rape, and its aftermath, seemed to have over me."
Nancy Raine, After Silence: Rape and
My Journey Back, 1998

For some contributors, such as Khadija, Rhoda, Samuel and Hassan, the book allowed them to speak about their experiences, knowing that their words would be heard and this in itself would become a "therapeutic project". The testimonies in this book capture not only the facts but also the emotions, which the (mostly nightmarish) facts generate. In stories such as Njeri's and Tina's, we hear their pain, the agony of coping and the struggle to heal.

Photographs, which run throughout the book, give faces to the voices and place the testimonies in the scenes where they took place in daily lives of Kenyans.

Who is the book meant for?

"When you live in the shadow of insanity, the appearance of another mind that thinks and talks as yours does is something close to a blessed event."
Robert Pirsig in Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance (1974)

This book is meant for people whose lives have been affected by gender-based violence, decision makers, policy makers, opinion leaders, the media, health and social workers, police, development practitioners, members of the judiciary and anyone who is interested in understanding the dynamics of gender based violence and how it impacts on our lives. We are confident that it will help people affected by gender-based violence to heal and take charge of their lives and we believe they will benefit and draw hope from the sincere testimonies that are shared here.

By including the voices of people engaged in mitigating and preventing GBV in Kenya, from the individual to societal level, we hope the book will also be understood as testimonies from a society that has committed itself to promoting and respecting the rights of all Kenyans as enshrined in the new constitution promulgated in 2010. Kenya is experiencing a transformation in its governance structure; a process that is not without some pain or some defeats along the way but is a push in the right direction. Within this change, the stories in this book of Honorable Esther Murugi Mathenge, Dr Nduku Kilonzo, Njoki Ndung'u, Dr Sam Thenya and Les Baillie highlight examples of people in government, NGOs and the private sector taking advantage of Kenya's recent strides to bring GBV and its consequences into the public light.

Collecting the Voices

Interviews were carried out in many different settings; under the shade of trees, in people's homes, workplaces and in safe spaces provided by organizations such as FIDA Kenya (Federation of Women Lawyers – Kenya), SOLWODI (Solidarity With Women in Distress) and GALCK (Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya). With the help of these organizations and others (included in the acknowledgements) and also through personal and professional contacts, we found interviewees with compelling experiences who were willing to tell their stories. The preponderance of interviewees from the coast of Kenya is not meant to imply that GBV is more prevalent there. In producing such a book, focused on individual stories, we have found it impossible to reflect all forms of gender-based violence or to cover all the corners of Kenya. However, we believe that the stories presented will resonate with both a Kenyan and international audience.

Each person interviewed gave written consent to take part in the project as well as a written statement regarding the extent to which his or her identity would be revealed. In putting the book together, GIZ and GVRC has taken every effort to be ethical in its presentation of survivors whilst recognizing the need to present the realities of gender based violence in Kenya.

How this book should (not) be read

This book will - as we hope - be read in Kenya and other countries in Africa as well as the rest of the world including countries of the 'North' and 'West'. However, we feel that a word of caution is necessary, particularly to our readers in the 'North' and 'West' of the planet to prevent the stories from being perceived as 'tales from the dark continent'. While we believe that GBV is related to underdevelopment, it is not a particular problem of so-called developing countries. GBV is, unfortunately, present in all societies. The ways GBV occurs, its magnitude and its effects on victims and their families are closely related to the political, social and cultural patterns of the society. Reading about GBV in Africa, the challenge to the reader from the North and the West will be not to fall into the trap of 'dark continent' stereotypes.

The Ugandan feminist lawyer and academic, Sylvia Tamale, recently described the effects of prejudices when looking at (African) sexualities from a European perspective:

"Beginning with the first contact with African communities, researchers from the global north maintained voyeuristic, ethno-pornographic obsession with what they perceived as exotic (rich, perverse) African sexual cultures…" As they "… set out…. to explore and study the sexual artifacts and traditions of Africans, African culture and sexuality were always framed as different…. and inferior to those of the west…. The standard approach was to view these sexual cultures as primitive, bizarre and dangerous and apply a knee-jerk reflex to "fix" them."
From African Sexualities, A Reader (2011)

GBV in Africa should not be understood as an "exotic" manifestation of an alien culture but as a symptom of poor economic/social development, poor governance and poor functioning of state organizations and other structures. Economic and social development affects GBV in two ways: one relates to the magnitude and causes of GBV, the second to the way the state and society deal with the problem. Colonial heritages, poverty, insecurity, tribal conflicts and high level of gender-injustice all contribute to its high prevalence. Poor governance, poorly performing public institutions, a lack of capacity to enforce the rule of law all lead to the culture of impunity that often characterizes a country's response to the problem.

We hope that our readers can go beyond the descriptions of violence in this book. Recent changes in Kenya, as outlined in the book, are very encouraging. These changes concern the passing of laws and of the constitution, all aiming to bring an end to impunity and gender-based discrimination. There is also a drive to develop committed leaders and professionals who work to change the face of the country and bring an end to violence.

Seeds of Hope

This book carries deep and heavy stories of pain, fear, shame, anger, doubt, emptiness, hopelessness and misery caused by GBV. Out of the gloom, some of the testimonies break into hope as men, women, children, parents, doctors, nurses, judges, communities, leaders, politicians, police officers, lawyers and elders work against the odds to mitigate GBV. The book, and in particular the stories of Hassan, Rawi, Peter, Tina, Violet and Njoroge should serve as a reminder that people who are affected by GBV can heal, move on with their lives and find the strength to help others through their stories, their actions and their courage.

Our deepest desire is that this book will break the silence on stories of violated women, men and children that would otherwise never have been told and develop a basis upon which children, men, women, civil society actors and policy makers can explore, understand and take action against GBV.

No. 1

Defining Gender Based Violence

There is no single definition for the term gender based violence (GBV). Global reports indicate that most violence is towards women and that the perpetrators are men. While women form the bulk of the statistics men and boys have also suffered GBV in different contexts.

Earlier definitions of GBV were geared toward violence against women and girls and in 1993, the first official definition was made. Delegates at the United Nations General Assembly defined violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. The definition further states that violence against women (VAW) is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to the domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women and that VAW is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men (United Nations, 1993).

In 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action expanded the definition to include: Violations of the rights of women in situations of armed conflict, including systematic rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy; forced sterilization, forced abortion, coerced or forced use of contraceptives; pre-natal sex selection and female infanticide. It further highlighted the most vulnerable women to GBV to include the elderly, the displaced, indigenous women, refugees and migrant communities, women living in impoverished rural or remote areas or women in detention (United Nations, 1996).

Many countries have adopted and domesticated these definitions. Kenya has expanded the definition to include violence against men and boys. The Sexual Offences Act No. 3 that was revised in 2007 has captured these definitions and also recognizes males as victims of GBV. For GBV we use the pragmatic definition of 'a range of acts of violence committed against females because they are females and against males because they are males.'

No. 2

Statistics on Gender Based Violence *from WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women: Initial Results on Prevalence, Health Outcomes and Women's Responses. WHO. Geneva, Switzerland, 2005.*

- *Most violence towards women is committed by an intimate partner*
- *Physical violence towards women by their intimate partners ranged from 13% in Japan to as high as 61% in Peru while the other countries fell within 23-49%*
- *Prevalence of sexual violence by intimate partners ranged from 6% in Japan, Serbia and Montenegro to as high as 59% in Ethiopia, with the other countries falling within 10-50%*
- *Other forms of GBV where women reported abusive and humiliating acts including threats by their partners, ranged from 20-70% of women across the different countries*
- *Most cases of GBV go unreported: between 55-95% of women had never sought any help from formal services or supportive structures within the community*

No. 3

Statistics on Gender Based Violence in Kenya *from Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), 2010. 2009 Kenya Population and Housing Census*

- *most violence is perpetrated in familial relationships where the perpetrator is known to the victim.*
- *In Kenya, 45% per cent of women between the ages 15-49 have experienced either physical or sexual violence.*
- *One in five Kenyan women (21%) has experienced sexual violence*
- *Strangers account for only 6% of GBV in Kenya*

No. 4

Forms of Violence

Defining different forms of violence is challenging. According to a WHO Report on Violence and Health (Krug et.al, 2002), defining violence encompasses a wide range of acts that include threats and intimidation that go further than physical violence. It also includes consequences of violent behavior such as psychological harm, deprivation and mal-development that compromise the well being of individuals, families and communities.

Types of violence include:

1. *Self-directed violence; which includes suicidal behavior and self-abuse. The nature of this type of violence may vary from physical violence, psychological violence or deprivation and neglect.*
2. *Interpersonal violence; which includes family (child, partner, elder) violence and community violence (acquaintance, stranger). The nature of this type of violence varies from physical, sexual, psychological violence or deprivation and neglect. This type of violence may happen within the confines of the home or outside the home set up.*
3. *Collective violence; which includes social, political and economic violence. The nature of this type of violence varies from physical, sexual, psychological violence or deprivation and neglect. This type of violence may happen between individuals who are unrelated, or who may know or not know each other and in most cases will happen outside the home set up. This type of violence may also be perpetrated by persons within a particular group against another group for political, religious or social reasons.*

Other forms of GBV such as dowry-related violence, preference of girl/boy child and female genital mutilation among others are cultural specific and have also been documented by many scholars as grave violations of human rights.

No. 5

Vulnerability to GBV in Kenya

There are – in addition to the well-established traditional, cultural, social or legal (impunity) patterns, various environmental factors that could explain the high vulnerability of African populations to GBV. Various authors have convincingly pointed on aspects such as the prevalence of poverty; familiarity with violence and emerging democratization and flow of conflict and wars.

All three themes are relevant for Kenya. While GBV is prevalent in all socio-economic groups its effect on poor people is greater; in terms of high vulnerability and exposure and in access to good quality health care and social services once acts of violence have been committed. The familiarity of violence fueled by an environment of widespread impunity is another feature of Kenya's social and political environment. As some of the stories in this book demonstrate, conflict and civil war-like conditions such as the post elections violence have been prime drivers of gender violence in Kenya.

Chapter 1: Hear Our Stories

In this chapter, we invite you to listen to the voices of a number of Kenyans from very different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds who have suffered different forms of gender-based violence. How have they made sense of what happened to them? How has each of them been able to move on? Let them speak. Hear their stories.

Tarmacking – Evelyn

Editor's note: Evelyn is a woman in her 20s from Taita Taveta. She wanted the interview to take place in my office on a Saturday and we met a few months later to talk again at a small cafe in Mombasa. She did not want her real name used.

I have lost count of the number of jobs I have had in the last six years, and as I sit here today I am still jobless. If you could see photos of me back in 2003, you would see how big I was; but now look at me, see how thin I am? You see how the stress of tarmacking, of vibarua, has affected me?

It started when I left my home in Taita Taveta, in April 2004. I had finished secondary school and I came to live with my sister, Grace, in Mombasa. I wanted to go to college but there was no money. My father was very bitter because he had paid for Grace's education up to Form Four followed by teacher training and now here she was already getting married. He said it was like someone coming into your shamba, seeing that the fruits were ripe and helping himself. Because of this, he refused to support my younger sister, Neema, who was in Form One, through secondary school. It was up to me and Grace, who was working in a government primary school, to help Neema through her education.

> You need his help, give it to him.

My first job was in an EPZ (Export Processing Zone) factory but after three months they made us redundant. My next job was in a hoteli where we were paid 120 shillings a day to work from 6am to 10pm. I was a few minutes late one day and the boss told me that he would pay me only 75 shillings. I said I could not work for that little so he told me to leave. I got a short contract promoting Omo in supermarkets for a month and after that I worked in another hoteli where they paid me 3,000 shillings a month but we were given food there; breakfast, lunch and dinner.

One morning I was serving one of our regular customers and I was thinking about all my stress, how to pay the rent, how to pay my sister's school fees and I was crying. He asked me, "Young lady, what is wrong?" His question made me feel worse and I cried even more. He asked for my phone number and I hesitated but told myself, "You need his help, give it to him." He called me a few days later and offered me a job in his grocery shop for 6,000 shillings a month and I agreed.

He was only in his forties but he was retired from the army. We used to go to church together and he became like a father to me. But in less than two months, his wife, who lived in Nairobi, died in a road accident. That was when he changed. He wanted me to be his girlfriend and he bought me a phone, a bible and a watch, and I thought, there is something wrong here. He said he wanted to marry me and that he could pay my sister's college fees. I told him I was grateful for his help but I could not marry him. So he told me, "Evelyn, you have refused to marry me so I am packing everything up in Mombasa and I am going back home. I will leave you with the shop and I will come to check on it from time to time."

That was the last I saw of him. He left the shop in my hands but he did not pay my salary so I took some money to pay Neema's school fees and the rent. In the end I was forced to close the shop as there was no stock, and I went back to the EPZ. We made clothes in the factory, but I got sick from the dust and the overhead fan and after two years I felt too ill to continue. I moved to a cleaning company but my supervisor wanted me to be his girlfriend and I refused, so he piled all the work on to me to make me suffer, so I left.

I was stressed, I could not pay the rent and I could not pay Neema's fees, so I called my friend, Jonathon, who is from Taveta too. He is married with three children and he has a kind heart. I explained my problems to him and he told me he had a friend in Voi who had many contacts with people in the tourist hotels. We went to Voi and I gave his friend, Rafa, my CV and letters from previous employers and Rafa told me he would call if he heard of anything.

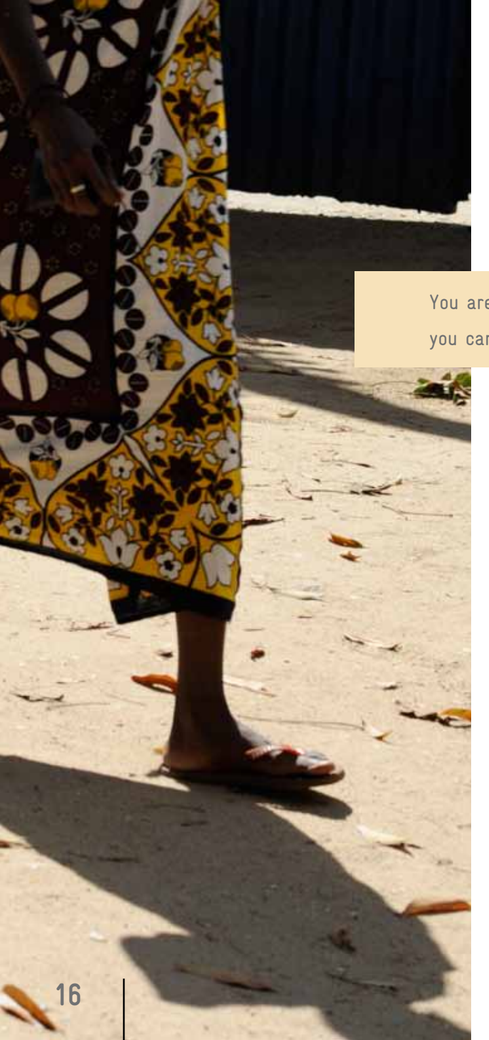
About a month later, Rafa called me at around 8pm one evening, and told me I should report to Voi the next day, Saturday. My sister, Grace gave me 300 shillings and I took a bus to Voi and arrived at midnight. Can you imagine? I felt no fear, I was so desperate; all I wanted was work and money. I did not know Rafa but I was ready to go with him and we went to his house. He lived on his own in a two-bedroom apartment in town; he had separated from his wife. He told me, "This is your room, feel free."

The next morning he took me to the hotel, which was about three kilometres from Voi town. The hotel manager, who was a Taita like me, was a short and smart man, with a big kitambi (pot belly). He told me I could start work that Monday at the reception, for 18,000 shillings a month. When we went back to Rafa's house, he said, "There is no need for you to rent a room here, you can stay here with me." I called Jonathon and he said, "Rafa is my cousin, there is no need to worry." On Monday I was picked up by a car and taken to work. I worked until the end of the month, and was paid 7,000 shillings which I gave to Neema.

> I felt no fear, I was so desperate; all I wanted was work and money.

I would wake up early and make tea for Rafa, and when I came from work in the evening I would cook for him; he was an older man and I served him as if he were my father. He worked for the Municipal Council and always wore a suit but he had a scruffy beard and was always smoking cigarettes and chewing miraa in the house. But soon, I realised he had started to think about me in a different way and I became uncomfortable.

In the middle of the next month, the hotel manager called me to his office and said, "Evelyn, we have helped you and you need to pay us back." I told him, "Please wait until the end of the month and I will give you your 'asante' then." That evening, Rafa called and told me to come to a hoteli in town. It was one of the nicer hotels but I did not feel good, I felt scared. When I arrived, Rafa was sitting with the hotel manager and he bought me a soda. The manager said, "We have helped you, Evelyn, and now we can see that you are becoming independent and we want our pay." I told him, "You are just repeating the same thing you said in the office today. What did I tell you after you asked such a question?" He said,



"You said we should wait." Then Rafa gave me a look that I could not understand; I could feel there was a game going on that made no sense to me. I went home and I went into my room. The door had a key, and I was thinking, this man, Rafa, now he could do anything to me, so I locked the door.

> You are there, you have your body;
> you can pay through your body.

The next day I was sent to Mombasa to take the hotel receipt machine which had broken down, for repair. I was told it would take a week to repair so the hotel manager told me to stay in Mombasa until the machine was repaired. One night I received a call and it was Rafa, and he said, "Come into town to meet us." They were both there and they said, "Evelyn, do you remember what we said? We helped you and we want our pay. It is not a must to use money; you can also pay us through anything you can offer." "Through anything?" I asked, and the manager said, "You are there, you have your body; you can pay us through your body." "Eh," I told him, "Look at how old you are! Yes, I struggled to get that job but do you think I can sacrifice my body for that job?"

They showed me a receipt for a lodging in Bamburi, a few kilometres from Mombasa town. They told me, "This is the lodging where we will go. Take the receipt, you can go first and we will meet you there." I started crying and I stood up and left.

When I took the receipt machine back to the hotel in Voi, the manager called me to his office and told me that my services were no longer needed. I asked him, "Please, tell me what my mistake was?" He said, "Just pack and go." I asked him about my dues and he said, "Where is the letter that shows you were given a job here? I do not want to see your face in this hotel again." I left and walked the three kilometres back to Voi. I tried to get back into the house but Rafa refused to pick my calls and I could not get in. I called Jonathon in Mombasa who called Rafa, and he eventually opened the door. He just stood there with a towel wrapped around his waist and he did not even greet me. I went into my room, packed my things and left for Mombasa without saying goodbye.

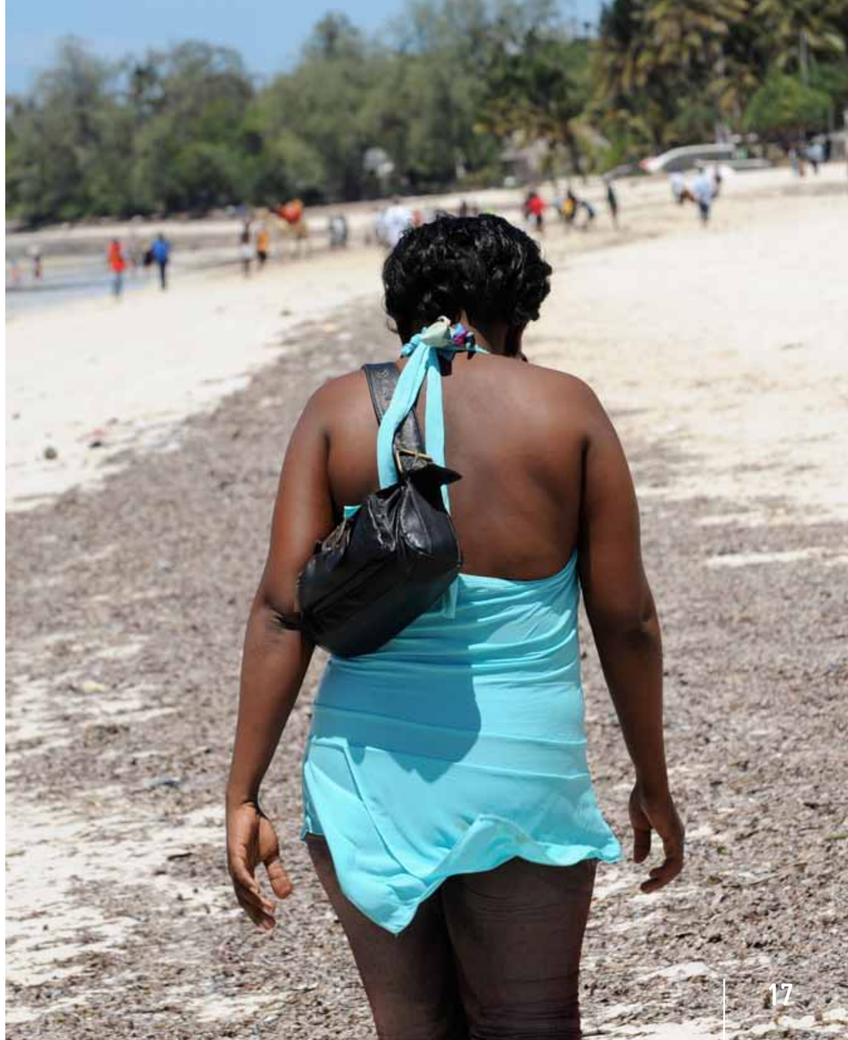
It has been six months since then and I have not had another job, but I am trying to start my own business. My idea is to buy mitumba (second hand clothes) from the go downs in town and then have a stall at Kongowea. So I am looking for capital, and then I will have my stall and I will be much better off.

You Can Do Better Work Than That - Tina

Editor's note: Tina was born in Machakos but moved to Mombasa with her mother and sister. She is a sex worker and I met her through SOLWODI, a local NGO working with vulnerable women and girls. We talked at SOLWODI's small office in Mtwapa. She granted written permission for her first name to be used.

When we were growing up in Machakos we hardly saw our father. He would finish work, go drinking and come home drunk, or sometimes he wouldn't come home at all. If we saw him it was just by chance; you know some fathers are just like that. My mother really suffered. She had nine daughters and she told me that one time, my father said to her, "Why are you giving birth to prostitutes? I want a son. If you get pregnant again and give birth to another prostitute, I will kill you. Your people will have to come and take your body away."

One night, my mother decided to run away. She knew she had to take me and my sister with her because we were still young, 10 and 12, and she knew that if she left us, we would suffer too much in that home. She came to Mombasa and found work in a shoe factory. She tried to pay our school fees but she couldn't manage; my sister would go to school for one term and then I would go the next. When I was 15, I decided I should get a job to help my mother rather than stay in school and get half an education. I became a maid for a woman who lived in a Swahili house.



Most of the neighbours were girls and I admired them and their clothes, and I thought to myself, what do they do to get these nice things? They told me they go to work at the beach hotels, looking for wazungu. I started to wash their clothes so I could get a bit of extra money and one day they said to me, "A nice girl like you, you're working in someone's house; you can do better work than that." So on the weekends I started going to the public beach with those girls and they taught me how to get a man and after some time I knew what I was doing, so the girls told me you can go by yourself now.

I would go to a bar, get a cigarette and look for a mzungu who was smoking, go up to him and say, "Excuse me, hello, can you help me with a light, please?" And then I would ask, "Are you alone? Is your wife around? Or can I come and sit here?" If he said, "No problem, sit down," I would sit and ask, "Where do you come from?" and we would go on from there. Every weekend I went to the bars and that's when I started knowing about money.

I got to know my work and I got a German man who loved me very much and I got pregnant by him when I was 19. He had a wife back in Germany but they didn't have children. I had my daughter and he wanted to take her back to Germany, but his wife told him if he went back with the baby, she would poison it, so my daughter stayed here with me. The German came back once a year, in June and July, and he sent me money every month and told me I shouldn't go to the beach anymore, so I calmed down and opened a hair salon. I said to myself, let me get a steady boyfriend now, an African boyfriend.

My boyfriend, Moses, also worked at the beach, but our main problem was that he wanted me to have his baby. I told him that I couldn't have his child because if the mzungu came back and found me pregnant, he would stop supporting me. But Moses' family were saying to him, "Your girlfriend is a prostitute, you don't have a wife, you don't have a child; you should find yourself a young girl to marry." He told them, "I love that prostitute you're talking about," but he had a lot of pressure from his home and he started pressurising me too. One time I had a very heavy period for two weeks, and Moses became convinced that I had got rid of the baby, and he went into a rage. He went to my salon – he had made a copy of my key without me knowing – and he broke everything up, the chairs, the equipment, he mixed up all my chemicals together, ruined everything, everything, and then he poured some kerosene over the floor and set it on fire. I had no idea he had done this when he came to our place later that day. He was drunk, very drunk, and he hit me in the face. He was saying, "You, you're a prostitute, you're a dog. A prostitute is just a prostitute," and he hit me pap on the mouth as opposed to in the mouth. He was wearing a ring and it split my lip open. He ripped my earring out and part of my ear came off. I screamed but no one came. He got a belt, and you know the metal part? He hit me and hit me with it until my skin was broken on my back. He kicked me in the stomach and I was screaming, "He's going to kill me!" Luckily a neighbour broke down the door and my boyfriend ran out.

> But can you really be so jealous that you hit someone and they have to go to hospital? No, that's just stupidity.

Later, I found he had also taken some of my things: jewellery from the mzungu and my money for stock for the salon. I went to the police to have him arrested. They wrote a letter and we went to his home, but his family told us he had gone to South Coast, to Ukunda, but they didn't know where in Ukunda. The police told me that if I found him, I should let them know and they would go and arrest him. He had left all his things here, but he knew that if he came back for them the police would arrest him. But even that police officer I talked to was not really going to help me; he just wanted to seduce me. He would tell me, "You come, let's go have nyama choma and then we can go to Ukunda together to look for him." So I said to myself, this case, heh, I can't see where it will go, so it's better I just leave it. I didn't follow it up again. My friends asked me why I wasn't following it up and I said, "Let me just leave it. I have forgiven him, let me move on."

I don't know why my boyfriend did this, but I think it was just stupidity and jealousy. The men who look for wazungu don't get as much as the women. We are given more money by the men and our boyfriends feel jealous. But can you really be so jealous that you hit someone and they have to go to hospital? No, that's just stupidity. You can ask a man, "Why do you hit your wife? There's no need to hit her, just leave her alone," and he will reply, "Hey, I've paid the dowry; I can do what I like."

I grew up through being with that boyfriend and now I stay on my own. I started to buy bras, perfumes and panties and I would go door-to-door selling these things. I am older now, I'm tired, tired of the work I was doing, and I don't want a boyfriend after my experience. I'm grateful for my business because I get enough money to pay my rent and to buy more stock, and if a sudden trip comes up, like to go to Malindi or Nairobi, I have enough money to go. Sometimes on the weekend I take myself out. I call my friends, I say, "Let's meet up," and we go out, we tell stories. If I get a man while we are out, I tell him, "Let's go, but with a condom, and it's not free! No, no, no, even if it's 1,000 shillings, give me, or 500, give me, but it's not for free."

I couldn't tell the mzungu, the father of my daughter, about the attack because I had to keep it a secret from him that I had a boyfriend. If he had known, he would have stopped supporting my daughter. He eventually stopped helping us when my daughter turned 18 because he said she was an adult now. When my daughter grew up – she's 22 now – I told her about my life history, and she felt so ashamed because she had thought I worked in hotels. She said she would never come back to Mombasa. I told her I didn't do this work because I wanted to or because I liked it. I said, "I'm grateful to God because at least your father helped out and made sure that you could go to school and get an education."

She went to college, worked hard, she did modelling, learnt French and she can drive. She works in Sudan now, with an international organisation. I don't quite understand what she does, but when she comes to Kenya she stays in Nairobi, she doesn't want to come to Mombasa. I've told her, "Don't worry about me; what I get from my small business is okay for me. If you feel you want to give me something small, you can, but don't feel that every month you have to send me something, no. Be very careful with your life, I don't want you to have to do the work I have done."

Can I Really Change Anyone? – Maryam Abdi

Editor's note: I met Maryam at her home in central Nairobi for the interview. She is a Kenyan Somali woman and activist working to see FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) abandoned completely.

One day I was in the office at around 5pm when I received a phone call from my sister and she said to me, "Guess what, Maryam? Today we did sunna on my granddaughter." I sat down and cried because here I was trying to educate people on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), from the grass roots to the national policy level, running around, wanting my community to understand that FGM has to be abandoned, and here was my sister, right in my back yard, doing it to her granddaughters. I asked myself, "Who am I cheating? Can I really change anyone? My family have not changed after all these years of talking to them, and my sister still thinks she has done something so nice that she calls to tell me." I was so hurt that I started to write this poem. I called it simply, 'The Cut'.

THE CUT

I was only six years old
when they led me to the bush, to my slaughterhouse.
Too young to know what it all entailed,
I walked lazily towards the waiting women.
Deep within me was the desire to be cut,
as pain was my destiny;
it is the burden of femininity,
so I was told.
Still, I was scared to death . . .
but I was not to raise an alarm.
The women talked in low tones,
each trying to do her tasks the best.
There was the torso holder;
she had to be strong to hold you down.
Legs and hands each had their own woman,
who needed to know her task
lest you free yourself and flee for life.
The cutting began with the eldest girl
and on went the list.
Known to be timid, I was the last among the six.
I shivered and shook all over;
butterflies beat madly in my stomach.
I wanted to vomit, the waiting was long,
the expectation of pain too sharp,
but I had to wait my turn.
My heart pounded, my ears blocked,
the only sound I understood
was the wails from the girls,
for that was my destiny as well.
Finally it was my turn, and one of the women
winked at me:
Come here, girl, she said, smiling unkindly.
You won't be the first nor the last,
but you have only this once to prove you are brave!
She stripped me naked. I got goose pimples.
A cold wind blew, and it sent warning signs
all over me. I choked, and my head
went round in circles as I was led.
Obediently, I sat between the legs of the woman
who would hold my upper abdomen,
and each of the other four women grasped my legs
and hands.
I was stretched apart and each limb firmly held.
And under the shade of a tree . . .
The cutter begun her work . . .
the pain . . . is so vivid to this day,
decades after it was done.
God, it was awful!
I cried and wailed until I could cry no more.
My voice grew hoarse, and the cries could not come out,
I wriggled as the excruciating pain ate into my
tender flesh.
Hold her down! cried the cursed cutter,
and the biggest female jumbo sat on my chest.
I could not breathe, but there was nobody
to listen to me.
Then my cries died down, and everything was dark.
As I drifted, I could hear the women laughing,
joking at my cowardice.
It must have been hours later when I woke up
to the most horrendous reality.
The agonizing pain was unbearable!
It was eating into me; every inch of my girlish body
was aching.
The women kept exchanging glances
and talked loudly of how I would go down in history,
to be such a coward, until I fainted in the process.
Allahu Akbar! they exclaimed as they criticized me.
I looked down at myself and got a slap across my face.
Don't look, you coward, came the cutter's words,
then she ordered the women to pour hot sand on my
cut genitals.
My precious blood gushed out and foamed.
Open up, snarled the jumbo woman, as she poured
the sand on me.
Nothing they did eased the pain.
Ha! How will you give birth? taunted the one with
the smile.
I was shaking and biting my lower lip.
I kept moving front, back, and sideways as I writhed
in pain.
This one will just shame me! cried the cutter.
Look how far she has moved, how will she heal?
My sister was embarrassed, but I could see pain in
her eyes . . .
maybe she was recalling her own ordeal.
She pulled me back quickly to the shed.
The blood oozed and flowed. Scavenger birds
were moving in circles and perching on nearby trees.
Ish ish, the women shooed the birds.
All this time the pain kept coming in waves,
each wave more pronounced than the one before it.
The women stood us up but warned us not to move
our legs apart.
They scrubbed the bloody sand off our thighs and
small buttocks,
then sat us back down.
A hole was dug,
malmal, the stick herb, was pounded;
the ropes for tying our legs were ready.
Charcoal was brought and put in the hole,
where there was dried donkey waste and many herbs
– these were the cutter's paraphernalia.
The herbs were placed on the charcoal,
and we were ordered to sit on the hole.
As I sat with smoke rising around me,
I could hear the blood dropping on the charcoal,
and more smoke rose.

The pain was somehow dwindling but I felt weak
and nauseated.
Maybe she is losing blood? my sister asked worriedly.
No, no. It will stop once I place the herbs, cried the
cutter impatiently.
The malmal was pasted where my severed vaginal
lips had been,
and then I was tied from my thighs to my toes
with very strong ropes from camel hide.
A long stick was brought and the women took turns
showing us how to walk, sit, and stand.
They told us not to bend or move apart our legs—
this will make you heal faster, they said,
but it was meant to seal up that place.
The drop of the first urine,
more burning than the aftermath of the razor,
passed slowly, bit by bit,
one drop after another,
while lying on my side.
There was no washing, no drying,
and the burning kept on for hours later.
But there was no stool . . .
at least, I don't remember.
For the next month this was my routine.
There was no feeding on anything with oil,
or anything with vegetables or meat.
Only milk and ugali formed my daily ration.
I was given only sips of water:
This avoids "wetting" the wound and delaying heal-
ing, they said.
We would stay in the bush the whole day.
The journey from the bush back home began around
four and ended sometimes at seven.
All this time we had to face the heat
and bare-footedly slide towards home . . .
with no water, of course.

We were not to bend if a thorn stuck us,
never to call for help loudly
as this would "open" us up and the cutter
would be called again.
Everything was about scary dos and don'ts.
I stayed on with the other five
for the next four weeks. None of us bathed;
lice developed between the ropes and our skin,
biting and itching the whole day and night.
There was no way to remove them,
at least not until we healed.
The river was only a kilometre away.
Every morning the breeze carried the sweet scent of
its waters to us,
making our thirst more real.
The day the cutter was called back
each of us shivered and prayed silently,
each hoping we had healed and there would be no
cutting again.
Thank God we were all done
except one unlucky girl
who had to undergo it all again,
and took months to heal.
Our heads were shaved clean.
The ropes untied, lice dropped at last.
We were showered and oiled,
but most important was the drinking of water.
I drank until my stomach was full,
but the mouth and throat yearned for more.
It was over.
All over my thighs were marks from the ropes,
dotted with patches from the lice wounds.
Now I was to look after myself,
to ensure that everything remained intact
*until the day I married.**

** This poem was first published in the anthology, Beyond the Dance: Voices of Women on Female Genital Mutilation, Violet Barungi and Hilda Twongyeirwe, eds, Femrite: Uganda Women Writers Association, 2009. www.femriteug.org*

It was only when I was around 19, in my first year at Moi University in Eldoret, that I realised that not all girls underwent FGM. We were three Somali girls and there were several Muslim girls from different communities in the same university, and when the three of us got our periods we were bedridden and missed classes because of very painful cramps and longer periods than others. One day, one of the other Muslim girls asked me, "Maryam, why is it that you guys get so sick when you get your periods?" Of course, the answer was because of 'circumcision' and she was like, "WHAT? You mean you people are circumcised?" and I was like, "WHAT? You mean you people are not circumcised?" She said, "Of course not, circumcision is done by savages," and I was like, "NO! Circumcision is done by Muslims." If I had not met that girl I would not be where I am today because that discussion made me want to know who was right; where the truth lay.

That was in the early 1990s when there was not much information, there was no access to the Internet at that time, and I just grappled with the thought in my mind. And then in 1995, after the Beijing UN World Conference on Women, I came across a document that said that FGM is only sunna in Islam, which meant that it is an optional act. If you did it you would get blessings, but if you did not do it you would not get punished. That got me thinking, who has ever punished me for not praying at 10 o'clock in the morning, which is optional? Who has ever punished me for not doing the optional fasting on Monday and Thursday? So I wondered, why did my people do something so harmful to me? That is when, in my own small way, I started telling people that FGM is not the way, it is not Islamic, you do not have to do it.

But I still did not have enough information on it until 2006, when I started working with the Population Council. I wanted to educate the community in North Eastern Province on FGM and my colleagues at the Council asked me what I thought the best approach would be. I told them we have to give this programme an Islamic face and provide religious teachings that counter FGM. I sent word to our offices in Egypt and Sudan and I got some materials from them. I also discussed with religious scholars here in Kenya what was happening to girls in the name of Islam. These scholars did not even know that FGM was being done in a Muslim community as large as the one in North Eastern Kenya, where almost everyone is a Muslim and 98% of the girls are cut, and in the worst form, and it is attributed to Islam. This is when I found out that it was a misinterpretation of Arabic terms and a misunderstanding of some religious texts that made people believe there was a religious justification for FGM.

When we talk about FGM we know the obvious: the bleeding, the infections, the organs that have been removed, the mutilation. But in my poem, I wanted to get across the taunting and ridicule that the young girl goes through, and the psychological brainwashing, whereby it is upon her to show that she can withstand the ordeal. I am not a psychologist, but I think this was one way the women who do the cutting stop themselves from feeling guilty, so that they do not see themselves as perpetrators of such a crime.

My struggle to fight FGM has not been easy. There is one relative of mine who says she cannot understand how someone can wake up in the morning, shower, have breakfast, get dressed and go out, to do what? To talk about the clitoris. And when she says this she holds her index finger and her thumb pinched together, to show how small and insignificant the clitoris is. One day, I had lots of girls in my house who had come for the holidays and I showed them a CD on my lap top, and she commented, "Huh, so this is what she goes running around with, talking to men, whether they are sheikhs or whoever; all she does is open up 'hiki kitabu' (this book)," implying that the laptop is the vagina. And she went on, "Have you ever seen a woman who is not cut delivering a baby? Her clitoris looks like the fangs of a snake." The girls laughed.

I just told them, "Hey, Allah in the Quran says He created man in the best form. Are you now questioning His creation? Are you cleverer than Him? You have to seek forgiveness because you are ridiculing the creation of Allah." That really deflated them. That was the only weapon that I had, and that is why I truly believe that the Islamic argument can bring about a big change in the community. It can really make everyone see just how sinful FGM is, once they know that if they do it, they have blood on their hands, they are causing pain and cutting organs and all this is wrong in Islam.

There is a lot of work going on in Kenya trying to realise our goal of FGM being abandoned completely. One of the things we are trying to do is to get FGM as an issue in the school curriculum and include it in the training of all arms of government – the police, health care providers, teachers, etc. It is something we are working on with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Gender, which houses the secretariat on FGM, because everyone needs to be sensitised. But any curriculum on FGM cannot be one-size-fits-all. For instance, if there is a class with Muslims in it, teachers must be trained to bring in the issue of religion. If, for example, in the class there are Maasai, the teacher must bring in the issue of transition from childhood to adulthood; you can't miss that out. If you have a class with Kisiis, you cannot ignore the issue of identity – does FGM make you a Kisii? At the end of the day you will be a Kisii, cut or uncut.

We still have a long way to go but I have hope because many young people are growing up in urban centres and they are getting an education, which makes them receptive to the arguments for the abandonment of FGM. An educated girl is likely to marry an educated boy, so if we give them the information to change, both the young men and the young women, right from when they are in upper primary and secondary, it will help in our efforts towards ending FGM.

After more than 12 years of fighting against FGM, I am convinced that crimes such as FGM, forced marriages and violence against women will only stop if the social status of women in these societies improves. To achieve this, women need better paid and sustainable jobs. A woman who has her own income is independent; she can decide for herself what is best for her daughters and will be less likely to succumb to social pressures. African women have so much strength and contribute so much to the potential of their continent. It is time for their contribution to be recognized and supported."

Waris Dirie, Somali-born, former international model, author of the best-selling autobiography, "Desert Flower: The Extraordinary Journey of a Desert Nomad", Harper Perennial, New York, 1999, and founder of the Desert Flower Foundation www.desertflowerfoundation.org

I Can't Even Tell You Why I Loved Him – Rhoda

Editor's note: Rhoda was interviewed by Margaret Ogola at Rhoda's home in Karatina. Margaret was introduced to her by GIZ and GVRC, which had assisted Rhoda. Rhoda granted written permission for her real name to be used.

I am 32 years old, I was born in Karatina in Nyeri county and I went to school up to Standard 8. I used to stay with my sister and knit sweaters; that was my work. On my way home from work I would see David, a mechanic in town, and we started to sit and talk and get to know each other. We did this for two years and I loved him so much but I can't even tell you why I loved him, maybe it was because he would tell me he loved me so much too.

We had a child, Stephen, and it was when I was pregnant with our daughter that we started to have problems. David would not come home until around midnight, and if I asked him where he had been, he would hit me and he wouldn't answer. I knew the women he was going with, they were the sex workers in Karatina. One time I threatened him, I told him I would find another man, and after that he said he wouldn't do it again. But of course he did. There was one time, about four months before he attacked me, when I decided to leave. I went back to my mother's place because I was tired of his infidelity and of being hit by him. After two days, he came to my mother's place and begged for forgiveness. I knew we had a lot of problems but I still loved him and I thought he could change so I went back.

On 9th September, 2008, he came back home having been away, out sleeping somewhere else, and I said to him, "Baba Stephen, you've started to sleep outside with other women again?" He raised his voice – he had such a hot temper – and he said he hadn't been doing anything wrong; he had been with friends, not with a woman, and that he was just doing business. I kept quiet for a while and then I said, "If you're going with women again, I can't sleep with you because you'll bring diseases back into this house." We were both angry with each other and we hadn't resolved the problem by the time we went to sleep. He was a quiet man and the problem with the quiet ones is you can't tell what they're thinking or what they might do. I think it was after this quarrel that he must have started thinking and planning what he was going to do to me.

Two days later, after being in town with my sister, I came back home. My children came back from school and I gave them tea and bread, and afterwards I said I would rest a little before I started preparing the meal for my husband. It was about 6.30pm when my husband came home, and he found the children there in the sitting room. He said to Stephen, "Can you go out and buy me a phone card?" I heard this from our bedroom because I wasn't asleep, I was just resting. My husband gave him 100 shillings and Stephen left and my husband closed the door behind him. I didn't know he had our panga (machete) and he came into our bedroom, to where I was lying on

I knew we had a lot of problems but I still loved him and I thought he could change so I went back.

the bed, and he hit me with the panga on the head, pwah! He didn't say anything. I got up, got hold of the panga and I said, "Ghaii, Baba Stephen, what have I done? If I have done something wrong, forgive me." But he didn't listen to me, he got some material and stuffed it into my mouth to silence me, and then he kept attacking me. I tried to cover my head, but he cut my head and my arms and then he just left, closing the door behind him. My daughter, Jacinta, was there and she was shouting at him, "Stop cutting mama, she's bleeding," but he didn't listen to her.

When he left, I managed to get myself out of the bedroom and into the sitting room, but I found the front door was locked. My son came back just as my husband was leaving the house, and David told him, "I can't let you into the house, go down there and sit where the rubbish is." My husband took his shoes in his hand and started to walk towards the main road. Stephen was left crying outside the house, but he didn't see me in the house. I sat down and said, "Jacinta," and then I was quiet. Jacinta had climbed up on the surface where I prepare food and she was crying and screaming, but a neighbour told her, "You, be quiet, child, your mother will be home soon." Jacinta said, "No, come, my father has eaten the meat of my mother." She was only four years old, and she had no other way of describing what she had seen.

The neighbour came and opened the window and saw me and she fainted. Some other people who were around came to see what was happening. By that time I wasn't feeling anything, I was just there, I didn't know what was going on, but they knocked the front door down and found me on the floor and they took me to the hospital in Karatina. From there, at around 2am, I was transferred to the the provincial hospital in Nyeri. I didn't know anything

for four days, I was unconscious, but the people at the hospital treated me very well. When I came round, I asked them, "Where is my husband? Why has he not come to see how I am?"

My husband had disappeared, no one knew where he was, but after six days he went to the police and told them that he had heard on the TV and the radio that he had cut me, and he was coming to find out why they were looking for him when he hadn't done anything. He was immediately arrested by the police. The MP for Nyeri, Esther Murugi, got involved. She came to the hospital and talked to the doctor and then to FIDA (The Federation of Women Lawyers), and she got me taken to Nairobi Women's Hospital where I stayed for about two and a half months. I had both my arms amputated and I had to have an operation on my head. When my children came to visit me in the hospital, they were so confused because they knew me as someone with arms and now I had no arms. My daughter said, "No, this is not my mother."

My son has asked me many questions that I just can't answer like, "Where was our father when he wasn't coming back to sleep at home? Why did our father try to kill you?" I just keep quiet. The case went to court and my husband is serving a life sentence. People have asked him why he did it and he says he has no idea, he doesn't know. What I do know is that I can't think about marrying again – when a man you loved tried to kill you, you can't think about a man again.

I now depend on my mother and I hope we can raise funds for me to get artificial limbs so that I can look after my children. At the moment, Jacinta stays with my sister and Stephen with a friend, and I feel very depressed because I don't have the money to support them.

I Thought We Were Happy Together - Samuel

Editor's note: I interviewed Samuel at the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya (GALCK) Community Centre in Nairobi, where he works as a volunteer. If he gets the funds he plans to go back to college next year to continue with his studies. He granted written permission for his first name to be used..

My name is Samuel, I'm 29 years old and I was born in Narok. My parents are from different tribes: my father is Maasai and my mother is Kikuyu. I grew up as a normal child, but when I was ten I discovered that I was different, that I had feelings for boys, not for girls. I thought, "I'm different, who am I? What is happening in my life?" I wondered whether I was the only person who felt this way. I asked myself, "Does God know who I am? Do my parents know this is how I am?" After starting secondary school, I realised there were some other boys like me, and I talked to some people about it and they told me that I was gay. I couldn't disclose this to my parents because it's something shameful according to our African culture; I knew that if I told them I was gay, they would no longer see me as a human being. I remember one boy at school who asked me whether I could be his boyfriend, and I asked him, "What do you mean?" because I was trying to pretend I am not the way I am. But it made me realise, okay, I am not alone in having these feelings.

Just over a year ago, I disclosed that I was gay to my cousin; we were chatting on facebook and I explained to him who I am. I told him I had never told my parents about this and he promised he wouldn't say anything to anyone, but he went against his word and told my brother, who told my dad. Not long after that I went to visit my parents at home, and my dad called me after supper and said, "I need you to tell me everything because I have heard about you." My father is a pastor, and he loved me so much because I served in his church and I used to sing and play the piano in church. I said to him, "What do you mean, Dad? I don't know what you are talking about." He said, "I've been told about you, something to do with men; you sleep with men and I need you to explain it to me." And I didn't deny it, I told him, "Yes, that's me, I don't have any feelings for women, that's who I am." He was furious. He told me, "I don't have such a son," and he tried to kick me and he chased me away and told me never to come back home. My mother tried to talk to him but he wouldn't listen. I came back to Nairobi that day and I stopped going home; I stopped talking to my dad, my brothers, my cousin, all my relatives, and I started living with friends who were of my kind.

But towards the end of the year, my dad called and said, "My son, come home. We love you, and we are no longer going to talk about that thing. We understand you. Let's have Christmas together so we can enjoy it as a family." I told him that I would try to make it, but I was still feeling bitter towards him. A friend of mine persuaded me to take up my dad's offer, saying that we have to forgive our parents because it's a big shock to them and we must try to understand them. So I went home and I sat with my dad and we never talked about it, but we had a good holiday together. Now when I go home they won't talk about it, but I have to draw them closer to me because at the end of the day, I need them as my parents.

I had a boyfriend I met online. We chatted online for over two years before we met each other. Mark was a white guy from the United States, and he came to live in Nairobi to work at a university here. We started living together. My dad was paying my fees for col-

lege but my boyfriend was also supporting me. We had lived together for four months when Mark travelled to London, and when he came back, he called me and said, "I'm at the airport, would you come and pick me up?" As usual, as a boyfriend, I had to go and pick him up. But he was not alone; he was with another man who I thought was just a friend because Mark used to come to our house with so many friends. When we arrived back home, I took his belongings upstairs, and I went to the bathroom to take a bath. As I came out of the bathroom, I met this man who had come with my boyfriend in my bedroom, and I asked him, "What are you doing in my bedroom?" He kept quiet. I insisted, "You have to get out because this is my bedroom," and then Mark came into the room and said, "He's not going out." I said, "Why? What is this?" then I continued, "Look, if you had wanted to chase me away you just had to tell me; to be open with me. You don't have to show me like this. Just say, I don't want you, I'm tired of you, you have to go, I have another boyfriend."

I created drama because I was feeling very hurt; I felt like I wasn't important to him. I tried to push that boy out of my room, and then my boyfriend hit me. I shouted and screamed. He slapped me again and I started bleeding, but I kept fighting with him. Then Mark went to the bed, opened a drawer underneath it and removed a gun. He said, "Samuel, if you are not silent, I will silence you." At that point I ran into the other guest bedroom and he locked me in there, saying, "You are not coming out of there," and he went downstairs. I called the chef who worked in our house on my mobile and asked him to come upstairs and open the door for me. He did, and I rushed out of there and ran away with only the clothes I was wearing.

I still had the key to the house, so I went back a few days later, when Mark had cooled down, and I told him I wanted us to separate. He had never been violent before; he had always been caring towards me, but I think he wanted a change and he couldn't face telling me the truth. He tried to talk to me but I said no, and I took all my belongings and left. Mark kept trying to contact me on the phone and by email but I said no, I want to move on; you just look for someone else.

I didn't take any action. I felt I couldn't because of being gay in Kenya. I was ashamed, I was worried about what my friends would think and I just wanted to move on. I couldn't see how the police would have helped. My boyfriend was a big person and he had contacts and I was just an average Kenyan down there, so I didn't think I could do anything to him. He could easily have bribed the police and there would be no case.

I have thought about it, and I wonder why he did such a thing to me. Where did I go wrong? I thought we were happy together. He could have been open with me, told me, Sam, this is what you are doing that I don't like. If I had made a mistake or wronged him, I would have liked to know. This made me think about relationships more: people in a relationship have to be open with each other and they must communicate; it is so important. You have to know your partner.

Samuel, if you are not silent, I will silence you.

I Want People to Hear My Story – Khadija

Editor's note: Khadija is in her early 30s. We met at the FIDA offices in Mombasa, which she felt was a safe place for us to talk. She is an upper class Asian woman living in Mombasa. Her name and her husband's name have been changed to protect her identity.

We came to Mombasa when I was 11, and having come from Nairobi, my sister and I were the 'hot cakes' in our community apartments because our skins were still light, and before we got used to the Mombasa heat we would flush red like tomatoes. My parents met abroad, at university, and when they got married back in Nairobi, my mum, as a woman, was expected to make a lot of sacrifices, and not to talk too much in front of her in-laws, but they moved to Eldoret and then Zambia, where my father had a very successful import-export business, so they always had some independence away from my dad's family.

I got to know the boy (who I later married) during the August holiday classes where we learnt about our culture. He was in Form Four and I was just starting secondary school and he proposed to me. I was like, "Wow, I wasn't expecting that." I had hotter guys running after me, guys of a high status, while he was from a family that had no class: his mother worked in a shop and his father was a lorry driver. My friends thought I was mad, but I wanted someone to look after me. He protected me from bullies and he was always there for me; every girl wants a man to provide her with security, right? I liked the way he was dedicated to his family and he was charming, but I didn't realise I was falling in love.

I was very close to my dad and he always told me that I had to educate myself first. "If this boy is in your destiny, destiny will bring him to you," he would say. "Give me the A's in your exams first and then I will let you talk to him." But Amir and I spent a lot of time together after school at his place alone, so by the time I sat my Form Four exams, I was already six months pregnant. I couldn't tell my dad; he was a big name in our community and he already had health problems.

After my exams I told my mum, and when I was eight months pregnant she told my dad. He just went silent; he was devastated. Later, he said I had to go to another country to deliver, so I was sent to Tanzania. My father told everyone that we were adopting a child from India. He died of a heart attack just before we came, but we lived that lie; and it wasn't until my son was six or seven that he started to call me 'Ma'. Of course, no one believed the adoption story: my son looked like me and was similar to his father in a lot of ways.

I decided that I had to study for my dad's sake, and so I did my 'A' levels and I went on to the University of Nairobi to study medicine. I was there for three years, but I got pregnant again, and now I was ready to marry Amir. When I told my mother, she said, "You're going to throw your whole life away again?" I didn't listen to her and we had our wedding. It was huge; there were about six hundred guests, and Amir's family paid for everything.

I soon realised that in Nairobi my mind had opened up, while Amir had been living at home with his mother and sister as a mummy's boy. The first thing Amir said was that I had to leave university because his wife couldn't be a doctor; he wouldn't be able to trust me. I said, "Ok, let me sacrifice my education because I want my child to know her father." I gave birth to our daughter in the United Kingdom, and when I got back we moved into a new house. It had eight bedrooms, all en suite, two kitchens and a swimming pool, and I wondered how, in one year, he had got all this money.

Our son came to live with us around that time, and in 2003 I had another baby girl. I asked Amir for money so that I could start saving for the children, but he said, "No, things are not easy at the office; I have so many loans and debts." And then he would add, "You are not praying enough for me." And I tell you, I prayed for that man and I made sure everything was done for him at home. But still, he would come home late, around nine, ten, watch the Indian soap opera he loved, and then go out again, saying, "I'm off to work," and he would come back at about four in the morning. If I complained, I was told to shut my mouth.

He bought cars like Mercedes and Land Cruisers, but the only money I got was for the day-to-day things, for milk, bread, food for the dogs and staff salaries. I started living this very enclosed life; I wasn't allowed to go for coffee with anyone, and he would tell me, "If you invite your girlfriends round for coffee, they are the ones who will steal your husband." He used Islam culture and beliefs to tell me how a wife should be; how she should never question her husband. My life was now totally within that house, all I thought about was things like what time my kids and my husband came home. I became a total zombie.

People on the outside looked at me and said, "Oh my God, she's so lucky: she's got a beautiful house, beautiful cars, she has been given the world!" Amir would tell people, "I've given my wife everything, I love her so much." But he wouldn't take me to social

events and he would come back and say to me, "You're just jealous of me, you don't want to see me happy. You don't want me to grow."

In 2006 he made a new rule: money was not allowed into my hands. He thought I was getting too smart because I questioned his movements, so this was like a punishment. I was told, "Money will now go to the supervisor of the house staff. You give him a list of all the groceries you need." I told him I have to pay my gym fees myself, because I needed to start saving. But every time I asked him for money, he refused.

There were so many changes in him, including in bed; he would come home and try a lot of funny things you wouldn't normally do with your wife. If we had a small fight he would go for my neck or slap me across the face; it was as if he was totally frustrated and wanted to get out of the marriage. He had got too much money too quickly and he wanted the freedom to enjoy it. He told me a couple of times, "Women are flocking to me; I wish I was a bachelor," and I would think he was joking. But there was a time I found a phone hidden in the Mercedes that he had forgotten to switch off, and I saw all these messages from people saying, 'Boss, what kind of girls do you want tonight?' 'We've arranged this and that for you.' Most of the time he was travelling, but when he was at home he didn't want to talk to me. If I wanted to have sex, he would put his hand up and say, "No, don't touch me, I'm not feeling like it." I was frustrated sexually, emotionally, and financially. Then he got more physical: there was a time he slapped me so hard across the face when we were arguing over 200 shillings that my jaw froze for days. And I thought, at 29, do I want to spend the rest of my life like this?

In 2008, he started chucking me out of the house. During Ramadhan that year, I confronted him because I heard he was sleeping with girls, 18 and 19-year-old girls. I was wearing my prayer clothes, and he told me to just get out, so I went to the mosque and slept there for ten days. All these rich Arabs who came to pray saw me there and said, "Oh, you really love God, you're sacrificing your home and family." How could I tell them I didn't have a home to go to? In our culture leaving a marriage to go back to your family is like public suicide.

> The first thing Amir said was that I had to leave university because his wife couldn't be a doctor; he wouldn't be able to trust me.

My older son, who was 13 at that time, told a girl at school that his mother was staying at the mosque. This girl was the daughter of a senior leader of our community and she told her father. He called Amir at midnight and asked him why I was sleeping in a mosque. He told Amir to sort out his marriage problems at home and within five minutes Amir was at the mosque. I thought, wow, all my prayers have been accepted by God. On the way back home, he stopped to get a take-away and he bought one portion of chicken tikka. As he was eating it, he looked up and said, "Do you want some?" I said, "Yeah, I do, I am really hungry," and I thought, how can someone be so selfish?

I survived another year with him, but one time I had to go to Nairobi for an operation and when I got back to Mombasa airport, there was no car to pick me up. I took a taxi and when I got home, the askari said he had been instructed not to allow me in, and to tell me to go to my mother's house. By then my family was experiencing hard times so my mum was living in a two-bedroom apartment, trying to rebuild her life. It wasn't the first time Amir had told me to go, but I was tired of being locked out so I went. I kept calling him like a mad person; I wanted to talk to my kids. I went to the elders from our community and they said, "Sorry, we can't help you, you need to get the arbitrator," but the arbitrator on the board was my husband's friend. When I talked to him, he said, "You're lying, your husband is a gold mine, why would he do this to you? Why are you trying to spoil his name?"

I got my children, Amir didn't fight for them. But they didn't want to leave their luxury life to come to my mum's apartment, where they slept on the floor, and there was no air conditioning, and no cook. My son rebelled, saying, "I wasn't born to live like this."

I didn't realise what emotional trauma I had been through in that marriage, but whenever someone talked about it, tears streamed down my face. In early 2010, I decided I had to get away from Mombasa to deal with it and I went to India, to Delhi, and checked into a hospital for 20 days. I was diagnosed with clinical depression and got a really good therapist there. I started to see that I had lost myself in my love for Amir. I came back to Kenya and continued with the therapy via Skype every day, and now we are in touch about once a month.

Amir has refused to divorce me, and he knows that in Islamic law, if a woman asks for a divorce she cannot get alimony. I got a job as an office clerk, and later I got involved in women's activities in our community and it's made me strong because I meet a lot of great women, international people, including speakers who give motivational talks, such as on building self confidence and leadership skills. I have started writing articles for our local magazine, and I have always wanted to help people and now I'm getting that chance. Also, I went to a marriage law seminar and I met women in my situation; now we share our stories and it helps us all.

> In our culture leaving a marriage to go back to your family is like public suicide.

My life is not a secret anymore; I don't have anything to hide and I want people to hear my story. I have talked to about ten lawyers and they say I have a very strong case, but they all say I also have a very powerful husband and that stops them from taking the case. I haven't given up. I'm still willing to take the risk to fight for maintenance and for my rights because I need to be an example to my daughters and to people in my community.

Chapter 2: I Realised I Would Have to Change

In this chapter, we hear from three people who are working to address some of the issues that drive gender based violence. A former perpetrator who leads men's discussions groups, a young activist calling for safe spaces for men to talk about masculinity and a gay man who works with religious leaders to meet and discuss sexuality and sexual orientation.

No Man Wants to be Seen as a Wimp – Rawi

Rawi is a programme manager with an NGO in Nairobi. I was put in touch with him by TICAH (Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health), another Kenyan NGO that works on sexuality issues. Rawi has been actively involved with TICAH's men's group discussions on violence. We carried out the interview at Rawi's office in Nairobi. He granted written permission for his real name to be used.

I grew up in Eastlands in Nairobi and even now, in my thirties, I live in Eastlands. My father was a responsible parent but I was never very close to him and I resented that. I loved sports; I was an athlete and I played rugby but what I loved most was boxing and I had that ego that made me feel like I had to defend myself. If another man wronged me there was nothing like, I have to forgive him; I would beat him up. My neighbourhood was a place where you always had to be ready to defend yourself.

I believed that good things were always done by men, and I was told, "Behave like a man, be strong like a man." I knew that women were weaklings and that nothing good could come from women. For instance, when I was sitting around with my friends and we saw a vehicle driven by a woman, we would say, "I can't get in that vehicle driven by a woman." My sisters would go straight home from school and wash the dishes and the clothes, but I felt that, as a boy, I could go to the gym and train and come back home later. My father wasn't happy with this and he would tell us that we boys should also do house chores, and that he wanted us to grow up to be responsible. But none of my friends did housework, so I felt my father wasn't right, and my friends would laugh at me if I helped wash the dishes.

After I finished school, I started a business with my girlfriend Rose, we had a boutique shop that sold clothes, shoes and other accessories. Once when I popped into the shop, there was a guy there and I asked Rose, "What is this guy doing here?" She said he had brought some of his stock to the shop. I said, "How does he bring his stock here? This is a joint business between you and I, and you never told me that this guy was coming in. Who is he coming in as? You never consulted me and I never gave you that permission. Why are you doing this?" She was just arrogant, she said, "What do you want me to tell you? This is just business." I said, "Ok fine, if it's just business, but this is my stand; I do not want to see any of his stock in this shop." I told the guy, "You keep off my grounds or I'm really going to beat you up."

> I knew that women were weaklings and that nothing good could come from women.

Rose did not come home that night. The next morning I went to her in the shop and said, "Where were you last night? Are you trying to tell me you can do whatever you want?" And she was still rude to me. I told her, "Okay, today you must come home or you'll regret it." In the evening I went to pick her up from work and since she had been with me for a long time she knew that she must come home.

At home she shouted at me, and I told her, "You know, you cannot shout at me, you must listen to me." On that day I was so violent, I beat her up and told her, "You are not going to work until you agree to be reasonable with me. I'm trying to talk to you and you are being rude, so there is no way that I will let you leave this house." I locked her in and went to work. When I came back in the afternoon she was still rude. Again, I beat her up. The following day she calmed down, we reconciled, but then she went to my father with her face swollen and told him that I had beaten her up. My dad was furious. He came over to my place and said, "Why did you do such a thing? Don't you know that even this lady has parents? Have you ever seen me beating your mother?" My father helped us to reconcile and we stayed together for a while, until we had another disagreement and Rose said we should break up. I told her there was no issue of breaking up and I beat her up. She went to the police and made up a story that I had a gun and had threatened to shoot her. When the police heard that they came for me, about six of them, armed. It was around lunch hour and she came along and greeted me. I patted her back and said, "Hi, Rose," and then she said, "This is the one," and I was completely surrounded. The policemen slapped me and I was handcuffed from behind. I was thinking, "Wah, what is all this? What's happening?" They took me to the police station and I was locked up for about four days. My father went to see the OCPD (Officer Commanding Police Division) and explained that it was just quarrels between his son and the girlfriend, and the OCPD understood and ordered my release. I was still really mad with my girlfriend but my dad pleaded with me to forget about her. Well, I cooled down, we talked and we agreed to split up and I moved on.

When it came to women, I felt that, as a man, I was always right. It is about masculinity; I have to show the woman that that we are not equals, I am stronger. These are the attitudes we shared with my peers, we would say, 'Ah, look at this guy, he's listening to what his girlfriend is telling him, he's a weakling."

I realised I would have to change if I wanted my dream of a nuclear family, and that it wasn't going to be easy; I would have to be swallow my pride and control my temper

No man wants to be seen as a wimp. In my relationships, even if I wronged a girlfriend and she tried to tell me so, I would say, "No way." Deep down in my heart I knew that I had done something wrong, but I couldn't admit it.

I got another girlfriend, we were cut from the same cloth as she was also violent and we couldn't get along. Eventually we split up and I stayed alone with our son. I was being violent with him too. If he lied to me or didn't complete his homework or if he did anything wrong, I would slap him, punch him, hurl him onto the sofa, cane him. One time I hit him with a plank of wood and he fainted and it really scared me. I was always remorseful afterwards but I couldn't understand why he wouldn't respect me. I eventually shared my problem with my boss who had been a kindergarten teacher, and she asked me, "Why do you want your son to reason like an adult and yet he is still a child?" She gave me a psychology book, 'I'm Ok, You're Ok' by Thomas A. Harris, and it really helped me work on my issues. I realised I would have to change if I wanted my dream of a nuclear family, and that it wasn't going to be easy; I would have to be swallow my pride and control my temper. My boss has listened to me and given me options to help me improve my life, which has really helped and I realise that flying into a rage doesn't solve anything. If I feel I am going to lose my cool, I walk away or turn on my favourite music, and I can't remember the last time I physically fought someone.

The good thing is that my wife, too, is a very cool woman, and she knows that I am hot tempered. When we got together, I told her that she would have to help me with my temper if the marriage was to work. Now I work on the principle that whenever there is a misunderstanding between me and somebody, in one way or the other, I have contributed to the problem, and so I start solving the problem by looking into myself.

I'm now a father of three boys and I'm trying to bring them up in a different way. They go to church, and when they are watching TV they ask me questions, "Dad, why is this like that?" I talk to them nicely and I encourage them to read story books, to be friendly and to broaden their minds. If you come to our house, you will find my wife and I sitting on the sofa together, I'm comfortable, leaning on her, we're watching a movie together and we're happy. But we have worked at this, it doesn't just come. You can't rule with an iron fist; that won't bring you happiness. She is also a human being and you must listen to her, and the moment you do, she will listen to you too, but if you don't want to listen, you will not have peace.

"Gender-based violence is not a tradition, it is behaviour. Some men believe that it is a man's right to beat his wife, but no one has a right to beat his wife."
Phares Ruteere, Secretary General of Njuri Ncheke, the Meru Supreme Council of Elders

Drivers of Violence - Anzetse Were

Editor's note: Anzetse is a young activist and writer who I interviewed in her office in downtown Nairobi. She was keen to contribute to this book. Her book, Drivers of Violence: Male Disempowerment in the African Context* was published in 2008.

I was 23 when I finished my undergraduate degree in Biology and I kept reading accounts in the newspapers of grandfathers raping grand children, fathers raping children, uncles raping three-month-old kids. I could not understand it, partly because a lot of the male role models in my own life were very caring men and I knew that men had a deep capacity to love and protect their families and the people they

What makes a man beat up his wife? And beat up his children? And then continually come back to these same children and wives?

value. I had so many unanswered questions: What makes a man beat up his wife? And beat up his children? And then continually come back to these same children and wives? It did not make sense. There has got to be something that is driving these men to behave this way. I began reading about male issues and masculinity and it became clear that the unique issues and past of African men had not been independently analysed and explored. Most of the analysis on masculinity had been carried out in North America and although there were similar issues, these had not been looked at through the lens of African masculinity.

** Drivers of Violence, Anzetse Were, Mvule Africa Publishers, Nairobi, 2008*

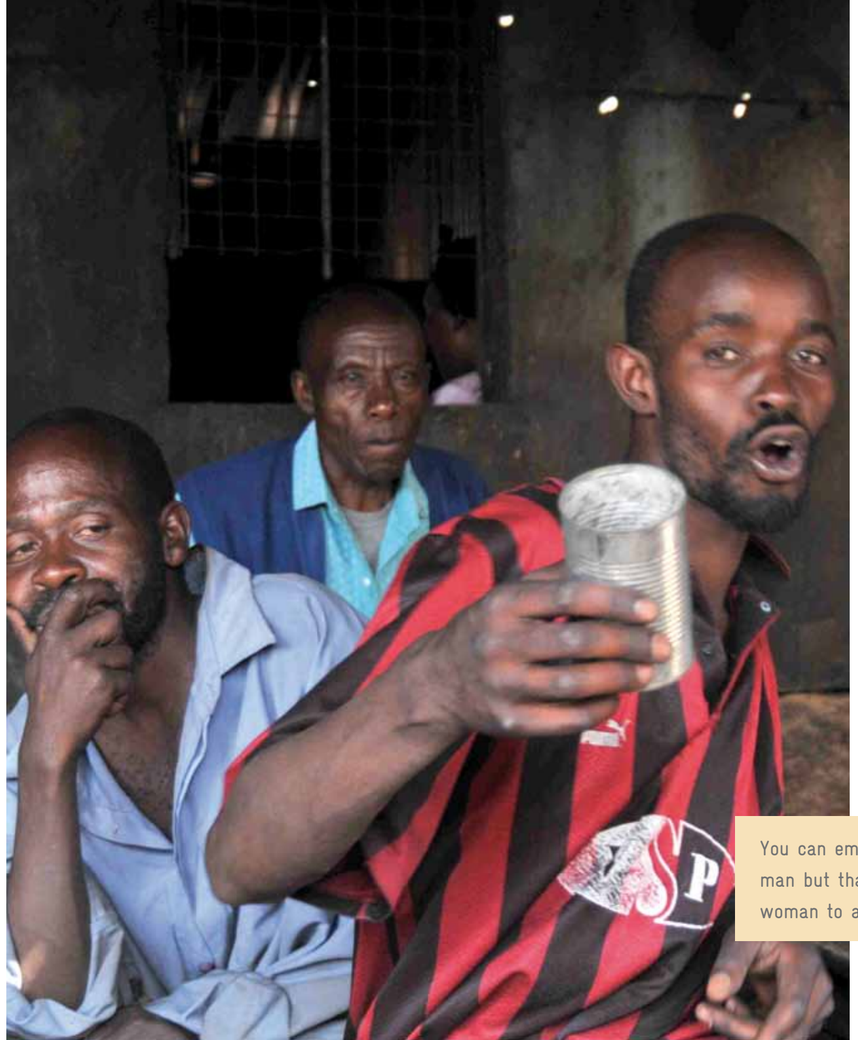
I looked into how and why African men struggle emotionally, financially and psychologically with today's reality, and I looked at historical factors such as slavery and colonialism and how they contributed to the breaking of the African man. The African man was a target; we relied on men for security so when invaders or colonialists came to Kenya they would target the men. African men have been the recipients of a significant amount of violence, but what seems to be happening now is that more and more African men are becoming the perpetrators of violence as well.

My mother, a medical doctor, influenced some of my thinking because we had conversations about her work in the 1970s when she worked at the community level. She talked about how clear the gender roles were and how the men were absent from the home. One of the questions that she asked the children was, "Tell me what role your mother has in your life." And the kids would say, "My mother takes care of me, she brings food, she helps me when I'm sad, she helps me with my homework." And then she asked them, "What does your father do?" and they had nothing to say. When she asked them, "What would happen if your dad died?" they would shrug their shoulders and keep quiet.

What we are finding is that there is not much of a change, even now, because one of the things that colonialism did was make male absenteeism very normal; men would go to work on the plantations or the coal mines or whatever the monoculture economy was that colonialism introduced to African economies. Men would leave, and the women and children would see them once or twice a year, so the children – both boys and girls – got used to men not being present. And even now you find that men may be living with their families but they don't go home until maybe ten or eleven at night, they do not show up to plays at school, to concerts, to confirmations or baptisms. Male absenteeism is on-going and affects gender dynamics in Kenyan society.

Another area of masculinity I looked into was how men are conditioned to suppress their emotions. Women have the license to be frustrated, sad, depressed or anxious but the only negative emotion that men are allowed to express is anger. If they get frustrated, they get angry; if they are depressed, they get angry; if they are scared, they become angry. That anger has to have an outlet somewhere and it is often a violent outburst: it can be sexual abuse, verbal, physical and that is where a lot of women and children find themselves, as victims of this abuse. In my book, I argue that we need to look at what is making men behave violently because I do not think that men are inherently evil. I think if you are a mother or a father, your first instinct tends to be to want to protect your child. So if a man finds that he is beating his child instead of protecting the child, I do not think it makes him happy. He abuses, he regrets, he apologises, he abuses, he regrets and apologises. I am not trying to excuse abusers; I am adamant that if you are being abusive you should face the law. But part of rehabilitation should be to look at why it happened in the first place. This is what is missing in the gender discussion. You can empower a woman to leave an abusive man but that abusive man is going to find another woman to abuse. So unless you deal with him and fix whatever is going on with him, he is going to go from one abused woman to another to another, ruining lives.

The reactions to my book, which discussed these issues, were interesting. Surprisingly, men reacted very positively to the book. I think this was partly because I kept my identity as a woman deliberately ambiguous, and some people thought it was written



You can empower a woman to leave an abusive man but that abusive man is going to find another woman to abuse.

by a man. Some men said that finally they had a book that showed that they were not evil, because the rhetoric around gender in Kenya is very much that men are beasts because they rape children and women. Men feel attacked; even the men who are responsible towards their families feel attacked.

The people who had a problem with my book were some feminists. Although some were receptive to what I was saying, there were others who were upset and angered by it. Their argument was that I was defending men and saying that men should not be blamed, and they thought that I was diverting the focus from women. They said women still have so many disadvantages: we are still under-represented in parliament, we do not get paid as well as men, we have all these cultural practices that are anti-women, why was I talking for men? They thought that I was abandoning the cause of women. I was saddened by their reaction because they had failed to connect the dots to see that if we can help men to be more empowered we won't have as many abused women and children and we would have a society that is a lot healthier and that can function a lot more effectively. I would emphasise that the only people who are really going to fix this problem are men. We need to encourage male mentor programs where empowered men mentor young boys through their personal, academic and professional development so that boys develop positive male-male relationships that can last a lifetime. CREAW (Centre for Rights Education and Awareness), a women's rights NGO in Nairobi, runs a fathers and sons program; this is the kind of program I am talking about. We need 'Men's Spaces' where men can come together and discuss their masculinity issues in a male-only space, and where candid thought and sharing can happen to build a support system of men who are there for each other. A 'Men's Hotline' would help abusers because currently even if a man wants to stop being abusive, there is almost no resource he can turn to that would help him change his life.

Raising awareness about male disempowerment is still in its infancy; there is an urgent need to stimulate thought, debate and further analyze the issue by both men and women. And we, as women, need to create spaces where we can talk to men in a non-judgemental way about the concerns we have about the way that they treat us. It is likely to be confrontational - change always is. Funding is also needed for boys and men's programmes, not just women's programmes, if we are going to deal with some of the causes of violence in our society.

"As a Maasai man, you cannot build a homestead without a woman and you have achieved nothing in your life if you do not have a woman. Traditionally, we would say in our language that the head is the man and the neck is the woman and women couldn't do anything without consulting men. But these days there are men who are not taking care of their families; they cannot afford to take food home, a kilo of sugar, unga, mboga. Some men get something little, go to drink, drink the whole day, the whole night, spending the last shilling in [their] pockets. Of course [such a man] will have problems when he gets home."
Mr Daniel Ole Muyaa: Chairman, Musagala Council of Elders (Maasai)

Other Sheep - Peter

Editor's note: Peter is an activist in his late 20s and we met at the GALCK community centre in Nairobi. He currently works as a volunteer programmes officer with a Christian organisation, Other Sheep. He granted written permission for his first name to be used.

I was in high school when I realised I was gay. I really thought it was something abnormal and I tried hard to suppress it but it was still strongly coming out. I grew up in a religious family with very disciplinarian parents. It was a good set up but it wasn't financially stable because we were a large family; I was the last born of seven, five boys and two girls. I struggled to understand my feelings towards other boys because of the stories and sermons I heard in church. I thought I had a disease that I would recover from at some stage. I went to a strict Catholic school where homosexuality was severely punished. The school had a huge compound, and one day two boys from my dormitory skipped evening study and were found in the act in the playing fields by the security guard. It was such a big deal; they were suspended and were only re-admitted when they apologised to the school. I also thought what they had done was wrong, so when a prefect told me he had feelings for me and that he would give me bread and let me off participating in physical games if I accepted his advances, I told him, no, that can't happen.

After high school I came to Nairobi and worked part time in a pharmacy but it wasn't until my 25th birthday that I met more gay people. I was still so green, but a friend of mine had observed the way I was with people and he suspected I was gay, so he invited me to his friend's birthday party, which was on the same day as mine. It was in a residential area in Westlands, and I couldn't believe what I saw when I got there. There were so many gay people, dressed up, with make up on and they were confident as a group. As I came in people came towards me, it was like I was a new, hot

> I left everything I had, even my certificates because they said that if they saw me again they would kill me.

catch and people were interested in me. My first instinct was to leave but I had no money for a taxi. Later I met some friends who knew my brother and they kind of protected me: one of them said, "Hands off, Peter is my boyfriend," and I felt more at ease and slowly started to enjoy myself.

I started to 'come out' about being gay, but I see it as a long process because I haven't yet told everyone. But knowing more gay people ignited the activist in me because my story is not as bad as some others who have been denied an education or a roof over their heads because of their sexuality. In late 2009 I was living with my partner in Eastlands and I had started discussing things more openly with people who liked to listen and chat. One day I was sitting with one of our neighbours, explaining to him about sexual orientation and gays, saying that they are just like any other person, and he acted like he was keen to know more.

The next day, he and a group of other young men came when I was alone in the house. They broke in, beat me up and forced me to say that I'm gay. I said, "Yes, I'm gay and if you have a problem with it, why not take me to the police instead of beating me up." They said, "You and your type are the sort of people we shouldn't allow near our children. You are outcasts, you should be killed." They pulled me out of the house and continued to beat me until a neighbour shouted at them thus saving me. I was bleeding, and she told me to go back to the house, where I locked myself in.

Another lady overheard the group say they would come and finish me off, and so she rushed and told me to get out of that house and run because these guys were coming to 'clear' me. I left late in the evening with nothing and headed to town. I was told that the gang came back looking for me, and to this day I have never gone back to that house. I left everything I had, even my certificates because they said that if they saw me again they would kill me. My partner and I stayed with a friend for about two months before we found another place.

After some time I got the courage to share my story with other people.

I went to the police and recorded a statement, but I couldn't bear to follow up the case. I just said, let it go, I want to forget the whole issue and start a new life. But psychologically, I was a mess; it completely destroyed me. I felt very scared walking in the city because I would see people's faces and think they were the ones who had attacked me; these images are there all the time. It really affected my self-esteem; I felt worthless, hopeless and I was paranoid. I was working in sales and I lost my job after the attack. My boss didn't believe that I had been attacked; he suggested I had cooked the whole story up, and that I wasn't trustworthy, even though I had the medical reports. It felt like he used it as an excuse to get rid of me.

Over time, I got better because I have this belief that the past is the past, I had to move on so I trained myself to look forward and carry on. But my partner was really affected. When he was only 16 or 17, his family kicked him out when they discovered he was gay. He is very emotional and he felt he was carrying his stress and mine after the attack, so he would go out and drink that very cheap alcohol with his friends, and he said he was doing it to forget about the situation. He has always had a problem with alcohol and it's difficult to convince him that drinking is not going to change things.

After some time I got the courage to share my story with other people. I talked with members of the clergy and people in the gay community who have gone through similar stresses. I felt I needed to become an activist because I realised we still have a long way to go. As a gay Christian, I have lived with the confusion that comes from knowing that the church does not accept us, and people are told being gay is a curse, an abomination. I wanted to work to change these views. There was a time I met with a pastor from the US who was gay who came to visit Kenya. He contacted an Anglican priest I knew called Reverend Michael Kimindu, who had worked as a chaplain in the Kenyan Navy where he had counselled and advised gay men. The two of them organised a meeting for people from the LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex) community to discuss the Bible and homosexuality. I was among those who suggested that we establish a formal group to hold discussions with religious leaders on homosexuality. We were put in touch with an organisation called Other Sheep International, which is a Christian organization that aims to empower sexual minorities through an understanding of God's unconditional love for all. Other Sheep used a quote from the Bible, John 10:16, where Jesus says, "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also."

We set up an East African Chapter of Other Sheep and got funding from UHAI (Ujinsia (Sexuality), Haki (Rights), Afya (Health) and Imani (Faith)) to hold meetings with religious leaders to discuss social justice among sexual minorities and other disadvantaged groups. As the meetings went on, depending on the mood and atmosphere, I would tell the religious leaders, "You know I am gay," and I would tell them about the attack on me. They would say, "Ah, I couldn't even imagine it, you are just like my son, I'm sorry about what I said." It made them more tolerant and understanding, but they would tell us that they still feared losing their positions if they took a controversial, supportive stance on homosexuality. That is why I will continue with my activism work: it is not easy, there is very little funding, but I am prepared to work hard to make Kenya a safer place for people in the gay community.

Chapter 3: Can Justice Be Done?

The passing of the Sexual Offences Act (2006) has been a groundbreaking step in the struggle against gender based violence in Kenya. And yet, implementing the new law is a challenge. In this chapter, the then MP who took the Bill to parliament shares her personal experience on this issue as well as the gruelling process of getting the Act through parliament. Also, a lawyer, a police officer, a sub chief and two young Kenyans speak about their varied experiences of Kenya's legal response to gender based violence.

It's a Negotiation – Njoki Ndung'u

Editor's note: Njoki Ndung'u was a nominated Member of Parliament between 2003 and 2007 and was the first woman to successfully bring a private member's bill to parliament, which was passed as the Sexual Offences Act, 2006. It was Kenya's first, stand alone, legal protection from sex crimes. Ms. Ndung'u was appointed to Kenya's Supreme Court in June 2011.

I am a relatively rare Kenyan for my generation because I was born and brought up in Nairobi. My parents moved to Karen in 1969 when it was just a big forest; our neighbours were the old, 'white mischief' aristocrats. I went to Loreto Convent, Msongari and Kenya High, and then the University of Nairobi. A lot of people wonder why someone like me would go into women's rights because they assume that when you are from a privileged background you can't possibly have seen violence or oppression. But in our home, in Karen, we had a lot of domestic violence, and there were times when my mother, my siblings and I would sleep in the cow shed until morning. I think divisions between urban women and rural women or elite women and grassroots women are false because as a child, I was with my mother and my siblings next to a cow, outside, and somewhere in Kibera slum a woman was doing the same, and in another poorer area of Kenya, another woman was also unable to sleep inside her house because of violence. It shows that gender based violence cuts across class and education levels.

I was the first born in my family and I was like a third parent in our home; trying to keep the peace and being a support crutch for my mother, who, like many women who face violence, was isolated from her friends. It made me grow up quite fast. The violence went on until my parents got divorced when I was 32. By that time, I was already a human rights lawyer working for the UN, and yet I still I bailed my parents out of the police station from time to time. I did not talk to my father for a long time during my 20s and 30s. Looking back, I think that domestic violence in the 60s and 70s was an accepted thing. My mother went to the police station countless times, but she was always told, "You just go home and patch things up with your husband." Domestic violence was not addressed as a crime.

As I was leaving high school, my father decided I should be a teacher, but it was very clear to me that I wanted to be a human rights lawyer. My first job was with the office of the Attorney General, based in Nakuru and then I did a Masters in human rights in the UK. When I came back, I left the government and joined the human rights movement.

I sat on the FIDA Kenya (Federation of Women Lawyers) council in the 1990s and guest lectured at the Kenya Police Force College at Kiganjo, where I talked about domestic violence. I challenged police officers not to see themselves as marriage counsellors because they were not trained as such. I showed them why they could not decide that a crime within the personal space was a lesser crime than a crime that occurred outside it. The policemen would say, "But, madam, if we arrest the husbands, we will break up homes," and I would say, "Look, what about when you shoot, kill or arrest bank robbers? They are bread winners too. You don't think you are breaking up homes then?" When I unpacked it like that they saw that they couldn't tell whether a domestic violence case would end up in a murder.

I joined the constitutional review process in the early 1990s because when I looked at the causes of violence against women – women are not well educated, they are poor, they are not able to negotiate as equal partners in their marriage – I realised that the problem had everything to do with the former constitution that allowed discrimination against women on the basis of personal law, marriage, divorce, inheritance and many other spheres. So it was the constitution that actually got me interested in politics.

In 2002 my party, the Social Democratic Party, joined the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), so I got involved in the campaigns. I actually became a member of parliament (MP) by coincidence. About three weeks before the elections, it was pretty clear that NARC was going to win. One day, I was sitting with Uncle Moody Awori (who became the Vice President in the 9th Parliament) when a group of women came to ask him for nominated MP seats. Their request made me think, why can't I ask for a nomination since I have been working for the party? So the next day I brought him my CV and he asked me, "What? You have done all these things? Of course you would be our number one choice!" So I got into parliament as a nominated MP. It was great because during my years at FIDA I had lobbied MPs on different women's issues but nothing ever went through. So this was my opportunity to do something for women.

But parliament was such a woman unfriendly place. In the chamber, when you are taking a vote you are all locked inside and there is only one loo, a toilet with an open urinal for men. Voting can take up to three hours, and God forbid you are having your monthlies; it was just a nightmare. Moreover, women were not allowed in the chamber with their handbags

because they said that we might carry guns, but no one ever checked what men carried in their jacket pockets. So you had to walk into the chamber with your sanitary wear out for everyone to see. Parliament was a place where women were not accepted; we were not supposed to be there. When we tried to ask the Speaker for a maternity leave policy, his reaction was, "What? Women do not come to parliament to have babies!"

> Domestic violence was not addressed as a crime.

I always say that being a young woman in parliament was like being a girl in a boys' secondary school – there was a lot of testosterone and chest thumping. Cecily Mbarire and I were the youngest women MPs there at that time, and we faced what we called the 'scratching problem' which is the handshake a man gives you where he scratches his index finger against the palm of your hand. It is supposed to mean that he wants to have sex with you, and it is absolutely disgusting. It became so awkward because these were MPs, our colleagues, and we did not know whether to shake their hands or to refuse point blank. So Cecily and I devised a strategy to let others know what was going on.

One day when there were lots of MPs around, I went up to a scratcher and held out my hand and he scratched me. I shouted at the top of my voice, "Oh, Cecily, this is scratcher number 7," and she shouted back, "Are you sure? I thought he was scratcher number 6. I know number 7, so let's get to scratcher number 10." The other men asked what was going on and I said, "You know we have a scratcher's list and this guy," – by this time the MP who had

scratched me was mortified – "is scratcher number 7. We are writing down the names of all the men who scratch our hands instead of asking us directly for what they want." Within a week the scratching had stopped.

Up until 2005, I was really busy with the proposed constitution, which had so many gains for women, so when it did not pass I cried in my house for a whole day. But the next day I got up and said, "Ok, what is my agenda now?" That is when I decided to work on the Sexual Offences Bill again. I had already published the first bill in August 2005, and so I had a workshop for MPs in January 2006 where I agreed to take out a lot of stuff they did not want. When you table a bill, it is a negotiation, so I had to put some stuff in the bill that I knew would never get through the house – like rape within marriage and female circumcision – so that those areas became the focus, rather than others that we really wanted to introduce, such as minimum sentencing or the rape shields. The MPs also insisted that we take out things that I did not expect, like the 'exposure' issue, because they obviously did not understand 'flashing' and they trivialised it, saying we have Maasai who wear nothing underneath, so what would happen when the wind blows? It is hard trying to persuade men when these sorts of things do not happen to them.

It is hard trying to persuade men when these sorts of things do not happen to them.

But I had a well thought out strategy, and the women editors at Nation Media supported me, and so did Caroline Mutoko of KISS FM radio, who talked about it every morning. I worked with Dr Thenya of Nairobi Women's Hospital and he became the male face of the campaign. One thing I came to realise was that on reproductive health issues, of which sexual violence is one, when women are at the forefront, it is very difficult to engage men because they have been socialised to regard women in a certain way. But if a male doctor speaks on the issue, it is not about women anymore; it is a medical issue. We had a big workshop for MPs the day before I moved the bill, and Dr Thenya came to it with a 56-year-old man whose 86-year-old-mother had been raped. Moving away from the rape of young women – because a lot of the MPs do not even think that can be rape – and looking at an 86-year-old-woman who subsequently had very serious psychological problems was very effective. Most of the MPs thought this woman could be their mother.

I lobbied very carefully, for example, I realised that it was much easier to persuade male legislators by using your feminine side rather than using assertive, aggressive ways. There were all these rumours that I had been crying in the toilet – which was not actually true – but I didn't deny it because I had MPs coming up to me saying, "Oh, pole, Njoki, don't worry, we are going to support you." I also worked with MPs' wives by having small meetings to persuade them to put pressure on their husbands, so we had many different ways to get MP support.

Some women MPs told me this was too difficult, that I should withdraw the bill, but I knew that even if it failed, at least we had raised so much awareness during the campaign. Some male MPs' statements made it easier, like the MP who said, during the debate, that when an African woman says no, she means yes. He got completely hammered by the media. Another MP talked about the bill at a funeral, saying, "These silly bills that are brought by westerners," and he got such a dressing down from the women in his church. But the day I first moved the bill was a disaster. A number of women's NGOs marched outside parliament with banners and sent SMS messages to MPs saying they would throw them out if they did not pass the bill. The MPs did not like such threats and many withdrew their support. It was a rough week, and I stepped down the bill for two weeks to repair the damage. We worked with some women's rights organisations: Ann Njogu at CREAW (Centre for Rights Education and Awareness), Atsango Chesoni and WILDAF (Women in Law and Development in Africa) and wrote speeches for different political party heads – so Raila Odinga had his speech, so did Uhuru Kenyatta and Kalonzo Musyoka – so that they all contributed to support the bill. I also worked a lot with MP Martha Karua – she was in the House Business Committee – and we timed the return of the bill when we knew about four of the key people who opposed it were out of the country. We did not waste any time; we closed the debate and the bill was passed. It was a great moment.

There were seven really important aspects of the bill that would protect Kenyans. It included the introduction of minimum sentencing; before the bill, rapists could be let off with a fine or just a day's imprisonment. Also, now no case could be withdrawn without the permission of the Attorney General, whereas previously, rapists would pay off relatives or parents to withdraw the case. The Act ensures free medical treatment for victims; there is a wider definition of consent; and rape shields were introduced, which means evidence of the victim's previous sexual history cannot be used without good reason. Also, there was the introduction of aggravated circumstances, such as gang rape or drug rape, that increase the sentence, and a wider definition of the complainant, so it is not just the victim who can report a case, and males are now included as victims.

Once the bill was passed, I worked with the Attorney General to set up a task force on the implementation of the Sexual Offences Act. We trained police officers, prosecutors and judges, in conjunction with the Kenya Women Judges Association and the Kenya Magistrates and Judges Association and they said they wished all laws that were passed came with the same kind of training. NGOs and churches also were trained, so what we now see is a lot more reporting of sexual violence, and the police take the cases much more seriously and there are a lot more convictions.

I have now left active politics. When I finished with the Committee of Experts on the Constitution, I felt I had been a part of making laws that give Kenyan women sufficient protection. Article 28 of the Constitution talks about the right to freedom of security – and that includes in the private sphere – so one can anchor domestic violence legislation on that. So I think that some of the reasons why women like my mother suffered domestic abuse are now dealt with in the Constitution.

On a personal note, my relationship with my father is cordial now. I would not say I am very close to him, but he has changed a lot and he even supported me during the debate of the Sexual Offences Bill. He is married to his third wife now and, from what I hear, violence is not an issue.

Getting to Know the Law: The Case of Kanze, Dadu and Sub Chief Masha Katembe

Editor's note: I was put in touch with Sub Chief Katembe by a friend at Moving the Goalposts, an NGO working with teenage girls in Kilifi county. Katembe took me by matatu and piki piki (motorbike) to Kanze's home in rural Kilifi, where I interviewed her with both of us sitting on the trunk of a fallen coconut tree. I later interviewed Katembe at a small hoteli in Vitengeni and I spoke to Dadu in his room at his family's homestead, not far from Kanze's home. All three decided that they did not want their real names to be used.

Kanze Katana: I am 17 years old and I was born here, at home in Sokoke, where I live with my mother, brothers and sisters. My father died a few years ago. I was in primary school and I did not have a boyfriend until Dadu came along when I was in Standard Six. He was 19 years old and in another school, and he talked to me every day, saying he wanted to be with me. He gave me money and he bought me things, such as 'Always' sanitary pads and clothes like spaghetti tops, and he bought me some shoes. When my mother asked me where I was getting money to buy these things, I told her I was selling cashew nuts and firewood. I did not worry about what was ahead because Dadu told me that if I got pregnant, he would marry me, and I believed him. When I realised I was pregnant, he agreed that the pregnancy was his and said that he did not want me to have his child at my mother's home, so I went to stay at his place. I did not tell my mother because I wanted to have his child with him. He lives in a big homestead and has his own room. I stayed there for one week and I was happy to be there because we had sex every night. In the morning he locked me in his room until he came back from school. He left me soda, bread, milk and water so at lunch time I ate and then waited for him to come back in the evening. He would unlock the door, bring water, and I would wash myself inside that room. When his mother cooked sima, he would bring it to the room and we would eat together. His family did not know I was there, so if I needed to go to the toilet, I went at night and that was the only time I left the room.

Dadu Kahindi: My father passed away a long time ago and I live with my mother, my three brothers and one sister. Kanze and I first had sex at a wedding; it was about 2 o'clock in the morning and I told her I loved her and she told me, "I love you too," so we went into the bush and made love. From then on, if I wanted to have sex with her she said, "It's okay, I will come to your place," and she came and then went back to her home. One time she came and told me that she would not go back home because people in her family were saying that she is with me now and that I should look after her. I told her, "That is not possible because we are both still in primary school and we should concentrate on our studies." But she refused to go back home. I locked her in the room every day because I had to go to school to do my exams; what could I do? If my mother had known Kanze was there she would have been mad at me. While I was at school my mind remained at home, thinking about Kanze and what I would do about her. She stayed for four days and on the fifth I started hearing that her mother was looking for her, saying that her child was lost. I told Kanze that she must go home because her mother was going to report the matter to the sub chief, so she went home the next morning. I felt relieved that she had gone; little did I know that it was just the beginning. I knew she was 17 and that I was 19 but I did not know the laws of Kenya.

Masha Katembe: I am a sub chief in Kilifi county. I have been following up cases of violations against girls for a long time. I see too many incidences where girls get pregnant, and even though the government says that a girl who gets pregnant can give birth and return to school, most – I would say 99% - refuse to go back to school once they have had their children. And they just suffer even more; they go and get married and suffer there, or they go back to their homes and have no way of helping themselves in their lives.

That is why I took this case of Kanze's forward to the police, so that the rights of this girl could be respected and so that the court could truly decide how to help young girls. Kanze had gone missing and after nearly a week, her mother and brother decided to come to me and they explained that she had disappeared so I started to ask around in the community and that's when Kanze was found. I called her family to my place and questioned them. I found out that Kanze was under age and the boy was over 18. He had sweet-talked her by saying he would marry her and she fell into his trap. I arrested the boy and took him, Kanze and her mother to the police station where they wrote statements and both the boy and the girl were put in jail. The case was taken to court but the boy was cunning and said that the girl had agreed to everything. We said, okay, she may have agreed to it all but the fact is that she was under age and he had broken the law.

Kanze Katana: When I left Dadu's place to come home to collect my things I was happy because I knew I would go back to stay with him. But when I got home, I realised that my mother had gone to the sub chief and they had decided this was a police case. They took me and Dadu to the police in Kilifi and we were both locked up. I did not know what Dadu was being accused of. I was locked up but after two weeks I was allowed to go home.

Dadu Kahindi: My mother received a letter saying that I must report to the sub chief. When I got there, he asked me, "Did you force her to have sex with you or did she agree herself?" I told him she agreed to have sex, but he told me we had to go to the police station. I did not want to go but Kanze said to me, "If you don't come with me I will suffer on my own." So I said okay and we went to the police station where I was immediately locked in a room. Kanze's mother was told to come back on Monday to write a statement. I stayed there from Saturday until Tuesday, when I was taken to court. They asked me, "Did you, on this date, hold Kanze and force her to have sex with you and hide her in your house?" I said, "No, I did not." This was on 4th October [2010]. I was taken from there to the prison and given a date for the next session in court, December 21st. After that session my case was in court another four times. Kanze helped me by not turning up the last three times. At the hearing on 10th February [2011], I told the judge, "Please, Sir, I am just a child suffering in prison with adults and sometimes I do not get food, I sleep hungry. Those people who brought me here wanted to teach me a lesson, but they do not have any evidence so please let me go. I am a school boy and I need to continue my education." As there were no witnesses present, the judge said I could go. I left that place at about 6pm and I walked all the way

I can make some change to see that the rights of girls in our community are respected.

home and got back at around 9pm. My mother was so happy to see me because she had thought I would never get out of there.

Masha Katembe: I think Dadu learnt his lesson, and others will see that they have to respect a girl's right to an education. I will continue to follow up such cases because people are now saying, "You see that chief, Katembe? If he gets a case like this he will not agree to let it go; he will follow it up to the end." And that is what keeps me going, knowing that I can make some change to see that the rights of girls in our community are respected.

Dadu Kahindi: I couldn't go back to school because I felt I was too old to return to primary school but I would advise any boy not to have sex with girls in school because it can wreck your life. Of course I am angry with Katembe but I cannot be annoyed with him forever because he was doing what he thought was right. Kanze helped me by not coming to court and making sure that the case could not continue. On May 21st 2011, the day the world was supposed to end, she gave birth to a baby boy at her home. She has asked if I will marry her. I would not refuse, but if I look at the way things are, I do not have work, we do not have money, it will not be easy.

"In the past our culture would bring people together and we had very clear ways of disciplining everyone: men, women and children. Now if anything happens we run to the police and the courts, but we had our traditional courts. If, for instance, somebody raped somebody's wife or somebody's girl, there were very heavy fines. If it continued, they were cursed and that thing of being cursed was what people really feared so things were more in line, more controlled than they are today."
Mr Meshack Riaga Ogalo: Chairman, Luo Council of Elders

We Will Hold You Up - Anne Ireri

Anne is the senior legal counsel at FIDA, Mombasa. FIDA gives legal advice and support to women, including to victims of sexual violence. She granted written permission for her real name to be used.

I am an average Kenyan who grew up in Nairobi where I did my four years at university studying for a law degree. I then went to the Kenya School of Law before being admitted as an advocate. I came from a corporate law background but I went to do an internship at FIDA and later they offered me a job in Mombasa. When I thought about it and I looked at the diversity of cultures and religions there, I got excited and I thought, why not?

At FIDA we offer free legal services to women. Most of the sexual violence cases we see – not all of them – come from families where firstly, they do not talk about sexuality, and secondly, they are experiencing some form of poverty. We get many defilement cases of girls or boys under the age of 18 and we see how traumatic it is for the mother of a defiled child because most of the time society asks, "Where was the mother when it happened?" And in Kenya the cost of living is very high so it is very difficult for a woman to be a stay-at-home mum. Many of the mothers we see work in the informal sector. They have other children to take care of, they wake up very early in the morning, go to the market, expose themselves to the risk of violence because no one is there to take care of them, come back home, make sure their children have gone to school, done their homework, and in between all this they are fixing meals and are at the same time supposed to be bonding with their children. The mother has that burden and she carries the blame for what happened to her child.

We had a case recently of a young girl – she was about six – who was defiled close to her home in a middle class estate; a very nice, spacious, clean place. The mother really blamed herself. The counsellor had to do a lot of work with her so she could support her daughter and get to a place where she was okay – not to say, "It's fine, what happened," but to be able to say, "I can deal with it," so she could help her daughter. I have seen very many mothers at FIDA; some will break down completely, telling you how bad they feel, but others, you can see them thinking, you know what, even this time that I am spending here at FIDA is eating into the time I should be at the market, trying to feed my children.

At FIDA we work closely with the judiciary and the police but there are many barriers to justice. I would say that we get the verdict we want in perhaps about 50% of the cases. Any trial in Kenya – and in this case a sexual violence trial – can take very many months and our judicial staff are stretched with a court list of about 30 matters a day. In our courts, the focus has always been on the accused but now, with the Sexual Offences Act and the Children's Act, we have the mechanisms in place to focus on the complainant. There are special courts for children but I believe we desperately need specialised courts for sexual offence cases. At the moment they are treated just like any other case, and when you have children

Any trial in Kenya – and in this case a sexual violence trial – can take very many months and our judicial staff are over stretched.

coming to court, sitting from morning until evening, they get hungry and their education is interrupted. Plus, as complainants, they have to give evidence in view of the accused. I heard of one woman magistrate at Kibera Law Courts in Nairobi – I do not know if she is still there – who improvised and put up a bed sheet in the court to prevent the complainant from looking directly at the accused person. It is high time we pushed for structures to put these things in place, to modernise the court, because we are supposed to be protecting the complainant, and the minute she sees the accused man or woman she cannot speak freely. The laws will not work properly until these things change.

It takes the efforts of everyone to have a successful case, from the police to the judiciary to the community to service providers.

I have personally trained so many police officers on evidence and data collection in rape cases, telling them the basics, such as, if you have under garments or clothes that can be used as evidence they should be stored in a particular way so that the evidence is preserved. But at times soiled clothes are not sufficient as evidence to prove the case beyond reasonable doubt. This makes witnesses very important but getting them to give statements can be hard because they are aware of the disruption it will cause to their lives. Success in regard to witnesses depends on how the police handle the cases and sometimes they are careless with the evidence. You may go out of your way to record a witness statement and then find it has been misplaced or it is not given the weight and seriousness it needs to stand up in court. People are told that if they give a statement they must be prepared to spend a lot of time in court, which is the truth, so if they have a job or if the case is not their main concern they will not prioritise it. If we had efficiency in the police and the courts where you knew the case would be heard in one day, people would not fear being witnesses and would commit to coming to court for that one day.

In many cases the perpetrator comes from that community, so it takes very empowered parents to stand as witnesses, for example, because of their negative perception that they would be associated with the case and held responsible for it being taken to court. Often you have situations where there was a civil ad hoc negotiation between the families involved and people thought it was finished there. Money may have changed hands from the perpetrator's family to the victim's. If someone then insists on criminal proceedings and gives evidence in court, he or she could be labelled a sell out.

It takes the efforts of everyone to have a successful case, from the police to the judiciary to the community to service providers. You will find that some of the worst witnesses are the medical personnel or the police investigating officers. Generally, the parents or the witnesses from the community are punctual in giving their evidence but the case drags on because of the failure of the medical personnel or police investigating officers to turn up. We really need to look at how we can sort this out. At least now our laws are amended so that it is not just medical doctors who can give evidence; clinical officers and nurses can do so too. But even then, the cases need to move quickly because they cannot be away from their stations too long especially if they are the only medical professionals at their clinics. It is the same with all expert witnesses; they are busy people and they cannot come to court to wait indefinitely.

Even if your case is successful, people will talk about you in relation to the sentence given to the person who violated you. But you are the one who wakes up every day having to re-live the experience. This country needs a survivor fund. We need a lot of financial input by the state to ensure, for example, that a child whose life was interrupted – maybe she had to relocate to a safe house – can pick it up again. We need a society that will embrace you if you have been violated; a society that, even though your life will not go back to normal, will help you to feel okay. We need to say to you, "It's not your mistake, there's no stigma, we'll help you move on, we will hold you up." That, I think, is the most important thing that society needs to do.

"We work alongside the provincial administration; sometimes we forward cases to them and sometimes they bring cases to us. Not long ago, there was a magistrate at the nearby court in Kaloleni who was getting so many family cases, so he came with the chief to see the Elders, to discuss how he could share some of the cases with the Elders. We agreed to this and wrote a list together of certain types of cases, such as family and local disputes, that we Elders could preside over."
Job, Kaya Elder, Rabai, Coast Province

Cases can take a long time – Janet

Editor's note: I was introduced to Janet, a young police officer working on the gender desk, by the Officer Commanding Police Station (OCS). I interviewed her at the Gender Desk, inside a spartan shipping container behind the main police station. Janet did not want us to use her real name or the police station where she works to protect her identity.

I grew up in Kisii county. My older sister, the one I follow, almost ruined my chances of getting an education because she got pregnant while she was in secondary school so my father said he was not going to waste his money taking another girl to school. The teachers told my father he should not punish me because of what my sister had done so he agreed to let me go to secondary school. Not long after I finished, in 2006, I heard there was a police recruitment coming up. It was not that I wanted to be a police officer, but I knew there was no way I would go to college, so I was looking for any opportunity. Without telling anyone, I took my results slip and my ID and I went to the field and did the physical and written tests. Luckily, I got accepted, and when I told my parents they were very happy. So I joined the police force in 2006 when I was 20 years old and went for nine months of training. I was then posted to Kijipwa but after six months I requested for a transfer because it was not a busy station. The OCPD (Officer Commanding Police Division) transferred me to

Under Kenyan law, any girl under 18 who has sex has been defiled because she does not have the right to consent to have sex until she is 18.

Malindi, to the report office, where I stayed until 2009, when I was moved to the gender desk.

Under Kenyan law, a person who has sex with anyone under the age of 18 is guilty of an offence termed defilement. That means that, in the eyes of the law, any girl under 18 who has sex has been defiled. We have many defilement cases because the children like discos, funerals and weddings, where they can stay up all night. In Coast province, girls get to know about sex when they are very young, like 10 or 12 years old, so when they are 16 or 17 they have known about it for a long time and they are not children any more. I have had many cases where a parent brings a girl to us and says that she has been defiled, and it is normally because by this time she is pregnant. But the girl knows that the father of the child is her boyfriend. So when the case goes to court, the girl refuses to testify against the boy; and she tells me straight, "If I testify against my boyfriend, who will marry me?"

We had a defilement case here just last week where a 49-year-old man raped a 16-year-old primary school girl. When I saw the girl in her maroon and white school uniform she looked much younger, maybe 12. The man was someone known to us, one of those idlers who hang around the police station, telling us he has seen these people doing this and those people doing that; someone you do not take seriously. The man and the girl were brought to us by people he knew and they told us the following story.

The girl was five months pregnant, and she said the pregnancy was from her boyfriend, a secondary school pupil. The man had been watching her as she walked to school every day, and he approached her and told her he could help her have an abortion.

We tell them what they should do if they find that their child has been raped: how to preserve the evidence; who to contact; and that they must take the girl to the hospital so she can be given PEP (post exposure prophylaxis).

After a few days she agreed and they met at the top of the hill leading down to St Joseph's primary school. He gave her one tablet, we do not know what it was, and then he told her to drink a liquid he was carrying in a plastic bottle. It was something like strong tea but the bottle also smelt of kerosene. He then told her, "We need to walk down the hill so I can get the pregnancy out," and they walked down and into the bushes where he told her to remove her clothes. She did. Then he told her if he had sex with her right then, the baby would come out. They lay down and he started to penetrate her, but some people who knew his behaviour had been watching them, and they ran into the bushes and caught him red-handed. They brought them both to the police station.

We took statements from the girl, the accused and the witnesses, and we had to get her parent because a child cannot be a complainant. The girl and the accused both went to the hospital for medical examinations. Since we cannot keep someone in custody for more than 24 hours without charge, we went to court the next day for the plea. The man denied the charge, so the magistrate set a date for the hearing where the girl, the witnesses and the accused will all testify.

Cases can take a long time, however. Witnesses disappear, or if the accused is out on bond he, too, can disappear, and then we have to issue a warrant of arrest. There is a case I have now that is going to the Attorney General to be closed. It was a girl who was raped by a 57-year-old man in a very small, remote island which you can only get to by dug-out canoe. The girl was brought to the police by a village elder, who we assumed was the girl's mother. We got the case to court, but then the girl was not turning up so I had to make the trip to the island to meet the elder. When I found her, she said she was not the girl's mother, but she had brought the girl to us in her capacity as an elder. She told us that the girl had gone away and got married and her sister had refused to tell the village elder where she had gone. We have decided to close the case, but you cannot close a sexual offences case until it goes to the Attorney General's office in Nairobi.

There are some NGOs, such as Plan International, that organise trainings in the community in the rural areas to educate people about sexual offences. The local chief invites all the parents to these meetings, which are held in school compounds, and Plan makes sure that a police officer and the children's officer attend the meeting. We normally find over 100 parents, mostly women, and we talk to them about the Sexual Offences Act and the Children's Act. We tell them what they should do if they find that their child has been raped: how to preserve the evidence; who to contact; and that they must take the girl to the hospital so she can be given PEP (post exposure prophylaxis) and have a P3 form filled. We hear many stories at these meetings. People will tell you that the family members call the village elders who might interrogate the girl in front of everyone; it is not right for a young girl who has been raped to be interviewed by so many people. The girl can end up even more traumatised.

There was a case I had where a father raped his daughter, but the relatives put the girl and her mother under so much pressure not to press charges. The girl was told, "We will chase your mother out of the homestead and we will sell your land if you take this case to court." In court, she ended up saying that none of it was true and she didn't know anything about it. The magistrate took action: he put the girl in custody in a children's home and ordered the children's officer to look for a counsellor to talk to this girl. The girl eventually agreed to testify, and the father was put in prison for life. She went back home, and we told her that if anything happened in relation to this case, she was to come back and tell us everything. We have not heard anything from her, so I believe the family could not follow through with their threats.

There is a lot of stress in our work but we have to vumilia because one day there is this case, and the next day that case, so there is no time to think of your stress. I tell my neighbours to look after their children, especially their daughters. There is one three-year-old-girl in our neighbourhood who tells the other children that only her mum or dad can take off her underwear. I think that is a good strategy. My own daughter is 11 months old, and I will teach her early that no one is allowed to look at her private parts or remove her underpants, because she needs to learn what is right when she is still young.

Chapter 4: There are Things You Can Never Forget – Carers' Stories

This chapter has stories from people who work 'on the front line' with people who have been abused and exposed to gender based violence. They talk about the impact of their work on their personal lives and the challenges and dilemmas they face in supporting people who have experienced gender based violence.

Still a Person - Alice Kibui

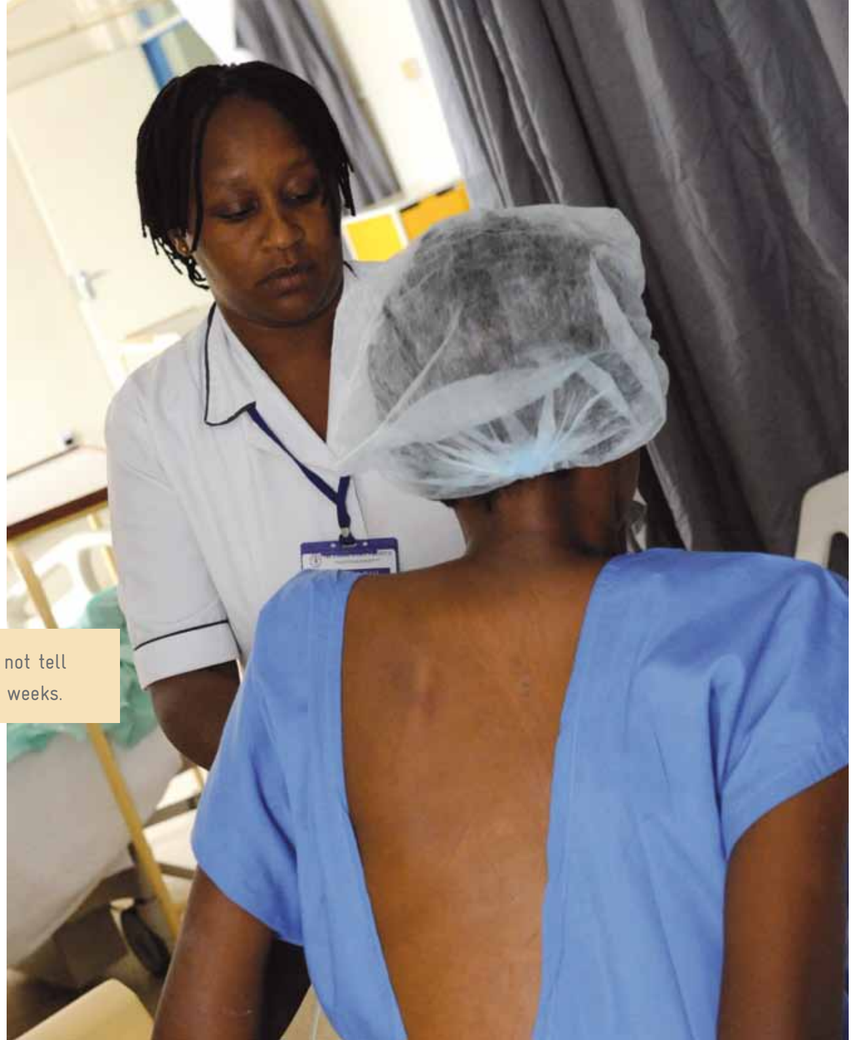
Editor's note: Alice was interviewed by Margaret Ogola at the GVRC. She is a nurse and works with cases of gender based violence. She granted written permission for her name to be used.

I was brought up as the first born of seven children by my mother and grandmother in Nyeri town. My father was in the police force, posted to Mandera County in North Eastern Kenya. In those days a police officer was granted leave every six months so we only got to see him twice a year. When I was about 14 or 15 years old, my aunt became sick and was admitted at Tumutumu Mission Hospital with diabetes and hypertension. We went to visit her often and I saw how kind the nurses were. They were all dressed in white uniforms, and I thought they were angels because they treated my aunt and her family so well. Unfortunately my aunt suffered renal failure and died after a month, but the experience inspired me and I decided I wanted to be like those nurses. I went to Tumutumu Girls High school and I trained to be a nurse at the Consolata School of Nursing in Nyeri. I have always been a very strong Catholic and the college was run by Catholic nuns, so I was trained in an environment where missionary work and serving people were our guiding principles. I graduated as a nurse in 1989 and I have worked at Mathari, Nyeri and Nazarene hospitals. In 2001 I joined Nairobi Women's Hospital as a nurse, teacher and mid wife.

In my work, women, and sometimes men, come to the hospital dirty, abused and displaced and they are looking for a safe place to be where they will be treated, counselled and discharged well. At Nairobi Women's we make sure they go home feeling like they are still a person. To do this job you need to be emotionally stable because it wears you out seeing the kinds of things human beings are capable of doing to each other. Sometimes the police add to the trauma of sexually abused women by not taking the situation seriously. I have seen cases where they mock the victim, make fun of her situation, and make lewd comments about the sexual nature of the attack, which injures the victim even more, emotionally. But, on the other hand, I have come across cases where the police have worked in a humane and caring manner. There was a case where a woman was robbed, beaten, raped and left for dead in a ditch. The police brought her to us and they waited while she was treated. We realized she needed to get to an ICU (Intensive Care Unit), which we do not have, so the officers gave the ambulance a police escort to Kenyatta National Hospital where there is an ICU.

> She was so traumatized that she could not tell anyone, and she became mute for three weeks.

I have dealt with many cases, but one very bad one was about a year ago when a 13-year-old girl was brought in. She was selling mangoes by the roadside and three men told her that they wanted to buy mangoes but the money was somewhere else, so they lured her away from the road and took turns raping her. They were carrying knives. Two of them used a condom but one of them did not, and when they had finished they forced her to swallow the contents of the condoms. They let her go but she was so traumatized that she could not tell anyone, and she became mute for three weeks. Eventually her aunt coaxed her into talking and the girl told her what had happened. She was brought to Nairobi Women's Hospital where she was treated and given counselling. Thankfully she was HIV negative and she was not pregnant.



I have learnt a lot of counselling skills on the job, such as listening skills; making the patient feel she is in a safe place; holding her hand; answering her questions and being compassionate. We also have to learn to practice a level of detachment. You have to deal with a case and then leave it at work otherwise you might end up hating men and seeing them as animals because the majority of the cases are perpetrated by men on women and children. But you have to keep reminding yourself that there are some good men out there. We have monthly staff supervision sessions where we meet to deal with issues such as burn-out, how to do our work effectively, and where we get support for personal and professional growth. We also have personal therapy for individual staff members. Also, once or twice a year, we go away to a retreat for debriefing and to enjoy ourselves together as staff and recharge our batteries. I am proud to work in an establishment such as Nairobi Women's Hospital where I know that God is watching me and I can sleep at night knowing that I have done some good.

Looking for Another Way Out – Sidi and Amisi, Counsellors, Magarini, Malindi county

Editor's note: Sidi is in her 20s and Amisi is in her 30s and they both work as counsellors, often dealing with cases of sexual violence. I interviewed them at the NGO where they work. Their names have been changed to protect their identities.

Sidi: My story starts in Malindi County where I went to the village primary school. I then went to Waa Girls Secondary in Kwale, but it wasn't easy because both my parents had died and I relied on my stepmother, who sold produce from her farm, to support me. I used to cry when I was sent home while my classmates were doing exams because we had not paid the fees. I was lucky, though, because I was a very good football player, and my teacher approached World Vision to sponsor me and they gave me a bursary over three years. I completed school in 2004 and trained as a peer educator with a youth group in Magarini. So many girls approached me for help and I think it was because I listened to them, I was friendly and I didn't judge them. I got sponsored to train as a counsellor in 2007.

My younger sister, Rehema, is seen as a closed book by most people in our family but she opens up to me. In 2006 she got pregnant when she was just 13. She was in Standard Three in primary school, the father was just another teenage boy and she had to drop out of school for 2 years when she had the baby. She has now gone back to school but she called me recently and told me that the other students were laughing at her because she is the oldest in the class but she was last in the exams. She said, "I can't even read English, I don't know how to do maths and I don't want to continue with my education." But I told her, "You can't do anything in life without an education. When you finish school you will never have to see those people again so just ignore them and stay in school."

Rehema was 15 when she told me that our stepbrother, James, who has never married and is much older than her, (he is in his 30s) had been sexually assaulting her. He would go to her room in the evening and pretend that he wanted to help her with her studies, and when our stepmother wasn't around he would touch her. I shared what she told me with my stepmother and I asked her, "What are you going to do about this?" She said that she would talk to him. It wasn't long after that when I got a call from Rehema and this is what she told me: "Sidi, last night I was asleep and James was pretending that he was preparing tea for himself. He told me that I mustn't close the door to my room because he needed the tea leaves and sugar that were in my room. I fell asleep, the door was open and at around midnight I found him in my bed and he was already raping me. I screamed but because our place is so far from any neighbours, no one heard me or came to help."

> I was scared for my personal safety so I told her we will have to look for another way out.

> I urged her to try to jump out of that fear, out of the culture, to make a change in Rehema's life, rather than to protect the other people.

I rushed home from Magarini that morning and I sat with her and told my stepmother that this is now a police case but she told me to wait, that we would talk to James. I asked her, "What if he is HIV positive and he has infected her, what would we do? Or what if he had made her pregnant?" I didn't know what to do.

I thought about the repercussions if I took the case forward. We have been brought up by that family and they told me we should sort this out at home. I was scared about what they might do to me. I wanted Rehema to come and stay with me in Magarini, but my family members told me, "You have a job and you are getting money, but it won't be there forever, so you can't take her away from her home." They brought up so many issues that it got to the stage where I was afraid they would put a curse on me. I was scared for my personal safety so I told her we will have to look for another way out.

Amisi, Sidi's counselling supervisor: When Sidi brought this problem to us, we talked about how our community can be unfair because it wants to protect its own family members. I suggested that Sidi should confront her stepmother and appeal to her emotions. I told her to ask her stepmother, "What if this was happening to your own daughter – not a step daughter – how would you feel? You would probably say that there is no way he should be forgiven; you would say he must be brought to justice." I told Sidi that the best thing would be to get Rehema out of that home but there is a lot of fear of witchcraft and this fear helps maintain the status quo. I urged her to try to jump out of that fear, out of the culture, to make a change in Rehema's life, rather than to protect the other people.

Sidi: But there was so much to consider. Even other counsellors are scared, they ask, "Who will protect me from the community if I follow up this case? The community can do anything to us." And those are my fears for Rehema. Is it worth it for either of us to go forward? It gives me sleepless nights.

Amisi: We have discussed these fears as a group of counsellors and we think community members need to know about the right steps to follow if they get a rape case and I feel that the justice system must provide some level of protection for counsellors. For example, I may take it upon myself to make sure the victim and the witnesses are present in court. But the case can be in court four, five, six or more times over many months, the evidence might not be strong enough and eventually the judge throws the case out. I then have to go back to the community where the case has come from, and I will be blamed for everything, but there will be no one to protect me.

What I think we need are more social workers at a certain level – maybe at the county level – who can actually follow up these cases to the end. Within the police, the officers on the gender desk should work closely with this social worker so that when she brings the evidence, matters are forwarded to the judicial system. Also, the children's courts should have a day where they respond only to GBV cases; they should not mix them with other cases. People get frustrated by the long time the cases take in court so there should be a much simpler system so that the child can get justice and move on with her life.

Sidi: There is not a day that goes by that I do not think of Rehema. I recently received a phone call and was told that our stepmother was at the police station reporting my sister because she said Rehema was stubborn and was not staying at home. I called my stepmother and said, "I hear you are with the police writing a statement about Rehema," and she said, "Yes I am because I want her to be jailed so that she learns a lesson." I was so angry. I told her, "Have you forgotten that when she was raped by your son, you took no action? You called relatives to discuss the issue at home. Now Rehema is having problems and you are going to the police?" I told her, "Fine, you talk to the police, but I will tell Rehema to tell the police everything about the rape. You have done nothing to help her, and now you're seeing that her mistakes are bigger than what was done to her."

My step mum stopped what she was doing at the police station and went back home. But she is still very harsh towards Rehema, and sometimes Rehema asks me, "Sidi, what can I do? Everything I do is bad, I do all the work at home but I can't do anything good in the eyes of our step mum." I tell her to struggle on, that I am there for her. Her boyfriend also tells her she must stay in school and she has agreed.

Do This Forever? – Ken Otieno

Editor's note: Ken is a young social worker at the GVRC in Nairobi. We met at Nairobi Women's Hospital and I interviewed him in a counselling room. He granted written permission for his name to be used.

I come from a home where domestic violence was an everyday thing. I am the first-born of four and we lived with my parents in Kisumu County. My mother was the main bread winner and she did everything in the house. My father would wake up in the morning, go to work as a mechanic, come back in the evening and expect food to be ready for him. It was a constant fight; him coming in very drunk, and if there was no food, he would beat up my mum and she would hit back to defend herself, so there was a lot of violence in our house. I asked myself, "When I need school books, it is my mum who buys them, when I need food, it is my mum who buys it; what, then, is the role of the man in this house?"

There was a time – I was about eight or nine years old - when I hit back at my dad. My mother was sick and he came home and started beating her up, so I took a frying pan and hit him. That was the first time I stood up for my mum and I cannot say I was in control of myself but I knew I wanted to protect my mother because she was crying in pain. Looking back, I still think I was justified in what I did because I was very young, I was angry, and it was all I could do to take some revenge on my father. He was such a destructive force in our home.

> I was going home in a matatu, you know how everyone is so silent, it hit me, it came back to me, what I had seen, and for the first time I shed tears, it was so painful.

When I was in Standard Five my mum passed on, so my brother and I went to live with my aunt. My two sisters, who had not started school, went to stay with other relatives of my mother. We could not stay with my father; everyone knew he was a drunkard and that he was the kind of person who could leave you without food for the whole day and not care. Staying with our relatives I did very well in school and I went to Friends School, Kamusinga, in Bungoma County, and then I went to the University of Nairobi. I chose to study sociology and communication because I wanted to look into questions I had and try to understand people better. My main question was why does domestic violence happen? Why is it that people get married, they are very happy but a few years down the line they fight every day, they break up and the children end up suffering? I thought if I did this course I would start to get some answers.

I did my first internship at the Women's Rights Awareness Programme (WRAP) in Nairobi, which deals with issues that affect women and shelters abused women and children. What really came out of that experience for me was the issue of economic independence for women. I realised that if a woman could provide for herself and her children, she wouldn't stay in an abusive marriage. I looked at how my mother was doing everything and taking the beatings, but she would not move out because maybe my dad was paying the rent. I really believe that if she had a good job and enough money, she wouldn't have stayed in that marriage.

After finishing my degree I came to work at the Nairobi Women's Hospital Gender Violence Recovery Centre (GVRC) as a social worker. I have worked here now for over a year, but there was a case a couple of months ago that made me realise I cannot do this work forever. It was a 4-year-old girl who had been defiled by her landlord, and she had been taken to Kenyatta Hospital for treatment. Her family was asked to pay some money for an operation, so her mother had gone to Meru to try to raise the funds. While the mother was still in Meru, a Good Samaritan brought the girl here to the GVRC, where services are free for victims of gender-based violence.

As a social worker, my work is to get the case history and to encourage the survivor. So one morning I went to see this little girl and she was very jovial, she talked a lot to me, asked me who I was and where I came from, what I did in the hospital. You can imagine such a young child asking very nice questions, she was not scared of anyone; she was the kind of child who would just joke around with you. But as she was getting down off the bed, I saw for the first time in my life – and what a shock it was – her pass stool through her vagina. I had never imagined it could get that bad. I remember I finished up very fast and left. I went to my desk, wrote her case study, sent it to my boss and left for the day. In the evening when I was going home in a matatu, it hit me, it came back to me, what I had seen, and for the first time I shed tears, it was so painful. I imagined what the mother must be going through, seeing her child like this every day for close to three months. And she was not financially stable; she was trying to fundraise for her child to be treated. I put myself in the mother's position and I couldn't take it.

It really affected my job because I would not go for my ward rounds. I would send the interns instead so of course there were a few hitches, things not getting done right, some cases not being reported. The nurses were complaining and the management realised something wasn't right. I was called and asked what was wrong, and I explained that this little girl's case had really got to me. That is when I joined the monthly supervision group. I had been going for personal therapy and I thought I could take in all these things, but after that one day with that young girl, I realised I needed more support.

It really makes me fear for my own daughter – if I get married and have children. I do not think there is any place where you can feel safe because even right at home, a young child is abused by the landlord, the watchman at the gate, the person he or she lives with. I do not think I will ever be able to say that wherever my daughter is, I know she is safe. This is one of my deepest fears.

I like my job, though, because it gives me a lot of satisfaction: when women and children – and even men – walk into Nairobi Women's Hospital they are so devastated. Some of them have given up; others come full of hope and they want to be reassured; they want medical treatment and drugs such as PEP for HIV. Many are worried about being pregnant, they need social support and access to justice. Others, such as a girl who is being abused by her father, are looking for a safe place to go, and we link them up with other organisations such as CRADLE (The Children's Foundation) and WRAP. I feel happy when they call and tell me they really appreciated the services they were given.

> There are pictures in my mind that will never go away completely.

Looking at strategies to tackle gender-based violence, one would be to draw attention to its effects. I think that people do not get to know the impact GBV has. People who are sexually abused may get physical problems such as urine incontinence; emotional trauma; and they fear returning to a community where they know they might face stigma and shame as victims of sexual violence. As social workers, we support their emotional healing and we encourage them to share their story with people they trust so that they can get support when they go home. When it comes to the perpetrators, people do not even know for how long someone has been jailed. If, for instance, a politician has done this or that, it is front page news, it is everywhere, and we all know about it. Why can't this be done for rape cases? That landlord who defiled the four-year-old girl was jailed for 15 years; why can't we have that as a headline on the front page of the papers? Why can't it be on all the radios so that would-be perpetrators get the feel of how it sounds?

I look into my future and see that I can go for all the monthly supervisions, the personal therapies, but still, there are some things I will never be able to forget; there are pictures in my mind that will never go away completely. I can continue where I am for the time being, interacting with people who have been abused on a daily basis, but I will not be able to do this forever. I will never stop fighting for the rights of women and children, but I want to go to another level: to advocate and get the best strategies and policies in place to fight GBV.

Chapter 5: Making Change Happen

Gender based violence is a human injustice and can result in serious health problems for people subjected to violence, which has implications for development and progress in Kenya. These facts are not lost on the many people and organisations working to make the country a safer place for women, men, girls and boys. In this chapter, we hear from a former Minister of Gender, Children and Social Development on her work on this issue, and we learn how NGOs and government are working together to improve health facilities' responses to GBV, as well as how the private sector can and does add its weight to the cause.

GBV Takes So Many Forms – Esther Murugi Mathenge

Editor's note: Esther Murugi worked closely with GIZ when she was the Minister of Gender. She is currently the Minister for Special Programmes. She was the Minister of Gender, Children and Social Development from 2008 to August 2010.

I got into parliament on my third attempt. My first attempt was in 1997 but I was very naive and did not get far. I tried again in 2002 and I was number two, so I said I think there is hope, and in 2007 I really went full blast. I raised money for my campaign, and I went on the ground from 2003 onwards; I was in every corner of the constituency, making sure that people knew me and what I wanted to do for them. As a member of Soroptomists International, I interacted a lot with women at the grass roots, and every time I met with these women they said that their issues were not being addressed by the leaders. I focused on issues, not personalities, and in 2007 I won and I became the MP for Nyeri Town constituency.

I grew up in Nyeri County in a very big extended family. My grandmother, the one who I am named after, had a great influence on me because, in spite of her age, she was literate, she owned a lot of properties and she was the one who made sure we all worked hard in school. One of my best memories from my childhood was of playing with our homemade roller coasters on the steep slopes near our home. We would make carts with wheels cut from a tree trunk, one at the front and two at the back, with a place where you sat and a rope, which was the steering wheel. The wheels were greased with cow dung so that they would roll smoothly. We would get on our carts at the top of the hill and go down as fast as we could. Because of my small size, I was an expert at manoeuvring the carts, and I was known as the champion because I could do it better than any of the boys. In the process, I ruined my dresses and had to convert to trousers, so I learnt from an early age to wear trousers.

After secondary school I went to university and studied Land Economics. I was one of only two women in a class of 45. I met my boyfriend at university and we went on to get married but it did not last, the relationship was not working. Looking back, I think I could, perhaps, have been a little more patient, but in the end there was nothing my husband could have done to keep me in that marriage. I had three children: a daughter, who is a human resource consultant, a son, who is pilot, and my other son who was in between them, who passed away some years ago in an accident, so I have two grown children now.

I was appointed the Minister of Gender, Children and Social Development when I became an MP and it made me realise very quickly the extent of gender-based violence in Kenya. I decided early on that I wanted to aggressively work on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) because it is a violation against girls and the worst thing about it is that we, as women, condone it, because we are the ones who carry out the practice. I wanted to add my voice to those speaking out against FGM and so I spoke publicly on the issue as often as I could. As a ministry, we linked with groups of elders, such as the Meru Elders and the Kuria, to condemn the practice. There are many NGOs working to stop FGM, so we set up the National FGM Coordinating Committee to map and keep track of the work everyone was doing. Since the ratification of the Children's Act in 2001, FGM has been illegal in Kenya, and statistics from the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey of 2008/2009 show that there has been some decline: overall in Kenya, FGM has dropped by 11% in the last ten years. But still, in some ethnic groups it is extremely high, most notably among the Kisii, where 96% of the girls still undergo FGM. In 2008, the Ministry partnered with UNICEF to carry out a study on the effectiveness of the approaches taken to address FGM, such as Alternative Rites of Passage (ARPs) and Intergenerational Dialogue (IDG). Also, we work with UNICEF/UNFPA and other partners to support initiatives, which encourage communities to abandon FGM.

The Prohibition of FGM Act 2011 was passed into law in 2011 but laws alone will not stop FGM; I believe we need many approaches. I have been saying we may need to go the 'Chinese way', that is, the way they ended the practice of tying up girls' feet to keep them tiny. They tabled bills and passed acts in parliament and it was outlawed in 1912. But this did not stop the practice until women came out strongly and said our boys will not marry any girl whose feet have been tied. This, coupled with a strict prohibition against foot binding enforced when the Communists came to power in 1949 ensured that the practice died. Also, we need to bring men on board. If men say they will not marry girls who are circumcised, it could put an end to it because the belief is that girls are being cut so that they can get husbands.

> I decided early on that I wanted to aggressively work on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) because it is a violation against girls

I first saw gender based violence in the domestic sphere when a neighbour of ours would to beat his wife. He would get drunk practically every day, and then walk all the way home and collapse at the gate of his compound. His wife would carry him into the house, and then he would beat her. One day she decided enough was enough and she did not go to pick him up at the gate and he spent the night out there. As far as I remember, that was the end of the beatings. Also, there was a polygamous family where there were three wives, and the husband used to say he was 'disciplining' his wives when he beat them. In the village at that time, this type of violence was generally perceived as ok; a man could discipline his wife. But having been brought up in my family where we had a strong mother as a role model and we were allowed to say what we thought, we naturally would not put up with violence.

When I became the Minister of Gender in 2008, I realised that so many of us do not take gender based violence seriously, and that saying sorry is not good enough. It will remain a big challenge in this part of the world when you have cases such as that of a woman who is raped and then has a broken bottle pushed into her private parts, and her area chief insists that this should be sorted out 'kinyumbani' (at home, without going to court). Another example is when a family resists prosecution of a father who rapes his daughter because he is the sole bread-winner for that family.

> I realised that so many of us do not take gender based violence seriously, and that saying sorry is not good enough.

I was working hard to have a bill that was called the Family Protection Bill enacted in parliament before I was moved to the Ministry of Special Programmes last year [2010]. I think we really need to talk to both sexes about domestic violence because some men do things without understanding that it is a violation of a human right. We should also build many more rescue centres in Kenya. At the moment when a woman or a girl is in an abusive situation, we have very few places to take her, and that is something that we really need to change.

I remember there being uproar about something called domestic rape, or rape within marriage; people said that it does exist. This was when they were debating the Sexual Offences Act in parliament in 2006. But when you talk to women, you realise it is a reality for many of them. People also tend to think gender based violence only happens among the lower income groups, but in fact it traverses across all classes, from politicians and judges all the way down. And it takes so many forms, physical and sexual, including the language that is used towards women that is derogatory. To me, that too is violence against women.

Working With the System - Nduku Kilonzo

Editor's note: Nduku is the Executive Director of Liverpool VCT, Care and Treatment, a Kenyan NGO based in Nairobi. I spoke with Nduku at her home in Nairobi.

I grew up in Kitui county, mainly in the rural areas, where my mother was a head teacher and my father was a business man. After studying at Moi University in Eldoret, I joined a community based organisation, Educational Services Foundation, where I ran a library. Some of the programmes were about giving women access to information about basic things like hygiene and sanitation; a lot of things you take for granted. This is when I realised that women have a very hard life. They were in relationships where they were the bread winners – but they were not supposed to be bread winners, and they had to worry about their kids, take them to the hospital and do all the work. I had come from a family where violence was not the norm, though I had seen it in my extended family. But here, in this community, I saw it every day; it was normal and it just did not add up.

After about four years, I moved to work as a United Nations Volunteer under a UNDP programme as a gender specialist in Kilifi county. This was in the late 1990s, and that is really what changed things for me. I would go to schools where there were 60 girls in Standard One and two girls in Standard Eight; there were so many early marriages. I also worked with the district's hospitals and saw victims of violence, especially sexual violence, and it was so accepted as a norm. I realised that I wanted to work in this field. When an opportunity came up at LVCT for a short term contract to do a situation analysis on the use of HIV post exposure prophylaxis (PEP) in the context of sexual violence, I thought, "Wow, this speaks to me." I got the contract and soon I knew that I had found the place I wanted to be.

I wanted to take it further, however, and do a PhD looking at post-rape care services in government hospitals in Kenya. I linked up with the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and they agreed that I could do the PhD with them if I was based at LVCT and found co-funding. I spent a long time applying for support and finally a donor, Trocaire, agreed to fund my PhD.

One of the challenges we have in Kenya is that we do not yet have a 'one-stop centre' in regular district hospitals that deals with all the needs of people who have been raped because this requires too many resources. At LVCT we work with government facilities to increase HIV testing and counselling within hospitals. With sexual violence, we focus on making sure that when someone who has been raped comes to a casualty ward, she gets the immediate care she needs, and we ensure that all the tests necessary are done and taken to the laboratory, and that she gets counselling, care and treatment. We use the existing framework for anti retroviral therapy that was being scaled up in government hospitals as the platform on which to provide PEP. So it is not a new system and it is not a parallel stand-alone system because neither of these works if your ultimate aim is to scale up. For us at LVCT, it has always been fundamental to work within the health systems that exist if we want to help this country to develop a system that works for delivering post-rape care.

> For us at LVCT, it has always been fundamental to work within the health systems that exist if we want to help this country to develop a system that works

Our work at LVCT contributed to improving knowledge on PEP, which is now widely available in Kenya. PEP provision is now a performance indicator for the Division of Reproductive Health, so more facilities will provide more comprehensive post-rape care. But even when PEP is available, we found that adherence in taking the drug was very poor. This could be for a number of reasons: you have to take the drugs for 28 days, which is a long time, and PEP has been shown to have side effects such as malaise and nausea. Also, hospitals cannot carry out good follow up of individuals because they do not have the resources to do so. Plus, sexual violence is stigmatised so most women don't tell anyone that they have been raped, so they do not have the support system to help them to continue with the treatment.

However, at the moment, sexual violence has acquired a profile in Kenya that it never had before because of the work of the National Gender Commission and the Sexual Offences Act. We need to capitalise on this in terms of prevention, which is about behaviour change and social transformation. One of the things that is grossly lacking is dedicated financing for a social mobilisation campaign that would shift people's attitudes. If you look at VCT and knowledge of HIV status ten years ago – most people did not want to know their status. But now, after huge campaigns which must have cost millions of dollars, sustained for three or four years, there is a change in thinking about the need to know one's HIV status. Now that's the kind of campaign that we need around sexual violence.

Free Services for People in Need – Doctor Sam Thenya

Editor's note: I interviewed Dr Thenya at his office at the Nairobi Women's Hospital. He is the founder of the hospital, which, through the Gender Violence Recovery Centre (GVRC) offers free medical services to people who have been subjected to gender based violence.

I never wanted to be a doctor when I was growing up in Muranga County. My dream was to be a pilot, and that one day I would come to our village, which was called Nyakihai, and pick up all the people I know and give them a ride in my plane to make them really happy. But my late father persuaded me that being a doctor would be a better, more life-long career by telling me that a pilot is just a glorified driver in the air. At the time I couldn't see what he was talking about, so we agreed on a compromise: that I would join medical school, become a doctor and then join the Flying Doctor's service so I would still fulfil my ambition to fly aeroplanes.

I was the last born son in a family of eight and it was my mother who taught me how to do business: we sold milk, we grew vegetables to sell and she opened my first bank account when I was in Class 6 in primary school. My older siblings were in high school and my father was a head teacher in a secondary school and would only come home on the weekend. Most of the time there were the three of us at home, my mother, my younger sister and me and we had a rota for cooking and cleaning because we both had homework so I grew up knowing that we all shared the responsibilities of being together as a family. Up to today I love cooking – it's what I do when I'm stressed.

After medical school and my internship in Nyeri, I returned to Nairobi for my post-graduate studies in obstetrics and gynaecology. In 1998-1999, when I was working at a private hospital, a couple of things happened that shaped my life. I started working on a concept that was popular in many other parts of the world, a women's hospital, because I believed that a specialist facility would serve patients better. I tried to sell the concept to the hospital where I was, but they wouldn't buy it. Then I was hired by FIDA (The Federation of Women Lawyers) as part of a team to do a survey on violence against women. The medical students we sent to collect data at the antenatal clinics in the major hospitals in Nairobi came back with shocking statistics: 60% of the women interviewed reported experiencing some violence in the previous 12 months. I actually thought the medical students hadn't gone to the hospitals and had simply filled in the questionnaires themselves, so I insisted on going with them, but we came up with the same data.

The next thing that happened was at work one Sunday afternoon. It's not usually a very busy time and I noticed a woman in the emergency area who looked smart, but dirty, and I could see that she had been roughed up. She was having an argument with the cashier, so I walked up to find out what was going on, and the cashier told me that the woman wanted to be seen but she didn't have any money and no ID. The cashier asked the woman to go to Kenyatta

> In about 60% of the cases, the person who has been violated knows the perpetrator, but very few want to press charges.

National Hospital but she refused. I dug into my pocket, paid for her, and when I attended to her I discovered she had been sexually assaulted by a gang of street boys. The whole experience really upset me because the hospital claimed to be one of the best in East Africa and yet we couldn't serve somebody in need, for free.

The next day I went to see the hospital's CEO and he said, "One day you want to set up this women's hospital thing of yours, now you want us to give free services. Look, Sam Thenya, if you want to do free services, go start your own hospital." And, for me, it was my 'Aha' moment. That's how I started Nairobi Women's Hospital.

From that day, I refined my plan and I started looking for premises. One day I was watching television and there was a report that a hospital in Nairobi called Hurlingham Hospital had closed down, so the very next day I went there and told the auctioneer, "I'm going to pay you whatever you are owed, I want this hospital." I had already started speaking to some doctors and I got 16 people to back me financially. I made it very clear from the start that even if Nairobi Women's Hospital was a profit making entity, we would give free services for those who came through our doors that were victims of violence.

We opened the hospital in March 2001, and in the beginning I was as front line as front line could be because I was the only doctor. My day would typically start at 6am at the hospital and end, if I was lucky, at 10 or 11pm, and it was like that for about two or three years. It was tough, I lost a few friends along the way, but my wife understood what I was trying to do.

Now we get seven cases a day, on average, which is a pretty high figure but it's not unusual. We trained staff at Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital, in Eldoret, when they set up their centre, and now they see about the same number of GBV cases as we do: five to ten cases a day. We can't be in every corner of the country, so we are working with other partners, training them and helping them to offer the services. It doesn't take much, mainly putting in the physical infrastructure and training up the staff already there.

The people who come to the Gender Violence Recovery Centre (GVRC) cut across all sections of society, all ages, the rich and the poor, but of course the poor report more to GVRC because it's free. In about 60% of the cases, the person who has been violated knows the perpetrator, but very few want to press charges. There was a case we had where a senior executive sexually abused his daughter, who was a Class Eight primary school girl. They were alone on a Sunday morning in their house in one of the rich suburbs of Nairobi when he raped her, and she ran out and attracted the attention of the neighbours, who brought her to the hospital. He had two other daughters who were at university at that time, and when they came to the hospital from church with their mother, they told us that their father had also been assaulting them for many years. What shocked me was that the mother turned against her daughters, saying, "How can you accuse your father of doing this?" The father told us that we wouldn't be able to do anything to him because he knew everyone he needed to know and he could buy out everybody. He accused one of our doctors of having an eye on his wife, and said he would sue us if we tried to pursue the case. Unfortunately the Sexual Offences Act was not there at that time, and the girls chose not to press charges. Now, with the Sexual Offences Act, it is much clearer that a crime is a crime, and in a rape case such as this, the state could prosecute on the girl's behalf because it is a crime like murder.

In an effort to reduce gender-based violence, we hold meetings with community leaders because they are important in shaping opinions. We still need to make women – and even children – aware of what sexual offences are so that they know that if someone touches them 'there', it is a crime and they should be able to report it. The perpetrators must be punished, severely, according to the minimum sentencing spelt out in the Sexual Offences Act. The perpetrator should be made public too; that was the idea behind the Offenders Register, which the Attorney General is compelled to maintain, although this hasn't yet been done.

Above all, we won't win this battle unless we involve men, hence the campaign we launched last year of 'A Million Fathers and Daughters.' Men are passionate about their daughters and their mothers, about the women in their lives, so if you got a million men to genuinely speak against gender based violence and to commit to protecting women, then we could reduce this problem quite considerably. We aim to have a million signatures from men on our website, so that we have a massive number saying, it's not just a women's issue, it's a societal problem. It is also an economic problem, and I want to collect evidence that will highlight the economic burden of gender violence in Kenya. Then we can start talking to the people who run the economy so we all understand how heavy a burden this is. The moment you do that, you will stop trivialising it, because it has been trivialised before, and people will start focusing and saying, my goodness, this is a serious problem and we need to address it.

A Corporate Response to Gender Based Violence - Les Baillie

Editor's note: Mr Baillie is the Chief Investor Relations Officer, Safaricom; Chair of the Board, Safaricom Foundation and a board member, Gender Violence Recovery Centre. I interviewed him in his office at the Safaricom headquarters in Nairobi.

I came to Kenya on secondment from Vodafone for twelve months when Safaricom started in 2000. It was quite a change for my wife and I because neither of us had worked outside of the UK before. The main attraction was that it was a 'green field start-up operation' – starting a totally new business from scratch – which was something I had done before with Vodafone, where I held several Financial Director positions. We have been in Kenya ever since – for over ten years – and have little intention of going back to the UK on a full time basis despite having four grown up children who live there.

There are many reasons why we are so happy in Kenya, but my main satisfaction has been the rapid development of Safaricom and the huge contribution it has made to the country. The use of mobile technology, and M-Pesa in particular, has had such a beneficial effect on most of the Kenyan population, especially the poorer people. My work with Safaricom Foundation, which was set up in 2003 to support community projects in education, health, economic empowerment, environmental conservation, arts, culture, music and sports, has been especially rewarding. It has given me the chance to see many parts of Kenya, and to meet many wonderfully dedicated people who have made huge sacrifices to help other Kenyans.

I first came across the Gender Violence Recovery Centre (GVRC) at the Nairobi Women's Hospital in 2004 when Sam Thenya, the CEO of the hospital, approached Safaricom Foundation for funding. He invited us to the GVRC and we realised pretty quickly that they needed support because most of their budget came from profits from the Nairobi Women's Hospital. We could not fund their entire budget, which was about 15 million shillings a year, but we told them that we would match their funding up to a maximum of 7.5 million shillings. We also agreed to help them fundraise so that it was a two-way partnership; we knew they had the capability to raise more money, but they needed help to do it. Using our contacts, we ran an advert, in conjunction with the British High Commission, to publicise the GVRC on the breakfast show on Capital Radio. Shortly after that, Coca Cola Foundation came in to support the GVRC and then so did Terres des Hommes, the Netherlands-based donor, and the GVRC very quickly raised about 3 million shillings. The GVRC suggested that two of the foundation's trustees become signatories to its bank account because they felt the amount we were giving them was significant, and they wanted to show that their governance was good. We were happy to do this to ensure that the money was going to the right areas and not being used to buy a nice expensive car for somebody.

> When a woman is raped there is a major effect on her husband, father and sons, and the reaction from these men can have a major positive or negative impact on the woman.

We decided we would help GVRC to run an annual fundraising dinner – an upmarket, expensive dinner. We have done four so far, one in the Nairobi national park, two in the Nairobi Arboretum and one at Carnivore last year. The idea is to raise both awareness and funding. It is predominantly aimed at corporates, because we charge about 100,000 shillings for a table of ten, and last year about 800 people came along. We get in big name artists; last year it was the Soweto String Quartet; the year before it was Oliver Mtukudzi from Zimbabwe; and in previous years we have had Eric Wainaina and other local artists. It costs about four to five million shillings, which we raise through sponsorship. I think it has become so successful because of the cause, but also the entertainment and the whole set up makes it a major attraction on the social scene. It has become very popular with corporates who want to support a good cause and have a good time.

The GVRC got the Kenya Rugby Sevens players on board, as figure heads, to highlight the role of men in gender based violence. We wanted to demonstrate that violence against women also affects those close to the victim. When a woman is raped there is a major effect on her husband, father and sons, and the reaction from these men can have a major positive or negative impact on the woman. The attendance of the Rugby Sevens at the last two fundraising dinners has raised a lot of funds because they were part of the auction. They are role models for men, and whilst I cannot say for sure what impact they have had, the intention is to put across the notion that if these big beefy men care about the cause, then all men should care because it can affect them as much as it does the women.

I am now one of three men on the GVRC board, which, I think, shows my personal commitment to the cause. I am very keen on raising awareness because there are still parts of the population that want to brush it away and say it does not exist, or they say it is just what happens, it is no big deal; if you beat up your wife, so what? It is a mindset, and I do not think it is a class thing; certainly it's not about class in the UK where it cuts across all of society. But I am sure that poverty can only exacerbate the problem. Safaricom Foundation sees the direct results of its grant as it helps those people who come to the GVRC , but we also see the multiplier effect of our support: other donors have come in on the back of our involvement, which makes our impact greater in the fight against GBV.

Chapter 6: Hear Our Stories

'A horrifying 17 years with three beautiful flowers [my children] to nurture. Thanks for listening and God bless.' This was a text message from Khadija after her interview for this book. In telling their stories the people in this chapter give us a glimpse into how they 'survive' with the different forms of trauma they are experiencing, picking up their lives and looking for the strength to move on. These final three stories illustrate both hope and despair – the reality of gender-based violence.

I Was Born into a Struggle – Violet

Editor's note: Violet is a sex worker in Mtwapa, but grew up in a village near Eldoret in the Rift Valley. I met Violet with Tina (interviewed earlier in the book) at the SOLWODI offices in Mtwapa. We talked in a tiny room, piled high with plastic chairs and boxes of condoms, which doubled up as SOLWODI's store and counselling room. Violet granted written permission for her first name to be used.

My father had seven wives and 28 children and he couldn't look after us all. I was the eighth of my mother's children. We lived in Kimumu village, near Eldoret. When my mother and father split up, she would sell changaa and busaa (locally made alcohol), get another husband, go to his place for a year or two and then come back to our village. We couldn't go with her so we were left with the other wives, and we suffered even more with them. We were definitely one of the poorest families in our area.

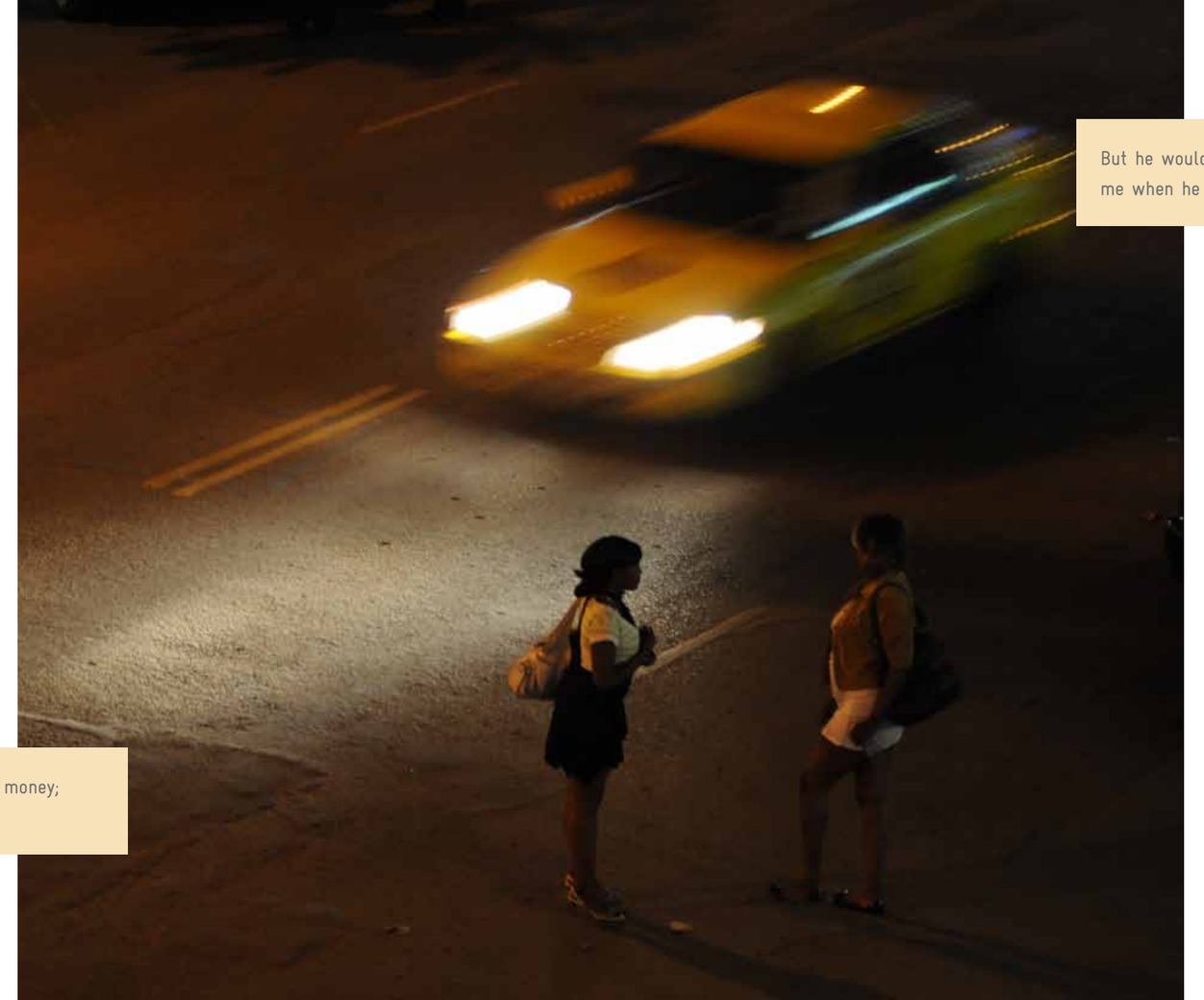
From a very early age, about 13, I started to stay with different men. I would find someone who would allow me to stay in his place and of course he would use me and then send me away in the morning. I wasn't really going to school, so I thought that if they slept with me, they would take me as a wife, but they didn't. The first man I went with was in his 20s, he was tall and dark and his body was big, like a bouncer. We went to his room one afternoon, he closed the door and told me what he wanted. I refused but he told me he would give me pocket money. I remember to this day, that he was huge, it hurt, but it was the start of how my life would be.

I gave birth to my first child in 1998 when I was 15. My aunt had taken me back to school and I was in Standard Eight. The boy who got me pregnant was also in school, and his father said there was no way his son could marry me. My own father said he couldn't help me, so I went to my mother, but she said, "If your boyfriend has refused to help you, you will have to look after yourself."

I had my son and I started work at the flower farms at 'Junction' near Eldoret, but the chemicals made me dizzy, so I found a job in a hoteli and that is where I met my husband, who also worked there. He was smart and looked like he had money; lots of girls liked him. I got pregnant by him, so he took me to his family's place in Kitale, and he went to Nairobi to look for work. I gave birth to my daughter, but my husband never came back. There, he got electrocuted and died, and we buried him in Kitale. I had been staying there without a man for three years, going to the fields every day to harvest potatoes for a mere 50 shillings a sack, so I decided to go back home.

My mother told me I couldn't stay, and that's when I decided to come to Mombasa. My elder sister was working for an old white woman here and she told me that I could find work here, maybe in the house of a mzungu, or I could do massage. I left my children with my mother. As soon as I got here my sister's husband tried to sleep with me, again and again,

> He was smart and looked like he had money; lots of girls liked him.



> But he would get very jealous and he would hit me when he was drunk.

while my sister was at work, but I refused because I knew that both my sister and her husband were HIV positive. When I told her about him, she said I was trying to steal him from her and she chased me away.

I then started this work; to 'go out' to the beach to see if I could get a mzungu to help me. I stayed with different friends, here and there, catching up with sleep during the day as I worked at night. I couldn't get other kinds of work because I didn't have any school certificates. A friend gave me some of her clothes, but I couldn't speak English, so the only way I could get a mzungu was by being cheaper than other girls. It was hard at first, but then with a bit of broken English and lots of sign language, I started to get men, but mostly the real 'mzungu mshamba' (low class whites).

There was one German who asked me how many children I had, and when he came on holiday for a few weeks we would be together and he would help me. He was old, 65, and he couldn't do much, and if he hurt me I couldn't say anything. He would say, "I am using my money; you need my money so you will do what I want." What could I do? I was able to send two thousand shillings to my mother every month for the children.

There was a time in the low season when I wasn't getting any work and I didn't send my mother money for two months, so she told me to collect my children. I said I didn't have the money to go there and I didn't have a house for them to stay in; I was squat-

ting in a room in Maweni, near Mtwapa. But she said, "There is a lorry coming to Mombasa and I will put your children on it. Everyone has to carry their own load." When they came they were dirty and thin and I cried. But I said crying is not going to help me, and I looked for a room for 800 shillings. My children were so happy to be with me because I talked to them nicely and made sure they got food.
When I had the room I found a boyfriend, a Luo. He came to Mombasa in 2003 and he didn't know much so I bought him clothes. The children began to treat him as if he was their father, and he helped in the house: he would cook, wash the dishes and look after the kids. He was a serious guy, and though he wasn't much to look at, I loved him anyway. At the beginning I was sonko because I was the one who was working. I would tell my children I was going out to parties every night or I did massage at the hotels. My boyfriend and I stayed together for four years, but he would get very jealous and he would hit me when he was drunk. I helped him find an older mzungu woman because I thought that would help us, but he got a lot of money from her and he didn't see the need to stay with me any longer. He went to live with her and now he is sonko and is running two bars.

It was at that time that I met the Russian. He was a tall, thin man in his 60s with a long pony tail and he carried a camera around his neck. He was on holiday and it wasn't his first time in Kenya. We met in a pub and I was wearing a long skirt, so I told him, "Let's go to my place so I can put on a mini skirt." You know wazungus think seeing you in a mini is an 'appetiser'. He got to see my home, which is one room in a Swahili house where I share a pit latrine and bathroom with the neighbours. My room also has my paraffin stove, utensils and jerry cans in it, and when the Russian saw it he told me he would help with my rent and the school fees for my children.

We went back to the bar, and as we were drinking beer he told me, "Now I have been to your place; I've seen how poor you are. Today you will be my slave whether you like it or not." I asked him, "What are you saying? I don't understand," and he said, "You will now see where I stay." He was drunk. We went to his room in the guest house above Jonty's bar. As soon as we entered, he locked the door and hid the key. We undressed and he lay naked on the bed. He had a wound on his thighs and around his groin. It looked like a very bad STI. He told me he wanted me to lick it for him and he would take pictures of me doing it. I refused, saying it was against our culture, but he told me, "You have to do this, whether you like it or not, I want this wound to be clean, do it now!" I refused and he hit me and my nose started to bleed. I banged on the door and I managed to jump up onto the window sill and screamed, "I'm here in room 21, help me, help me." He was trying to hold me and suddenly I saw that he had a gun and he was getting ready to use it. He said, "Today you will see how the Russian is. I can't kill animals or insects; I kill only people and you are the one I will kill today." Luckily the security men came running with three bouncers and they broke the door down, overcame him and called the manager.

The manager asked the Russian, "Aren't you supposed to be leaving at four this morning anyway?" The manager didn't want any trouble, and the Russian gave him 25,000 shillings. The police had been called, and when they arrived, one of the police officers looked at me and said, "Go away, go home, malaya, we'll talk about it with you tomorrow."

You can't protect yourself in this business; it's the risk you have decided to take. The police don't protect you; they want to sleep with you too. I was born into a struggle and I am still struggling, but I have very good support from my friends. We were trained as peer educators with a NGO, SOLWODI, and now, every week, I go out to talk to women and men about HIV and safe sex. I also take people who are HIV positive to Bomu clinic, over on the other side of Mombasa, for treatment and care. People don't want to go to the nearby clinics because of the stigma, so I take them to a place where no one will know them. We help each other. I'm still struggling to educate my children. My son did very well in his KCPE and he is now in Form One in western Kenya. My daughter is still in primary, we stay together, but she tells me her ambition is not just to finish school but to go to university. I will do what I can to make that happen.

"In the Somali tradition, women were considered to be second class citizens so while Islam puts women on a high pedestal, culture puts her down. For instance, people in the Ijara area in Garissa had a tradition of very harsh treatment of women. When a woman made a mistake, the man told her to get a rope, a stick and a stool. He would then lead her out of the village. In the bush, he would use the rope to tie her to a tree, beat her with the stick, and when he was tired, he would rest on the stool until he was ready to beat her again. Afterwards the woman was untied and taken back to the village. From the 1970s onwards, these cases have reduced as Islam, education and the rule of law become more widespread. But these things are true and they should be talked about and condemned so that people can move on from the past."
Umar Husseinali, Community Elder, Wajir, Chairman of Northern Water Service Board and founding member of Wajir South Development Association (WASDA)

What Would I Become? – Njoroge

Editor's note: GIZ introduced me to Njoroge, a cameraman, who agreed to be interviewed on one of his days off work. We met at the GIZ office in central Nairobi. Njoroge did not want his real name to be used in the book. His first wife's name has also been changed.

I was brought up in a very disciplined family; my parents told us your friends are books, nothing else. I was born in 1971 on the outskirts of Kiambu, and I grew up with my nine siblings, four boys and five girls. I lost my father at the time I finished my A levels and couldn't afford to go to college so I started working as a matatu conductor. I did it for a year until I got my driving license. As a teenager in the matatu industry, I had few worries: I had money, sex and food; what else did I need? You know you are smart, you have money, you see those girls coming, you take someone for chips and soda and that's it, it turns into a relationship.
I was operating in one of the estates in Nairobi, driving one of those fancy matatus with music when I met Wanja. She was disciplined, smart and stubborn and I thought that she could transform my life. But one time, early on, I saw a side to her character that I wasn't sure of. We went to meet some of my friends from school in a bar and after Wanja saw these women and men, she got offended and she stormed out of the pub. It was very late at night and I chased after her, but she jumped into a bus and was gone. I met her a few days later and asked her what happened,

> Men need to be tamed in one way or the other, and I thought she could tame me.

and she said, “You have to decide what you want.” I asked her, “Do you mean I have to do away with my friends?” And she said, “Yes.” At that time I saw it as positive because she had already won my heart; I thought she was tough and she inspired me. Men need to be tamed in one way or the other, and I thought she could tame me.

We had a traditional wedding, we lived together and we were blessed with our first kid in 1998. I would leave the house at three in the morning because I was now driving long distance from Nairobi to Garissa. My vehicle was popular because I was a very fast driver but very careful. I wanted to make two trips to Garissa in a day, but I used to get tired. My wife complained that I always got home late, so I invited her to come with me one day and even before we came back from Garissa she realised that this was a tiring job.

One day I brought some friends to come and see our baby – they were women and men – and they brought gifts. My wife prepared a meal for them and we had a good time. Two days later, I came home from work, it was very late, around 11pm, and I found her ironing, which was strange. She said, “Why do you bring people here who you are having a relationship with? I have discovered you have a girlfriend and you brought her here to see our baby.” I said, “No, why would I do that? You have seen my work; where would I get time to do these things?” She pulled the iron out of the socket and threw it at me. Somehow I blocked it with my hands and it fell and broke into pieces. She came for me but I was stronger than her, I managed to hold her back. We struggled and at one point she reached for a knife. She was getting more furious, and when someone is angry they can become very strong, and I felt as if I was going to faint. I gathered my strength and pushed her towards the bedroom and ran out to my brother’s house in the same compound. She chased me there with the knife, and insulted my brother and his wife using very bad language.

I spent the night at my brother’s, and luckily the car keys were in my pocket so I left very early the next morning for Garissa. By around 3 or 4pm I was back in Nairobi and I went for lunch. While I was eating, I saw my wife standing near my matatu with our baby, fuming, and she sent someone to call me. I went to where she was and we didn’t talk, not even one word, she just put the baby in my arms and went. I had to cancel my second trip to Garissa and find a matatu to my village. I took the baby, who was very young, still crawling, home to my mother and told her what had happened. I said that I didn’t know how I was going to keep on working because my wife had humiliated me in a place where I was respected. I was very down and I decided to leave Wanja, so I packed up everything of mine and went to stay at my mother’s house. I was there for around three months when my wife and I reconciled and we shifted to another place, and we had long discussions to look for a way forward. We actually coped very well for some time.

Things were going well in my career at that time. After eight years I got out of the matatu industry and got a job as a driver with a media company. That is when I got my first opportunity to take pictures for the newspaper and television. My interest in pictures started at a young age; I used to like movies and was inspired by newspaper pictures. I was congratulated for the photos I took, but I knew that to get a job I had to get trained, but I didn’t have the money. But, you know, if you have an interest in something God will always send his help. A lady who used to work in the same company offered to pay my full college fees,

which was about 70,000 shillings. She left Kenya soon after that and we lost touch, so I have never had the chance to tell her that I graduated and got a permanent job as a cameraman.

After six years, my wife and I got our second child, but it was after a long struggle because even making love was a problem. She really denied me, sex was given to me in small doses like prescription medicine and it was killing me slowly but surerly, and I started losing interest in many other things. Wanja would tell me, “You think you’re going forward but you’re not going anywhere. You have taken yourself to college but you won’t go far.” She didn’t appreciate anything I did, and she valued her friends more than she did me. She would come and tell me all the time, “Now, I hear...” and then share some story, like I was having an affair with one of the big managers, which was not true. Her brothers and sisters were all good people and they would try to advise her, but she was rude to them too.

It was difficult for me to share with anybody what was going on. I would go to work with a bruised face and say I had been hit by the wardrobe door. She took advantage of the fact that I wouldn’t respond physically. I felt that I was less of a man because of the harassment, and being denied conjugal rights. But when she hit me I wouldn’t retaliate because I knew she would create a scene and I would be humiliated again.

The climax came one day when I came home late after covering a political function in Nakuru. I had spent the whole day in the hot sun in the stadium and I had a severe headache. I called her to say we were back in Nairobi and that I had a very bad headache but I would be back after the 9 o’clock news. I was the last person to be dropped home by the work vehicle, at around 11pm, as I lived furthest from town. When I got home I told her to make strong tea because my headache was still aching. She did so, and while I was drinking it, I asked her in a low tone, “Would you by any chance happen to have any Hedex or Panadol in the house?” Eh, she opened her big mouth and threw insults at me: “Why don’t you go back to where you have come from, from those prostitutes?” I couldn’t handle it; I actually shouted, “God, why don’t you take away my life?”

I went to the bedroom and lay down. When I touched her pillow, I saw the edge of a knife under it. My fatigue went, my headache went. I returned the pillow to its place and decided to wait for her to come to the bedroom. She took more than an hour. When she came in, she roared like a lion, pushed me and went for the knife, but I held her wrist and asked her, “What have I done to you that you want to finish me again?” She actually bit me on my arms and stabbed me – you can still see the scars. A neighbour heard the noise and came in and saw that my hands were bleeding. He asked me, “Why do you have to fight your wife?” I told him it was just a small issue. I didn’t know what else to do or say.

From that day on I had sleepless nights in that house; I was too frightened. And so I would park outside a pub and sleep in my car until morning and then go to work. My children wanted to know where I was, but I couldn’t tell them because I was scared. It went on like this for a year and a half, and my health and my work suffered; I was tired all the time and I lost weight.

Then I was given some time off work, and offered a holiday in Malindi by an organisation that I had filmed a number of times. They put me up in a children’s home where I helped out in the mornings, and after lunch I went for long walks on the beach. I started seeing my life more clearly and I thought about how far I had come. There had been so many positive things in my life, but what about tomorrow? What would I become? And if I kept moving up the career ladder and I became a senior person, how could I go to functions with Wanja who did such things to me? I decided I had to leave her. The biggest challenge was my children, whom I love so much; they had always been my reason to stay. But I said to myself, isn’t it better for the boys if I leave but I’m still alive so they can see me, rather than if I died in that relationship and left them forever?

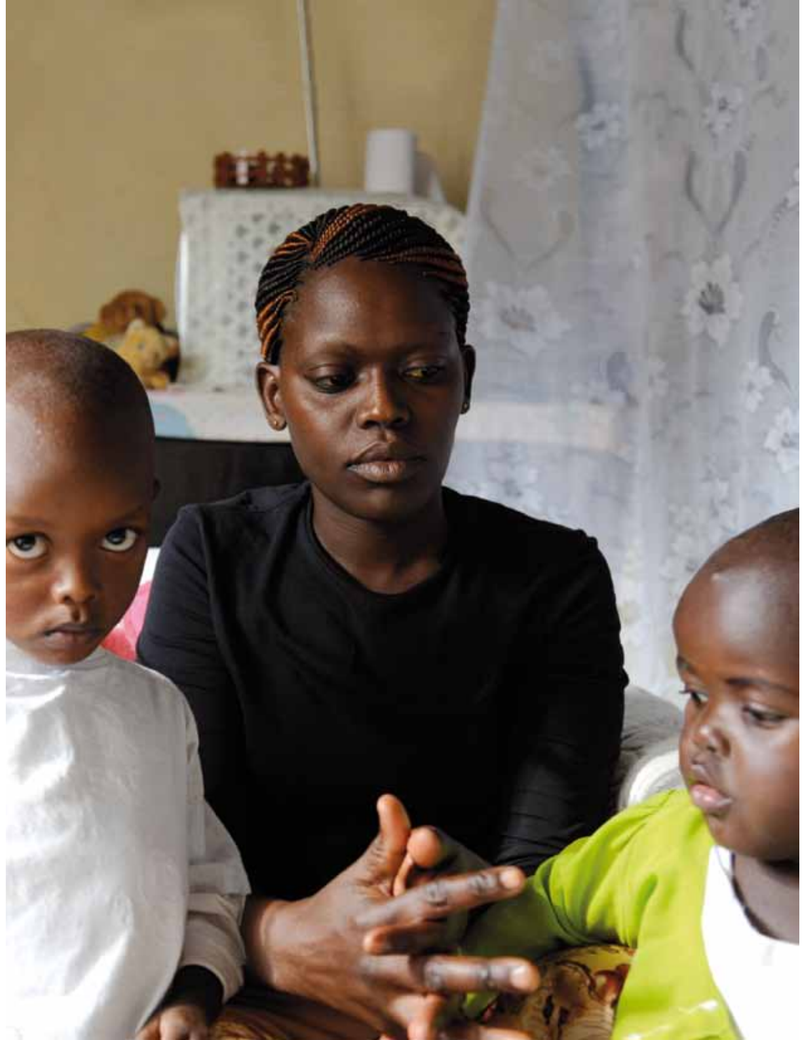
When I got back from Malindi, I woke up one morning and told her, “I’m leaving and you will never see me again. There is nothing to debate; you have humiliated me enough.” She couldn’t believe it because all I took was what I was wearing, trousers and a shirt, I didn’t even carry a paper bag, nothing, and I have never returned to take anything. I stayed at a friend’s place for less than a week, and then I got a small house along Thika Road and put a mattress on the floor. I tried to stabilise. I needed my peace; I needed to sleep. I looked for money and was able to get a better house. Wanja tried to keep the children but I had the upper hand because I was providing for them, and when they were asked whom they wanted to stay with, they said me. If they had said their mother, I would have said ok, but they, too, wanted their peace.

Two years after I left her, that is last year, I got another wife, who has a child from a previous relationship. We now stay together and I’m a happy man. My new wife knows everything about my life and I know about her life too. She has taken my kids like they are hers and, as of now, we are living in peace.

Somehow I Survived - Njeri

Editor's note: Njeri was interviewed by Margaret Ogola at Njeri's home in Kiambu County. She was born in Kericho in Kenya's Rift Valley. Her family was one of many attacked during the post election violence in 2008. Men forcibly entered their house, injected her one-year-old son with a substance then threw him against the wall, killed her husband and gang-raped Njeri. She did not want her full name to be used..

Somehow I survived and so did my baby; we were found by my aunt who came looking for us, and we were taken to the Nakuru Showground IDP camp. My baby was treated and luckily he has had no long term physical problems, but he is still traumatised. They gave me counselling. In the next month after the attack I missed my period. I had not had sex with my husband since my last period, and I told the counsellor I knew I was pregnant, but I was advised to wait because the shock could have caused me to miss a period. I told them there was no way I could carry this pregnancy, I needed an abortion, but they counselled me and sedated me with drugs. I was told the government was following IDPs closely and if they found anyone doing an abortion there could be trouble. I delivered the baby by caesarean section but my heart wasn't interested in looking after her. I was persuaded to breastfeed her, and it wasn't until she was one and a half that I started feeling like I could love her in any way.



I reported my experience to the Waki Commission, and I have now come to live in Kiambu because my life was threatened at Mawingu IDP camp. In January [2009], I became sick and I was admitted to Ol'Kalou District Hospital. At about 1am one night, some people came to my bed saying, "Njeri, please wake up." When I opened my eyes there were three big men there, and one drew a pistol on me and said, "Move, we're going." But the patient in the next bed woke up, and screamed, and they ran off. I wrote a statement and then I was taken back to Mawingu Camp under security, but I was followed there. That night they cut my old tent and damaged my things, and I was advised to leave the camp, so I came to Kiambu.

My main challenge now is that I have two children. I'm not educated enough to get a job so money is not easy to come by. I wash clothes for people and clean houses, and sometimes I even have to sell myself, after all I have been through. These days when the month of December approaches, I become depressed and confused, I can't sleep. Sometimes, when things are too much, my mind gives way and I get admitted to Mathari Mental Hospital.

'During the post election violence in Kenya we treated 653 people with comprehensive services at the GVRC but we believe they were just the tip of the iceberg. Those who managed to reach the GVRC told us that there were so many more people who couldn't get to the hospital who had been assaulted. We gave evidence to the Waki Commission because we had data to show that the violence was systematic, planned and targeted at certain communities in certain areas. Sexual violence was being used as a tool of war, a weapon of war.'
Dr Sam Thenya, GVRC

Do Not Let This Break You – Hassan

Editor's note: Hassan, who is 28 years old, only agreed to be interviewed if it were carried out by his friend, Jeanette Riedl, an intern with GIZ. Jeanette interviewed him in a café in Nairobi. He did not want his real name to be used.

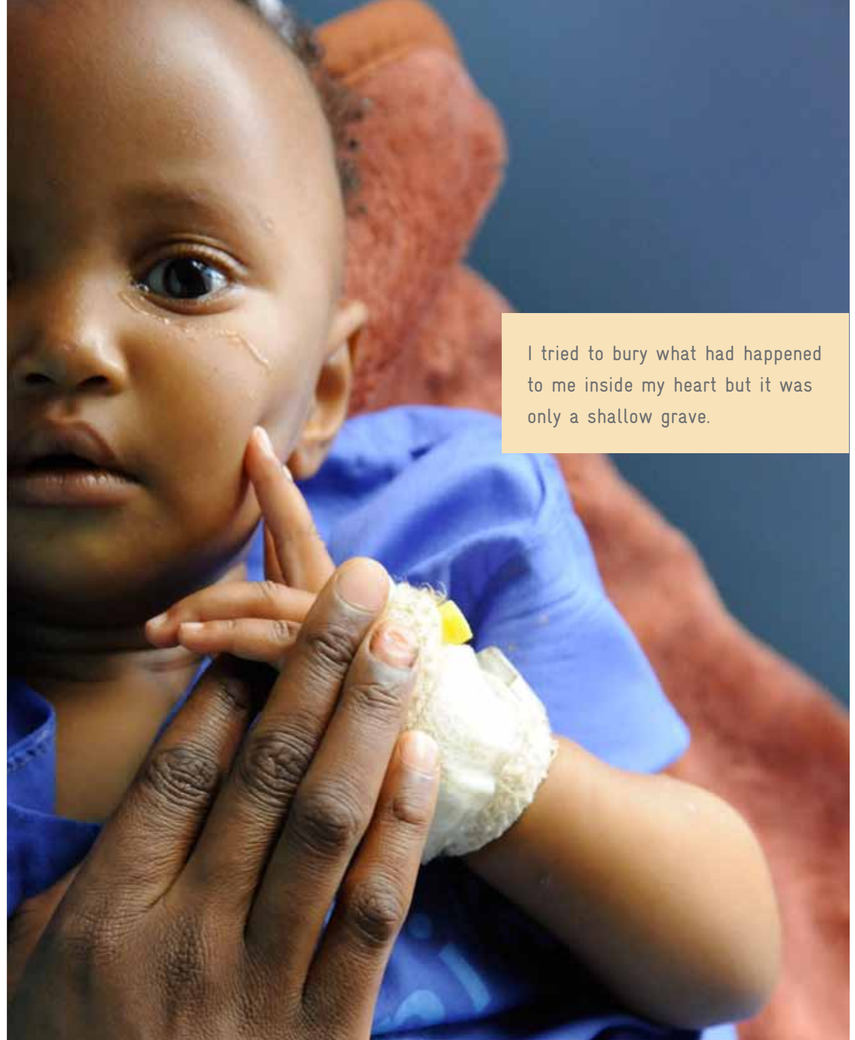
I grew up with my grandparents in Nyali, Mombasa in a six-bedroom house with a big garden with lots of roses, because my grandmother used to love the smell of roses. Our garden had many fruit trees with monkeys that I used to chase with our dog, and there was a place to play football with my friends, we climbed trees and the beach was just a two-minute walk away, so we had fun as boys. My grandfather, who worked in shipping before he retired, taught me how to ride a bike, how to use a bow and arrow and catapults, and we went swimming and fishing together. He taught me how to read and made me read encyclopaedias. I loved reading; I read Sherlock Holmes, William Tell and, as a Muslim, of course I had to read the Quran.

I still do not know why my mother gave me to my grandparents, I think she was working but this seemed like an excuse to me. She would come and visit me around four times a week after work in the evening and she would bring me goodies, but we never had a mother-son relationship; to me she was like a visitor who came to say hi. I was her only child but I never went to her house so I do not even know if she lived with my father, who was an alcoholic. He would come to visit too and was abusive, saying I was weak and worthless when I was still a very young kid. He disappeared after some time and started a new family.

I got along well with my uncles; they would take me for motorsports, rallying, go-carting, but my grandfather was the one I looked up to. He was smart and intelligent, he used to play music and he had this pipe he would smoke and he looked so cool. My grandmother was so generous, she would give anyone food and a place to stay and she would help the whole estate. She would tell me stories, walk me to the school bus and she taught me that everyone is the same, no matter what colour or religion, and I try to live my life by her beliefs.

I was about six years old when it started. There was this couple, family friends, who would come and visit us. It was subtle, they would be very nice to me, buy me presents, especially those small model aeroplanes that I loved. It started with the woman; she would tell me I was a good boy, say how nice I was, and that next time she would get me a bigger present, a present for a man. She would come to my bedroom, tell me she wanted to give me something, and then she would tell me to touch her here, do this. I was reluctant, I did not want to, but she kept going on and on, stroking my hair, touching me. I just wanted it to stop so I did whatever she said. I could not run or start screaming, it is not easy to do that, all you want is for it to be over. After some time the guy would come too and she would tell me what to do to him. They also started doing things in front of me, saying look at us, look at what he is doing to me; they made me watch them together, kissing, touching and having sex with each other.

I do not remember exactly how long it went on for, but it was for way too long, maybe two and a half, three years. I did not feel anything when they did it, it became like walking or breathing to me. Whenever it was happening, all I could think of was to do what they wanted so that it stopped. I did not understand



I tried to bury what had happened to me inside my heart but it was only a shallow grave.

what they were doing but they told me that they would hurt my grandmother if I told anyone, and I did not want her to get hurt so I did not say anything. They told me I was no longer a boy, I was a man, and that men kept secrets, so those threats kept me quiet.

I think my grandmother suspected something because she asked me if there was something going on, if there was anything I wanted to tell her, and that I should not be afraid to tell her anything because I am her son. I just cried and cried when she said that. Then it stopped, just like that; I guess my grandmother must have done something because I never saw that couple again.

Outwardly the most obvious problems I had were anger problems and a severe distrust of people. I went for anger management classes when I was around ten years old and psychiatrists came up with different diagnoses, one said I had 'dark triad' traits of self obsession, impulsiveness, callousness and deceitfulness, while another said I was a psychopath.

I tried to bury what had happened to me inside my heart but it was only a shallow grave. It was always on my mind and I was scared of being in my room. I felt so much hate for the world and I felt betrayed and vulnerable. As a teenager I managed to some extent because I was good at sports which attracted the girls. I wasn´t a Casanova but I was one of the cool dudes and I had many friends. We played a lot of football and there was this rivalry between us: the posh side and the not so posh one on the other side of the road; we were Man United, they were Man City. I also coped through music, listening to it or playing the guitar, which would take me to a safe place, a different world where nothing went wrong. I wrote poems and music and I had these imaginary friends in my head who helped me to escape. They were always there for me and made everything alright. With them it was as if it had never happened, and I could wipe out my history: where I stayed, where I went to school. Although it was in my imagination, I came to believe this other parallel world existed, which was the complete opposite of my reality. It eventually affected my mental condition.

Both my grandparents are now dead and I never told them about the abuse. The first person I told was my ex-girlfriend, then my current girlfriend and now my psychologist and my doctor. My girlfriends were shocked to begin with but they have both helped me through everything and they have been good to me. I went to university but I found it difficult to keep friends, I was not as talkative and funny as I used to be; it has controlled my life. I have recently started therapy and counselling because I eventually had a serious break down; I got very confused and could not differentiate between reality and imagination. I have been told that the abuse is the cause of my mental condition and that there is no medicine that can cure it. If I accept it, forgive and move on from the past, the parallel universe in my head will deflate itself. Right now, at 28, I'm doing ok, I'm in a serious relationship and I hope with time and counselling it will get better. I still have nightmares and I still think about it, but I'm trying not to forget but to forgive. I would like to tell young people who have suffered any kind of abuse to try to speak out. It is not easy, it is very hard, but maybe if you give just a hint, someone can help you. And be careful with people who all of a sudden become your best friends. If it does happen, do not let it be the end of the world for you; unfortunately you are not alone, there are millions of us out there, just like you and just like me. Do not let it define you and do not let it break you because it is not who you are. We are with you.

Afterword

These are not just stories. These are real life experiences from people I can only describe as Kenyan s/heroes. Although the experiences shared are deeply troubling, I am humbled that Evelyn, Tina, Maryam, Rhoda, Samuel, Khadija, Rawi, Peter, Njoroge, Violet, Njeri, Hassan, Kanze, Dadu and others found the strength and courage to open up. They have shared very personal and truly inspiring stories that are a powerful message for Kenyans and the rest of the world. Gender based violence is real, and unacceptable. It has to stop! It can only be stopped by you and me.

From all the experiences shared, the pain and suffering seems too much to bear, but these s/heroes have borne it all, and gone beyond to not only reconstruct their lives, but to support others to heal. At the Gender Violence Recovery Centre, having given direct support to over 19,000 survivors of GBV over the last 10 years, we realize that we have a huge responsibility to society, "to bring back meaning to the lives of survivors and their families". The stories in this book highlight the loss of dignity and worth during the different phases of abuse and the struggle people go through to get a footing back into normal life. At GVRC we are committed to, and continue to deliver, meaning, so that people affected by gender based violence and their families can face life again.

Many of my colleagues and I spend sleepless nights reliving the events of the day. We can be frustrated by the systems, perpetrators, law enforcement and lack of funding for GBV, but we realize that we are the hope and the solution to ending GBV; not just as GVRC, but all of us, you and me. We can do something today, I can be my brother's keeper and my sister's protector, and we together can stop wishing GBV away and instead play a proactive role towards stopping it.

Having worked in civil society for over 15 years, seeing poverty and human rights abuses, I thought that I had the experience and skills to handle any situation that came my way. But I found that when the real test came, a couple of years ago, when I personally experienced domestic violence, I struggled very hard to deal with it. It is therefore with great humility that I salute all the people who have contributed to this book. I also thank GIZ for the role it has played in Kenya, towards both prevention and management of GBV. This book is evidence of GIZ's tremendous commitment.

Wangechi Grace Kahuria, Executive Director of the Gender Violence Recovery Centre, Nairobi Women's Hospital

Abbreviations

AIDS.....Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ARV.....Antiretroviral, a drug used by people with HIV
CEO.....Chief Executive Officer
CREAW.....Centre for Rights Education and Awareness
DC.....District Commissioner, representative of the local government administration
DO.....Divisional Officer
EPZ.....Export Processing Zone
FGM.....Female genital mutilation
FIDA Kenya...Federation of Women Lawyers - Kenya
GALCK.....Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya http://www.galck.org
GBV.....Gender based violence
GIZ.....Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit - German Agency for International Cooperation
GVRC.....Gender Violence Recovery Centre at the Nairobi Women's Hospital. It offers free comprehensive medical treatment and psychosocial support to survivors of gender based violence in Kenya, www.gvrc.or.ke
HIV.....Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICRH.....International Centre for Reproductive Health
ICU.....Intensive Care Unit
ID.....Identity card
IDP.....Internally Displaced Person
KCPE.....Kenya Certificate of Primary Education
KNH.....Kenyatta National Hospital
LDP.....Liberal Democratic Party
LGBTI.....Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex
LVCT.....Liverpool Voluntary Counselling and Testing, Care and Treatment
MP.....Member of Parliament
NAK.....National Alliance of Kenya Party
NARC.....National Rainbow Coalition
NGO.....Non-governmental organisation
OCPD.....Officer Commanding Police Division
OCS.....Officer Commanding Police Station
ODM.....Orange Democratic Movement
PEP.....Post exposure prophylaxis
PNU.....Party of National Unity
SMS.....Short message service
SOLWODI.....Solidarity for Women in Distress, an NGO based in Mombasa
STD.....Sexually transmitted disease
STI.....Sexually transmitted infection
The CRADLE.The Children's Foundation
TICAH.....Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health
UHAI.....Literally, Alive or life. An acronym for Ujinsia (Sexuality), Haki (Rights), Afya (Health) and Imani (Faith): The East African Sexual Health and Rights Initiative
UNDP.....United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA.....United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF.....United Nations Children's Fund
VCT.....Voluntary counselling and testing (for HIV)
WASDA.....Wajir South Development Association www.wasda.or.ke
WILDAF.....Women in Law and Development in Africa
WRAP.....Women's Rights Awareness Programme

Glossary

All the non-English words are in Kiswahili unless otherwise noted.

Asante thank you

Askari guard, security guard

Bangi marijuana

Bob shilling

Busaa local brew

Changaa potent alcoholic drink

Children's Officer A civil servant employed at a districtlevel to advocate for the child

Constitution Kenya's new constitution was promulgated on 27th August 2010

Defilement in Kenya Sex with a child (anyone under 18 years) is considered defilement as stated in the Sexual Offences Act (2006) Section 8 (1)

Gender desk Set up in Kenyan police stations to specifically address cases of gender based violence. Gender violence survivors are encouraged to report with the assurance of professional treatment by trained police officers

Hoteli big or small eating place

Kongowea Large wholesale vegetable and second hand clothes market in Mombasa

Kinyumbani at home

Kitambi pot belly

Kuria Ethnic group resident in southwest Kenya and northern Tanzania, closely related to the Kisii ethnic group in language and physique

Leso colourful piece of rectangular cotton cloth worn by women, used for carrying babies, etc

Lodging Low cost hotel with rooms, sometimes rented by the hour

Luo One of Kenya's tribes, predominantly located in western Kenya

Malaya prostitute

Matatu minibus van that is a public vehicle

Mboga vegetables

Miraa Also known as khat, an amphetamine-like stimulant that is chewed

Mitumba second hand clothes and shoes

M-Pesa Product name of a mobile-phone based money transfer service provided by Safaricom. M for mobile, Pesa is money in Kiswahili

Mteja (Hapatikani kwa sasa) The customer (cannot be reached). Automated message on a cell phone call when the mobile user is unavailable or has switched off their phone

Mtungi jerry can

Mzungu white person

Mzungu mshamba lower class white person

Nyama choma roast meat, cooked on an open fire

Omo a brand of washing powder

Other Sheep International A global ecumenical Christian organization dedicated to empowering sexual minorities by sharing the good news that God loves all people

Panga machete

P3 form Police document that must be filled and signed by a medical professional form to record physical injuries sustained in a crime

Rape shields A rape shield law limits a defendant's ability to cross examine a rape complainant about his or her past sexual behaviour

Rectovaginal fistula Disability when a passage or connection is made between the rectum and the vagina due to physical trauma

Rungu Club, blunt stick

Sexual Offences Act Passed into Kenyan law in 2006

Shamba farm, small or large, for cultivating crops

Shia Ismaili Muslims Community living in over 25 countries around the world, united in their allegiance to His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan, the 49th hereditary Imam (spiritual leader)

Sima Also known as Ugali, staple food cooked from maize meal and water

Sonko slang for a person with a lot of money

Soroptimists International Worldwide organisation for women in management and the professions

Sub chief Representative of the local government administration

Sunna In some cases refers to female genital mutilation (FGM). Sunna is an Arabic word that means habit or usual practice. Sunna is good practice and recommended and usually rewarded but one will not be committing a sin by not practising it

Supervision A formal meeting for social workers and counsellors to discuss their work with an experienced and competent supervisor. It helps prevent burnout, gives support, ensuring personal and professional growth

Swahili house Houses found in coastal Kenya (and elsewhere) with rooms for rental, shared bathrooms and a communal area for all tenants

Tarmacking Looking for work (literally walking the tarmac roads in search of work)

Taita Taveta District in Coast Province, Kenya

Taita Ethnic group in Kenya

The Children's Act Passed into Kenyan law in 2001. Gives effect to the obligations of Kenya under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Children's Charter

Unga maize meal flour

Vibarua informal, short term (often daily) work (literally 'letters')

Vumilia struggle, persevere, persist

Waki Commission Set up as the Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence (CIPEV) to investigate the facts and circumstances surrounding the violence in Kenya in late 2007, early 2008

Waki Report Report by the Waki Commission on the post election violence in Kenya

Wazungu white people

World Vision International NGO working in Coast Province, Kenya

Organisations in Kenya that Support People Affected by GBV

Amani Counselling Centre

Kisumu Office
P.O. Box 3528
Kisumu
Tel: 057 – 20245

Mombasa Office
Ambalal House
P.O. Box 88165
Mombasa

Nairobi Office
Mbagathi Way, off Lang'ata Road
P.O. Box 41738 – 00100
Nairobi
Tel: 020 - 6002672 / 3
Safaricom Cell: 0722 626 590
Airtel Cell: 0733 263 870
Fax: 020 – 6002674
Email: info@amanicentre.org

Nyeri Office
Sohan Plaza
P.O. Box 733
Nyeri
Tel: 061 – 2034641
Website: www.amanicentre.org

Biafra Clinic
1st Avenue/12th Street, Opposite ARRAHMA Mosque
P.O. Box 16212 - 00610
Eastleigh, Nairobi
Cell: 0718 - 222555
Email: Biafraclinic@yahoo.com

Centre for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW)
Convent Drive, off Isaac Gathanju Road,
100 metres from Lavington Green

Kibera Satellite Office
Kibera Driv e, DO's Compound
Kibera, Nairobi
Tel: 020 - 3860640, 020 - 2505903
Cell: 0720-357664
Fax: 020-3861016
Email: info@creaw.org
Website: www.creawkenya.org

Coast Provincial General Hospital Mombasa – Gender Based Violence Recovery Centre (GBVRC)
Kisauni Rd
P.O. Box 90231- 80100
Mombasa
Tel: 041 - 2314204
Cell: 0734 - 466466, 0722 - 208652
Fax: 041 - 2220161
Email: Christine.katingima@icrhk.org

Federation of Women Lawyers-Kenya [FIDA-K] Nairobi Office
Amboseli Road off Gitanga Road
P.O. Box 46324 – 00100
Lavington, Nairobi
Tel: 020 - 3870444, 020 - 3873511
Cell: 0722 – 509760, 0733 - 845003
Email: info@fidakenya.org

Mombasa Office
Kizingo East Road off Mama Ngina Drive
P.O. Box 80687-80100
Mombasa
Tel: 041 - 2224500, 041 - 231 3611
Cell: 0724 - 256 659, 0724 - 444 449
Email: info@msa.fida.co.ke

Kisumu Office
Milimani Estate, off Tom Mboya Drive
P.O. Box 19219-40100
Kisumu
Tel: 057 - 2025560
Cell: 0724 - 256 658, 0734 - 444 448
Email: info@fidaksm.co.ke
Website: www.fidakenya.org

Gay And Lesbian Coalition of Kenya (GALCK)
P.O. Box 13005 – 00100
Nairobi
Tel: 020 - 2426060
Cell: 0734 - 133773
Email: info@galck.org
Website: www.galck.org

Kenyatta National Hospital – Gender Based Violence Recovery Centre
(GBVRC)
P.O. Box 20723 – 00202
Nairobi
Tel: 020 - 2726300-9 Ext. 43136, 44101
Cell: 0722 - 829500/1/2, 0733 - 606400
Fax: 020 - 2725272
Email: knhadmin@knh.or.ke
Website: www.knh.or.ke

Liverpool VCT Care and Treatment
Argwings-Kodhek Road
P.O. Box 43640 - 00100
Hurlingham, Nairobi
Tel: 020 - 2714590
Cell: 0733 - 333268, 0722 - 203610
Email: enquiries@liverpoolvct.org
Website: www.liverpoolvct.org

Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital Centre for Assault Recovery of Eldoret (CAR-E)
P.O. Box 3705 - 30100
Eldoret
Tel: 053 - 2061005
Cell: 0712 - 776 -776, 0735 - 776776
Fax: 053 - 2033041
Email: dean som@chs.mu.ke,
deanmedicine@mu.ac.ke
Website: www.chs.mu.ac.ke

Nairobi Hospital
Argwings-Kodhek Road
P.O. Box 30026 - 00100
Nairobi
Tel: 020 - 27222160/63/64, 020 - 2722034
Fax: 020 - 2728003
Email: hosp@nbihosp.org
Website: www.nairobihospital.org

Solidarity with Women in Distress (SOLWODI)
SOLWODI Building, Archbishop Makarios Road
P.O. Box 17038 - 80100
Mombasa
Tel: 041 - 222327
Email: solwodi@wananchi.com

The CRADLE – The Children's Foundation
Ns. 2 & 3, Adj. Wood Ave Apartments, Wood Avenue, Kilimani
P.O. Box 10101, 00100
Tel: 020 - 3874575/6
Cell: 0734 - 798199, 0722 - 201875
Fax: 020 - 2710156
Email: info@thecradle.or.ke
Website: http://www.thecradle.or.ke/

The Jocham Hospital – Gender Violence Recovery Centre
Kengeleni off Malindi Road
P.O. Box 88984 - 80100
North Coast, Mombasa
Tel: 041 - 474472, 020 - 8011612, 020 - 2039042
Cell: 0722 - 207644, 0733 - 710174
Fax: 041 - 474913
Website: www.jochamhospital.org

The Nairobi Women's Hospital Gender Violence Recovery Centre (GVRC)
Medicare Plaza
Argwings-Kodhek Road
Hurlingham, Nairobi
Tel: 020-726821/4/6/7
Fax: 020-2716651
Adam´s Branch
Ngong Road
Nairobi
Tel: 020 - 3862772/3-9, 020 - 2726821
Cell: 0721 - 696214, 0721 - 760146
Fax: 020 - 3862771
Email: Nairobiwomenhosp@africaonline.co.ke
Website: www.gvrc.or.ke

Wangu Kanja Foundation (WKF)
P.O. Box 12608 - 00100
Nairobi
Tel: 020 - 368000
Cell: 0722 - 790404
Email: info@wangukanjafoundation.org
Website: www.wangukanjafoundation.org

Women Challenged to Challenge (WCC)
APDK offices, Waiyaki Way opposite ABC Place
P.O. Box 10593 - 00100
Nairobi
Tel: 020 - 4452034
Cell: 0725 - 868450
Fax: 020 - 4441363

Women's Empowerment Line (WEL)
Junction, off Ngong Road Opposite Red Cliff Gardens
P.O. Box 22574 - 00100
Kilimani, Nairobi
Tel: 020 - 3864482/97
Cell: 0711 - 907132, 0737 - 286889
Email: info@wel.or.ke
Website: http://www.wel.or.ke

Women's Rights Awareness Programme, WRAP
Next to Mathari Hospital
P.O. Box 3006 - 00200
Nairobi
Tel: 020 - 2050148, 020 - 3744874
Cell: 0722 - 252939
Email: info@wrapkenya.or.ke
Website: www.wrapkenya.or.ke

Acknowledgements

Our thanks go to the people who agreed to share their stories and insights for this book and, in particular, to those who opened up to talk about very painful, personal experiences. We are indebted to them for their openness, bravery and willingness to take part in this project and we believe their stories will help create greater discussion on the issue of gender based violence in Kenya and beyond.

The book has been a team effort, spearheaded by Klaus Hornetz of GIZ, whose original vision and desire to produce a book of Kenyan voices on GBV has driven the project. This vision was shared by Dr Sam Thenya and his team at the GVRC at the Nairobi Women's Hospital and the collaboration was born. Thanks to Olivia Okech for managing the project and to Rukia Yassin, Anne Weber and Jeanette Riedl for their support from within GIZ. Karolin Herzog, Anna von Roenne and Rose-Marie Beck gave valuable input. We are grateful to the team that collected and wrote up the interviews, Margaret Ogola and Sarah Forde, and to the photographers, Ursula Meissner and Boniface Mwangi. From Storymoja, Muthoni Garland, Martin Njaga and Doreen Baingana supported with ideas, advice and editing.

We would like to thank Ann Njogu, Mary Okioma, Okumba Miruka and Barrack Muluka for their insights and advice on legal concerns related to the manuscript. We would also like to thank the many organisations that helped us identify interviewees. We are grateful to Lucy Kiama, Executive Director, and Diana Wambui, Psychosocial Counselor, at the Refugee Consortium of Kenya. Anne Ireri at FIDA in Mombasa, Caroline Omondi at SOLWODI, Dorcas Amakobe from Moving the Goalposts and Amini Tengeza at the Coastal Forest Conservation Unit showed a real commitment in finding stories. We are also grateful to the Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health (TICAH) and GALCK for putting us in touch with interviewees.

'Do Not Let It Break You', a collection of interviews and photographs, immerses the reader in stories of Kenyans affected by gender based violence. In their own words, Asya, Rhoda, Njoroge, Evelyn, Tina and the other survivors eloquently describe their experiences, showing us how they are moving on with their lives despite the trauma. The photos present another way to engage with these stories. By giving the issue a face, the reader is moved beyond blame to empathy. Alongside are the perspectives of various professionals in this field, from police, traditional leaders, counsellors and lawyers to nurses, researchers and even corporate fundraisers. These include Njoki Ndung'u, currently of the Kenyan Supreme Court, who tells of her struggle to get the groundbreaking Sexual Offences Act through parliament in 2006; Dr. Sam Thenya on how he set up the Gender Violence Recovery Centre in Nairobi; and Somali-born former model and international activist, Waris Dirie, on her fight against female genital mutilation. The different angles give us a deeper and broader insight into the complex problem of GBV so we can better understand its effect on individuals and its huge impact on society.

This book does not contain a silver-bullet solution to the problem of gender based violence in Kenya. The personal stories, however, compel the reader to recognize how acute this problem is, while showing that something can be done and must be done about it. We can no longer ignore GBV. This book provokes us think about and discuss this issue and above all, to act.

9 789966 690159
9 789966 690159