

## **An assessment of the effectiveness of interventions against gender based violence in Zimbabwe: A case Study of Gweru Urban District (1986-2011)**

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**Abstract:** *This research has been informed by the ever increasing cases of gender based violence (GBV) globally and specifically in Zimbabwe. There is an acknowledgement that both males and females suffer from gender based violence, however, studies show that women, especially young women, and children of both sexes are most often the victims. Gender based violence comes in different forms which include rape and sexual assault, violence between intimate partners as well as violence associated with war or political instability. As a response to the devastating effects of gender based violence, there are strategies that have been instituted to try to address the causes and effects of gender based violence. However, these strategies have not been effective enough as gender based violence remain high in Zimbabwe. One major drawback in the studies of gender based violence is the lack of agreed standard in the collection and presentation of data on gender based violence. To effectively curb gender based violence there is need for implementation of laws that have been put in place to curb gender based violence as laws on paper without implementation are just as good as having no laws. There is also need to have strategies that address the underlying causes of gender based violence. This can be achieved through the concept of changing the rivers flow which deals with addressing the underlying causes of gender based violence.*

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### **I. Introduction**

Gender based violence has remained a pain in the neck for decades, the world over, and particularly in Zimbabwe. Strides are being made to try to curb gender based violence. To this end, if gender based violence remains unchecked, then this is detrimental to human development hence the need to put a stop to it. The fact that the Government of Zimbabwe is acknowledging that gender based violence is a problem makes it a cause for concern when gender based violence remains prevalent in Zimbabwe. This study assists in bringing out the key issues as to why gender based violence continues to exist even though efforts are being made to put it to a halt. Furthermore, this study unlocks the underlying factors as to the effectiveness of the strategies that are being implemented to curb gender based violence.

### **II. Period Of Study**

Focus of study is the period spanning from 1986 to 2011. Selection of the period of focus was informed by prior events to the year 1986, specifically during the period 1976 to 1985 which has been regarded as the decade for women. The Decade for Women was a direct outcome of International Women's Year (1975) which was a conference held in Mexico city in order to combine the concerns of numerous NGOs with that of the UN . The year was a period of fact finding and planning, and mostly a period for action. The decade for women is the period which gave the impetus to the formation of women's organizations in Zimbabwe. These organizations were formed in order to lobby for policy changes and raise awareness on prevention and management of gender based violence.

### **III. Area Of Study**

The research was carried out in Gweru District of the Midlands Province. The district has a population of 228 269 people and is geographically located at the centre or the heart of Zimbabwe. The city falls between the Shona and Ndebele regions, hence a sizeable percentage can speak both of the major local languages although Shona is spoken by the majority with approximately 30% speaking Ndebele. Midlands's province is one of the ten provinces in Zimbabwe which has Gweru as its capital city. Gweru district is divided into Gweru Rural which falls under the Vungu Rural District council and Gweru Urban which falls under the jurisdiction of the Gweru Municipality. Statistics from the Zimbabwe Health and Demographic Survey of 2006 indicated that of all the ten provinces in Zimbabwe, it is the Midlands Province which has the highest rate of gender based

violence. Selection of the Midlands Province and subsequently Gweru Urban District has therefore been necessitated by the striking gender based violence statistics.

#### **IV. Research Design And Sampling**

The research used the descriptive survey method which has its main objective as acquiring knowledge. The research sought to gain an insight as to why gender based violence remains endemic in Zimbabwe despite the various interventions such as legislation, campaigns through the media and various pressure groups. The survey method was the most ideal in this research as it is more of an investigation of social phenomena. Abrahams in Ghosh, views the survey as a process by which quantitative facts are collected about the social aspects of a community's position and activities. [1]The main attraction of the survey is its simplicity and ability to synthesise public opinion. In order to obtain a representative sample of the population, sampling was done at two levels which is, sampling of enumeration areas as well as sampling of research participants. Stratified sampling was employed in order to come up with the suburbs where the survey was to be conducted. This was followed by the sampling of households in each residential suburb, thus sampling from each strata. Information for the study was obtained from Mtapu, Athlone and Kopje. Random sampling was used to select the research subjects for interviews that were done with the targeted beneficiaries for gender based violence services. The researcher settled on simple random sampling as it ensures that each member of the population has an equal and known chance of being selected. Thus stratified simple random sampling technique was used to sample the research subjects.

#### **V. Strategies Employed To Curb Gender Based Violence In Zimbabwe**

Gender based violence is a pervasive problem all over the world, being more prevalent in Africa where it is a grave reality in the lives of many women and girls. It is an aftermath of the destructive gender norms as well as social and economic inequities that give privilege to men over women. There is an escalating acknowledgment in Zimbabwe of gender discrimination and inequity in different facets of life. This fundamental violation of women's rights has devastating consequences to women and men, their families and the community at large.

Gender based violence increases women's vulnerability to reproductive health problems, negatively affects their general well being and decreases their ability to freely participate in their families and communities development initiatives. Furthermore, gender based violence hurts children, men and families by creating a culture of fear and mistrust that leads to a lack of intimacy and safety within familial and intimate relationships. Communities also feel the negative consequences of gender based violence which is a drain on the strength and development of micro and macroeconomic systems.

The United Nations Decade for Women provided the needed impetus for focusing on gender-based violence as a priority issue for action by the world community. The United Nations General Assembly passed its first resolution on violence against women in November 1985. The next major turning point in the development of an international consensus on the issue occurred when the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women convened a special working group to draft a declaration on violence against women. Adopted by the General Assembly in 1993, the declaration provided, for the first time, an official United Nations definition of what constituted gender based violence.

Subsequently, the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo, Egypt, in 1994, and the Fourth World Conference on Women, Action for Development, Equality and Peace, held in Beijing, China, in 1995, are two milestones that have sustained the international community's focus and moved the agenda forward on women's rights issues, including strides on curbing gender based violence.

Viewed from a human rights perspective, gender based violence has been interpreted to include a wide spectrum of abuses and violations. To a large extent, much of the debate on the issue has been informed by the advocacy activities of women's rights groups and organizations. Now, with the shift to the need to address gender based violence as a public health issue, and particularly as a reproductive health issue, it is both strategic and pragmatic to narrow the focus on those concerns that have direct implications for policy and programming areas in the health, and particularly in the reproductive and sexual health, sector. For too long, policy makers and health practitioners have considered gender based violence as being outside their mandate, perceiving it largely as a human rights issue. Yet, the physical and psychological consequences of violence against women have a direct bearing on the reproductive and sexual health status of girls and women.

Gender Based Violence has emerged to be a serious human rights violation and public health problem. The Zimbabwe demographic and health survey of 2005/6 revealed that 25% of women in Zimbabwe have experienced sexual abuse; 36% physical abuse and 57% emotional abuse. Eight percent reported that they experienced violence while pregnant. Further analysis showed that currently married women who had

experienced physical violence only, or both physical and sexual violence were significantly more likely to be HIV positive than those who had not experienced any physical or sexual violence.

The Zimbabwe Millennium Development Goals Monitoring report of 2005 identified gender based violence as a major impediment to achieving gender equality and the overall sustainable development. The Zimbabwe National Gender Policy calls for the coordination and harmonization of national efforts with the view to achieve gender equality and equity. Many organisations are working on reducing cases and incidences of gender based violence in Zimbabwe. However, efforts around gender based violence continue to go unnoticed due to lack of coordination and integrated approach towards addressing the issue. As a result, UNICEF assisted the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development in mapping of the organisations that are providing gender based violence services in the Midlands Province.

Appreciated is the pervasiveness of gender based violence and its effects. Gender based violence is a deterrent to development as it inhibits realisation of full potential which is critical to development. In Sub-Saharan Africa, HIV and AIDS is not only the most challenging problem, it tends to affect women and children more negatively than men. Poverty makes women in the 19-24 age group twice as likely to be infected as men, due to prostitution, limited power in decision making and intergenerational sex. Poor women affected by HIV and AIDS, already economically insecure, are often deprived of their rights to property, adequate health services and displaced from their usual habitat with gender based violence further accelerating women's exposure to HIV infection.

## VI. Evaluation Of Strategies Of Curbing Gender Based Violence

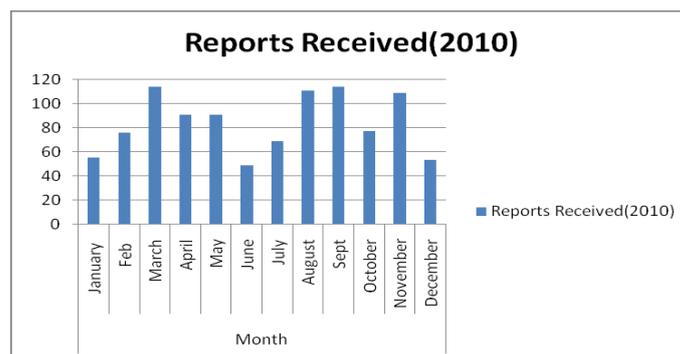
In order to address gender based violence, many African Governments and civil society stakeholders have taken several actions in curbing gender based violence. These include setting up supportive legislation, training police in women's rights and assistance to the victims of gender based violence, creating counselling services to assist the victims of gender based violence, creating a database on domestic violence, establishment of centres for abused women and children. Zimbabwe has not been an exception in putting structures that are aimed at curbing gender based violence. Furthermore there has been awareness and advocacy initiatives in curbing gender based violence.

These strategies are put in place in an effort to ensure that the survivors of gender based violence are emancipated from the perpetrators of violence as well as ensuring that the perpetrators of violence stop abuse of their victims or potential victims. Getting the most recent statistics on gender based violence was a challenge as some of the organisations that deal with gender based violence were not in a position of releasing these. This is against a background that most of the cases reported five years prior to the research were as a result of gender based violence experienced during the election period which is a sensitive area in Zimbabwe.

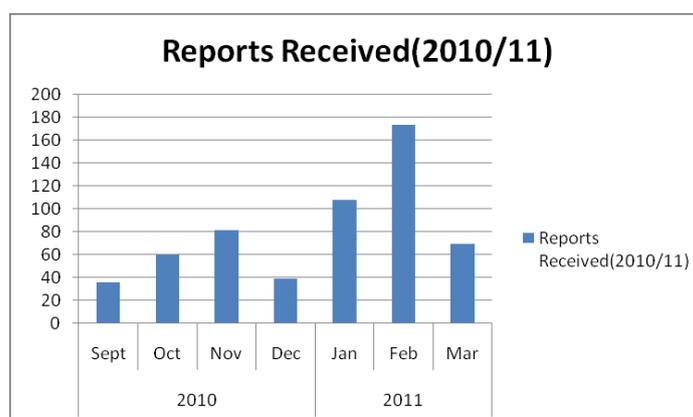
Efforts are being made by the government of Zimbabwe and other players such as NGOs and the church to try and curb gender based violence. Different strategies are being employed by these organisations after a realisation that gender based violence remain a challenge. In Zimbabwe, gender based violence was realised as a major issue during the decade for women. Although, there are strategies that are being implemented to curb gender based violence, statistics on gender based violence remains high. The table below indicates cases on gender based violence that was received by Musasa Project from January to December 2010.

PROBLEMS PRESENTED	2010												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Physical Abuse	7	15	18	10	15	6	8	21	21	6	14	10	151
Economic abuse	20	22	29	30	30	16	24	35	38	30	36	15	325
Inheritance	4	1	5	1	3	3	0	5	0	4	4	1	31
Sexual/marital rape	1	12	17	9	0	2	4	2	10	3	7	8	75
Rape	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
HIV/AIDS	1	2	9	3	3	1	3	5	5	1	5	2	40
Psychological abuse	22	24	36	38	40	21	29	43	40	33	42	17	343
Total	55	76	114	91	91	49	69	111	114	77	109	53	967

An analysis of the statistics presented above indicates that gender based violence still remains endemic despite the various strategies that are being implemented to try and curb gender based violence. The graph below depicts a clear picture on the gender based violence trends on a month to month basis.



Information from Childline Zimbabwe also indicates that child abuse, which is a form of gender based violence, still remains endemic in our societies.



As depicted in the table and graphs above, there is need to explore the effectiveness of the strategies that are being used to curb gender based violence. Effectiveness would have been seen in a constant reduction of the prevalence of gender based violence, which is not the case as the cases fluctuate but remains high, therefore a cause for concern.

As Zimbabwe got independence in 1980, one key step that was made was to establish the Ministry of Women Affairs that looked into the issue of women. As a strategy this worked as it saw the emergence of women's organisations. These are organisations such as the Women Action Group that was formed in 1983 and subsequent formation of other women's organisations post 1985 period. These are organisations such as Musasa Project which was formed in 1988 to address the plight of women on gender based violence.

The earliest groups in Zimbabwe were linked to Missionary activity and the church. The role of the ideal African Woman that were taught in this era were to be a virtuous wife, selfless mother and a tidy industrious housekeeper. With time the concept of women's groups spread outside the church in the form of local and community based women's groups. During the 1990s women in Zimbabwe responded to the international dialogue and mobilisation around gender and development issues through the formation of numerous organisations [2]. One of these organisations was the Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe which was formed in 1999, in a bid to bring together the different women's groups to provide a collective voice in the advocacy of gender equality in different spheres in Zimbabwe.

Empowerment of women in Zimbabwe is one of the strategies that was employed to curb gender based violence. In 1995 women in Zimbabwe were part and parcel of the fourth world conference of Beijing. The Beijing conference became the buzz word from the grassroots woman to the girl child in school up to the business woman executive in Zimbabwe. The Beijing declaration and Platform for Action was a statement of political commitment of participating governments to advance equality, development, human rights and peace for women worldwide

The Beijing conference was a platform for women in Zimbabwe to come back home and put in place measures that would put a foot on gender based violence. With renewed energy, women came with vigour and the message that was being preached was that of equal rights with men. This was more of a radical change which did not go down well with men who in turn took a defensive stance. As a result of the Beijing women's conference, which was an outcome of a noble cause, gender based violence was fuelled as men shunned the conference. To consolidate efforts of the Beijing Conference, The Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe managed to

lobby policy makers, including Heads of State to adopt the Beijing Platform of Action, which reflected governments' commitment to work towards women's empowerment and gender equality.

Although there were positives that were realised as a result of the Beijing women's conference, there were challenges that were faced in the adoption of the action plan. Most women and women's organisations took a radical stance in which they wanted to see an immediate change from the status quo. As a result men took a defensive stance hence this became an undertow to the strides of curbing gender based violence. What they should have realised was that behaviour change is a process which happens over a period of time.

As there is an acknowledgement that gender based violence is a challenge in Zimbabwe, lobbying of laws on gender based violence is a strategy that is in place. There has been a breakthrough as evidenced by the various pieces of legislation that are in Zimbabwe that are meant to protect women on Gender based violence. The table below documents the laws and policies that have been enacted to curb gender based violence from the period Zimbabwe got independence in 1980.

Year	Law/Policy	Provisions
1980	Equal pay regulations	Provided for equal pay for work of equal value.
1982	Legal Age of Majority Act	Confers majority status on women. Before this African women were regarded as minors.
1984	Labour Relations Act (Chapter 28:01)	Prohibits employers from discrimination against employees on grounds of sex.
1985	Public Service Pensions(Amendment Regulations)	Made provisions for female workers in the public service to contribute to their pensions at the same rate as male contributors.
1987	Marriage Act ( Chapter 5:11)	Sets minimum age of majority for both girls and boys at 18 years to be in line with the Legal Age of majority.
1987	Customary Marriages Act (Chapter 5:07)	All spouses in unregistered customary marriages are required to certify their marriages before competent authorities.
1987	Matrimonial Causes Act ( Chapter 5:13)	Extends the jurisdiction over and dissolution of all types of marriages to Magistrate's courts and chiefs.
1989	Maintenance Act	Requires a negligent non custodian parent to contribute regularly to children in the custody of the other parent.
1990	The Electoral Act (1990)	Allows all women to participate in general and by-elections for the Presidency or Parliamentary and local elections as voters or candidates without ant discrimination.
1997	The Administration of Estates Amendment Act(1997) ( Chapter 16:01)	Protects the inheritance rights of surviving spouses and children.
2000	The National Gender Policy(2000)	Provides a framework for mainstreaming Gender in all sectors of the economy.
2001	Criminal Law(Codification and Reform)Act – Sexual Offences Act (Chapter 9:23)	Protects women from sexual abuse and criminalises marital rape and wilful transmission of HIV and AIDS. The Act also prohibits trafficking of persons for purposes of prostitution and imposes stiffer penalties for violations.
2004	The interpretation Act(2004) (Chapter 1:01)	The Government of Zimbabwe came to realise that the use of the language that denotes the masculine gender in legislative instruments perpetuate discrimination against women. The Act has therefore, been amended to use language that denotes feminine concurrency with that of masculine gender.
	General law Amendment Act ( Section 12 Chapter 8:07)	States that women in Zimbabwe are legally entitled to take up political and public offices such as those that can be held by men.
2007	Domestic Violence Act (2007) (Chapter 5:16) and its regulations(2008)	Provides for protection of survivors of Domestic Violence and Criminalises such acts as abuse derived from any cultural or customary rites or practices that discriminate or degrade women.
2009	Anti Domestic Violence Council (2009)	Launched to spearhead the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act

Source: Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development [3].

More specific pieces of legislation prohibiting gender based violence that have been put in place are the Domestic Violence Act (Chapter 5:16) which provides for protection of survivors of domestic violence and criminalise such acts as abuse derived from any cultural or customary rites or practices that discriminate or degrades women.

There is also the Criminal law (Codification and Reform) Act, The Sexual Offences Act (2001) which protects women from sexual abuse and criminalises marital rape and wilful transmission of HIV and AIDS. The Act also prohibits trafficking of persons for the purposes of prostitution and imposes stiffer penalties for violations.

Furthermore, there is the Labour Relations Act which prohibits employers from discrimination against employees on grounds of sex. A breakthrough in having the Domestic Violence Act was therefore as a result of the continuous lobbying by various women's organisations. However, there is still need for these organisations to continue lobbying for specific laws on trafficking and torture. More focus will be put on the effectiveness of

the Domestic Violence Act in curbing gender based violence as it has more provisions that deal with gender based violence issues as compared with the other pieces of legislation..

In Gweru, the Legal Resources Foundation is the organisation that is making strides to make sure that women are given correct information so that they make informed decisions on the legal course that they can take in cases of domestic violence. There are however challenges that are being met in the execution of some of the stipulations that are made in the Domestic Violence Act. One of the tenants of the Domestic Violence Act is to protect the victims of domestic violence.

Protection of the victims of gender based violence is made through the placing of special duties on the police to assist the victim and providing for specific domestic violence sections at the police stations. In Gweru, this has been done through the establishment of the Victim Friendly Unit at the Gweru Central Police Station and other outposts like Nehanda Police Station on Mkoba.

In order for the Police Officers to be able to assist the victims of gender based violence, they have to be trained to deal with such issues. Through their training they should be able to advise the victim the right to apply for relief under the act, arrest the perpetrator without a warrant if there is a reasonable suspicion that gender based violence has been suspected as well as serving a protection order on behalf of the victims who are unable to pay for the court fees. Furthermore, the police are required to bring the perpetrator of domestic violence before a magistrate's court within forty eight hours.

As good as the provisions of the Domestic Violence acts looks, there are challenges that were highlighted in the implementation of these provisions. The Victim Friendly Unit is not 'friendly' to all victims of gender based violence. This is as a result of the lack of training of the Police officers to be dealing with issues of gender based violence. The Centre Lawyer at the Legal Resource Foundation at the Gweru Centre reiterated that this is a major challenge as some victims end up failing to access the services of the Victim Friendly Unit.

Thus, respect and implementation of existing laws is a big challenge at most levels as the administration of formal justice takes place at various levels, with several actors being involved including the police, prosecutors and health personnel, especially doctors who collect scientific evidence in cases of assault and sexual violence and courts who are in charge of administration laws.

The Legal Resources Foundation has managed to conduct training on some of the Police Officers on the provisions of the Domestic Violence Act. The major challenge is that there are constant staff deployments that results in trained officers being removed from the VFU. As a result of this, the VFU is many a time manned by Police Officers who do not have specialised training in the area of gender based violence. The police officers therefore do not have the legal knowledge of gender based violence legal framework to carry out appropriate investigations nor the skills and attitudes to support traumatised survivors. Nationally there has been reports that cases of gender based violence are not attended to as they are simply referred to as 'domestic issues' that would need to be dealt with back home and not at the police stations. There is therefore a glaring gap between the enforcement and interpretation of legal provision that seek to protect women from gender based violence.

A challenge observed at the Gweru Central Police Station was the location of the VFU. For one to access the VFU there is need to pass through the charge office. This is not the most ideal situation for the gender based violence victims who will be traumatised. As a result, the victims of gender based violence end up not reporting their cases of abuse to the police. This is against a background that most of the victims of gender based violence are mostly in repeated abuses.

In the quest for protecting the victims of gender based violence, the DVA has provision for issuance of a protection order. In Gweru, the protection order is given by a magistrate's court against a person causing psychological, emotional or economic abuse. This is meant to ensure that such person does not continue to commit the violence. This may also order the person committing the violence to pay maintenance where there is economic abuse. The order is to be issued with a warrant of arrest that the police will use to arrest the perpetrator anytime an act of gender based violence is committed. The challenge at the Gweru magistrate's court to implement this is that they do not have the protection order forms in stock. As a result, they end up requesting the victims to do photocopies of the master copy that they keep for the magistrate's court to issue out the protection order. Most of the victims will not be having the ready cash to do the photocopying, thus they tend to lose out on having a protection order to be issued.

As provided for in the DVA Chapter 5:16, Section 16, the Domestic Violence Council was launched in 2009. The mandate of the council is to promote the protection and relief of victims of domestic violence through research, information dissemination, coordination and monitoring of the Domestic Violence Act [5].

Furthermore, the Domestic violence Council would keep under constant review the problem of domestic violence taking all steps to disseminate information and increase the awareness of the public on issues of domestic violence, promoting research into the problem, promoting the provision of services necessary to deal with all aspects of domestic violence, monitoring their effectiveness, the application and enforcement of the Domestic Violence Act and any other law relevant to the issue of domestic violence.

Activities to be undertaken by the council include promoting the establishment of safe houses for the purposes of sheltering the victims of domestic violence including their children and dependants, pending the outcome of court proceedings under the Act, promoting the provision of support services for complainants where the respondent who was the source of support for the complainant and dependants has been imprisoned. Furthermore, the council would do anything necessary for the effective implementation of the domestic violence act.

Members of the council are drawn from the ministry of Justice, legal and Parliamentary Affairs, Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development, Department of Social Services, Zimbabwe Republic Police, Council of Chiefs, Churches in Zimbabwe inclusive of Private Voluntary Organisations concerned with the welfare of survivors of gender based violence, children's rights and women's rights. Establishment of the Domestic Violence Act has been regarded as a milestone in the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act which was enacted into law in 2007 to allow maximum protection to survivors of domestic violence, providing relief to survivors and long term measures to the prevention of gender based violence.

As good as it is to have the Domestic Violence Council in place as a strategy of curbing gender based violence, there are challenges that have been met with the existence of this council. Challenges have been faced in having the Council to execute its duty which meant failure as a strategy to curb gender based violence, thus being ineffective as a strategy.

The Government of Zimbabwe has failed to allocate funds to the Anti-Domestic Violence Council so that it can adequately deal with cases of gender based violence in Zimbabwe. The council adopted a strategy which had not been implemented to the detriment of hundreds of women who continue to be battered everyday by their partners or husbands. There is therefore lack of the monitoring of the Domestic Violence Act, lack of training for the community based counsellors including the judiciary and police.

To be highlighted is the gender discrimination in the allocation of resources as the Government of Zimbabwe budgets tend to favour men. An analysis of the allocations of different government ministries made by Zimbabwe Women Resource Network revealed that the budget of the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development which was instrumental in the setting up of the domestic Violence Council constituted 0.23% (US \$ 6 857 000) of the 2011 budget marginally increasing by 0.2 %. Budget allocations therefore impacted on the establishment of the Domestic violence Act as a strategy of curbing gender based violence. Provision of safe houses has not been done. In Gweru there is only one safe house that is in Mambo Suburb.

The Gender based violence Act is too broad which makes its implementation difficult in trying to curb gender based violence. In the Domestic Violence Act there are unrealistic provisions such as one which requires a third party to report gender based violence to the police.

One of the challenges of bringing the perpetrators of violence to book is the slowness in which the cases of gender based violence are dealt with. In some cases the perpetrators of violence end up on the loose once they know that there is a possibility of a warrant of arrest being issued out to them.

From the issues discussed above, it can be noted that, pieces of legislation are good on paper and if they are not executed it is just as good as not having the legislation in place. Thus for legislation to be more effective in curbing gender based violence there is need for implementation of the provisions of the legislation.

Working with men is a key strategy to prevent gender based violence. Padare is an organisation that works with men on gender based violence issues. Behaviour change strategies in the health sector have shown that gender inequitable attitudes can be unlearned through the inclusion of men. If boys are not engaged in schools, focusing initiatives on girls as "victims" to be protected without addressing patriarchal attitudes and behaviour among boys simply reinforces the notion that girls are responsible for the violence they suffer. Throughout society and the community in general, men are decision makers that can pave the way for change if they are included in the strategies of curbing gender based violence. The challenge that is being faced with Padare is that they are not being taken seriously by other men which make their interventions difficult to achieve the intended outcomes.

Treatment is one of the strategies of curbing gender based violence. This ranges from emotional treatment that is realised by counselling through to physical treatment that is done through the clinics or hospitals. Survivors of gender based violence, especially rape should have access to post exposure prophylaxis to prevent them from contracting HIV. There is however no legislation that makes it mandatory for victims of gender based violence to have access to post exposure prophylaxis. In Gweru post exposure prophylaxis can be accessed at the MSF sexual and gender based violence clinic at Birchenough Hospital.

There has been a comprehensive testing and treatment and care of survivors of sexual offences at the MSF sexual and gender based violence clinic at Birchenough Hospital. These services are being offered for free of charge. The legislation is however found wanting as it has to provide clearly for free medical assistance to victims of gender based violence.

In order to ensure that the gender based violence vicious cycle is broken, one of the strategies used is social and psychological rehabilitation of perpetrators of gender based violence. These are achieved through counselling sessions that are offered mainly by NGOs. MSF and Musasa Project are the major NGOs that are offering counselling services to perpetrators and survivors of gender based violence and this has raised sustainability issues especially given the current viability of Musasa Project which has scaled down its operations as a result of limited funding.

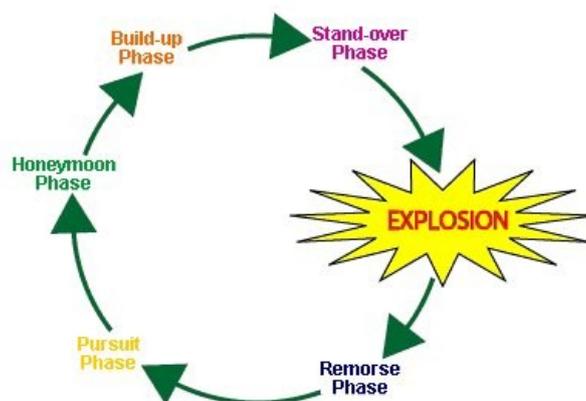
One of the ways gender based violence is prevented is through the holding of workshops. This is evident in organisations such as Childline Zimbabwe, GWAPA and Musasa Project. As workshops are conducted with groups of participants that are manageable, they make sure that participants do understand the issues discussed. This strategy of curbing gender based violence has challenges in that most of the times what is discussed ends up in workshops. Although there are work plans with clear timelines that are produced at some of these workshops, what lacks is follow up on the implementation of the agreed work plans. As a result, information will be held only with those that would have been trained on certain aspects of gender based violence prevention.

Workshops that are conducted by Childline Zimbabwe by their training department mainly focus on the custodians of children. However, it would have been more prudent to have outreach programmes that target the potential victims of abuse, and these are children. This way it would mean that children would avoid situations in which they might end up being abused. It has to be acknowledged that children also play a part in curbing gender based violence. As a result of this, it would mean that cases of violence against children are reported on time. Information from the MSF sexual and gender based violence clinic highlighted that most of the cases on child sexual abuse were reported late, at times after multiple sexual abuses. This would mean that the children would not benefit from the administration of post exposure prophylaxis as it has to be administered within 72 hours of the abuse, or sexual contact.

Most of the organisations that curb gender based violence also use information, education and communication material (IEC) to raise awareness of the public on gender based violence related issues. This method ensures that people access accurate information. One of the challenges with the use of the IEC material is that all people are not at the same literacy levels hence they might not grasp the intended message on the pamphlet in the way it was supposed to have been heard. Furthermore, in most cases the IEC material is printed in English. A visit to the Gweru Legal Projects Centre indicated that most of the readership clients that visited them read English and Shona. This was evidenced by the rate the pamphlets written in English and Shona were being taken as only the pamphlets written in Ndebele language were the only ones left at the reception area.

There are NGOs that are not doing gender based violence work but do mainstream gender in their programming. These are organisations such as CARE International. Through their ECHO funded urban livelihoods programme, they managed to establish community gardens in the urban set up. A documentary review from GWAPA highlighted that the beneficiaries of the project were very grateful as it empowered them to be economically sound. This enabled them to spend most of their time attending to their vegetable beds in the gardens hence shunning activities such as prostitution which exposed them more to gender based violence. However, organisations such as this just bump into curbing gender based violence not by design.

As highlighted earlier on that most players in gender based violence are doing work on prevention, protection and participation, there is a tendency with most players that they mostly intervene on the protection phase hence addressing the symptoms of gender based violence and not the causes. Addressing the symptoms would mean that there are high chances of reoccurrence of gender based violence. The diagram below helps to explain the cycle of domestic violence.



Source: Dr Lenore Walker, 1979, USA [6].

This theory that domestic violence occurs in a cycle was developed in 1979 by Lenore Walker as a result of a study conducted in the United States. The “cycle of violence” theory explains how and why the behaviour of a person who commits domestic and family violence may change so dramatically over time. This cycle provides an understanding to why the person affected by domestic and family violence continues to face a violent situation. The cycle goes through a number of stages. However, it is acknowledged that it is not the same for everyone and some people may experience only some stages of the cycle.

Most organisations that offer gender based violence services intervene after the explosion, which in most cases will be the physical violence. This way they will be addressing the symptoms. In order for these organisations to be able to effectively curb gender based violence, there is need to intervene at the earlier stages, especially before the stand over phase that leads to explosion.

The interventions that are being put in place to curb gender based violence do need to be monitored and evaluated. Realised is that most of the organisations that are offering gender based violence services have weak monitoring and evaluation systems. Their strength is mainly on the monitoring and recording of cases of gender based violence and the people reached through the various outreach programmes. However, there is a lack of follow up on the survivors of gender based violence to monitor the quality of the programmes that would have been done so that lessons can be drawn for future programming.

Focus group discussions are one strategy that is in use by GWAPA in trying to curb gender based violence. A case in point is a focus group discussion that was done by nursing students at Gweru Provincial Hospital. Discussions were made on the sexual reproductive health and gender based violence. Key issues that came out of the focus group discussion were that there were a lot of intergenerational relationships that were going on between the female students mainly and the outside world. During the process students were reported as being prone to gender based violence. The main driving factor was the lack of grants to sustain the students. One dimension mentioned also was that students were not willing to access the government grants as they were to be bonded after completing their training. Students aired the uncomfortable scenario of being bonded as this limited their options after the training. Thus, in this instance, government policies are detrimental to curbing gender based violence.

There are myths on reproductive health among the youths and these are drivers of gender based violence. As a strategy to demystify these myths, there are youth friendly corners that have been established but these are not being accessed by the youths as they have other options of accessing information. Mostly these are through the internet. This has been even made easier through the introduction of the 3 G Mobile by Econet Wireless (telephone service Provider).

Another focus group discussion was held with students from the Midlands state University Students. Issues that came out were gender based violence a result of co habitation of students in Senga Suburb. Through the cohabitation then gender based violence ended up being inevitable.

LRF is only restricted to the offering of legal advice hence they cannot represent clients in a court of law as their practicing certificates are limited to the provision of legal advice only. They can only go as far as giving legal advice and following up in the case but they cannot represent a client in the court. This has challenges in making sure that justice is delivered as the survivors of gender based violence will be represented by the public prosecutor who might not have been trained on the provisions of the Gender based Violence Act.

Most of the private voluntary Organisations that are operating in Gweru capitalise on the Gweru Agricultural show to showcase what they offer on gender based violence. They also take this show as an opportunity to raise gender based violence awareness. The major challenge with the agricultural show is that it only comes once a year, hence limited clientele outreach. Furthermore, for one to gain entry into the agricultural show arena there is needed to pay. As a result the low income households that are mainly affected by gender based violence will certainly miss out on the gender based violence information shared during the agricultural show.

Although the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary affairs is responsible for making sure that justice is delivered, there are challenges to how the system operates. Many a time the general populace is not aware of how the legal system works. Thus many a time perpetrators of gender based violence are granted bail and they return to the same community were they would have perpetrated gender based violence. As a result the survivors of gender based violence live in fear of reporting their abusers as they think that they will be let loose and even retaliate with more violence.

While it is universally understood and accepted that traditional and cultural ideologies and practices promote male dominance and the marginalisation of women, not much is well known about how to effectively address these practices in a way that will increase gender equality and reduce vulnerability to HIV for Zimbabwean women.[7] These power relations are so embedded deeply into the fabric of the Zimbabwean society such that even the well intentioned laws and policies cannot reach them.

Despite many years of working towards gender equality and curbing gender based violence, many programmes and strategies that are being implemented lack an in depth understanding and appreciation of how these systems and structures function, thus rendering them ineffective in their efforts to meaningfully improve the lives of women and to reduce HIV and AIDS. As a result of this ignorance, some programmes have used a 'blame' approach that undermines the communities and view African culture as evil and in need of major changes or total eradication. In response the communities have build walls to resist these 'outsiders' and simply ignore the calls from change and continue with their ways.

A one size all fits approach has been used in the strategies that are being used to curb gender based violence. Responses from respondents indicated that the forms of gender based violence vary across the residential strata. Physical abuse was the most prevalent form of abuse in Mtapu high density residential area whilst psychological abuse was the most rampant in Kopje low density residential area. This can be explained by the fact that those who stay in the affluent suburbs do have the required income thus, economic abuse is low.

Psychological abuse was mainly as a result of extramarital affairs as more income could have been the main driver of such abuse. Programmes to curb gender based violence should therefore be crafted in such a way that they become target population specific, which is, specifically designed for low density residential areas and high density residential areas.

For strategies of curbing gender based violence to be more effective, there is need to devise better ways of working within the realm of culture that does not alienate the custodians of these cultures. This might include focus on capacity building of the communities supporting them to understand how culture is linked to gender inequalities which form the basis of gender based violence.

## **VII. Recommendations On What Could Be Done Differently To Curb Gender Based Violence**

As highlighted in prior discussions, gender based violence is a worldwide phenomenon, which spans across all social classes and age groups. The main cause is the power gap between men and women and the way women are disadvantaged in key areas. Relations between men and women are closely bound with political, economic and social structures with the majority of the poor being females who generally earn less than men and are forced into marginal sectors of the labour market with a lower economic status [8]. They are less likely to have access to education and career development and are less involved in political decision making processes.

As there has been an appreciation globally that gender based violence is a cause for concern. Strides have been made in trying to curb gender based violence. Promoting gender equality has a crucial role to play in promoting social justice and the effectiveness of development efforts. Despite decades of gender and development research and advocacy, most development interventions continue to be gender blind as they are unable to take cognisance of the fact that there are unequal power dynamics between women and men. Furthermore, women's roles and distinct contributions to the development process are often overlooked in the policy discourse within governments, in organizations and even in development programmes, from which women and men, girls and boys are supposed to benefit from.

Even in industrialised countries, the most dangerous place for a woman is her own home. Here and in the private sphere most acts of violence against women are generally committed by their own partners or close friends or relatives. Laws are often inadequate, because the state is reluctant to interfere in so called 'private matters'. This distinction between 'public' and 'private' life has for a long time prevented domestic violence from being recognised as a violation of human rights in the same way as the crimes of rape, torture and murder committed in the public domain.

It is recommended that programmes on gender based violence adopt the rivers flow concept. This is an understanding that like a river, cultural practices which are the main underlying causes of gender based violence may seem permanent and constantly flowing in one direction. The truth however is that just as geology tells us that rivers change their permanency, so do cultural practices as culture is always changing and adjusting to different circumstances.

In order to curb gender based violence effectively, there is need to adopt the changing rivers flow concept. Just as the molecules of a river, acting together constantly to reproduce or transform the rapids, so do human beings, acting together constantly reproduce or transform their cultural norms and practices. These waves, like whirlpools or cultural norms, may seem to be static objects, but they are really processes. We therefore cannot scoop out a whirlpool and forever remove it, as it will just reform. To change the whirlpool one would have to literally change the river's flow.

Likewise, one cannot simply pick out cultural norms and practices and remove them because these norms are processes, thus, in order to transform them we need to understand and change the forces and mechanisms behind them. Thus we can want to remove a cultural norm that is problematic from a gender based violence point of view, we can put laws in place to prevent it but it will tend to reform unless we can change the underlying causes.

The analogy of a flowing river brings the issue that relates to gender based violence to the surface as there is a tendency of thinking of a river as a source of water necessary for life. People also tend to think of rivers as objects of beauty, valuable in themselves. Similarly, culture is both a necessary part of life and beautiful, valuable in itself. Therefore, the metaphor of a river is a reminder to be respectful of culture and celebrate its richness and diversity, even if at the same time there is an agreement that certain aspects of culture no longer serve us hence the need to address them in the quest of ending gender based violence.

It has to be noted that, as what the learning theory of behaviour stipulates, violent behaviour is not biologically predetermined but learnt through social interaction and gender specific socialisation. In Zimbabwe, the physical strength, aggressive behaviour and threatening gestures in male children and young men are approved and fostered as positive qualities through culture. Through the same socialisation process, girls are brought up to be compliant and considerate [9]. Analysis of the phenomenon assumes that several inter related factors increase the likelihood that women and girls will become victims of gender based violence. This is mainly through, the low status of women within society, an imbalance of power within the family and within society, economic dependence of women on men as well as acceptance of violence as a means of settling disputes, hence the need to rework the cultural dimension in the socialisation of children.

Despite all the efforts that have been employed to combat gender based violence, negative customary norms persist in contradiction to the provisions of CEDAW and UN basic human rights. One of the biggest challenges is attitudinal change on the part of communities that hold on to cultural practices that form violence to girls and women such as the concept of '*chiramu*' in Zimbabwe.

The government of Zimbabwe has a major responsibility to spearhead attitudinal change towards culture and traditions that foster subordination of women by men, gender discrimination and practices that are harmful to the health and welfare of women and girls. Public awareness campaigns on the value of girl children, through public education, promoting equal treatment of girls and boys is critical.

Respect for girls and women must be instilled in boys from early age, hence catching them when they are still young. Male responsibilities in the family life must be included in the education of children from the earliest age with special emphasis on the prevention of violence against women and children. Sensitization and awareness creation should be done especially through community leaders such as religious leaders on the importance of valuing each other's rights.

Policies that address gender based violence should be reviewed and effectively implemented and monitored. There is need for more counselling and rehabilitation facilities that should be made available for victims of violence. There is need to allocate resources towards improving access to legal aid and psychosocial services in order to effectively curb gender based violence.

As the situation stands in Zimbabwe, there is lack of accurate and comparable data on violence against women that is essential for monitoring and policy making purposes. The availability of data on gender based violence is a cornerstone to formulate a strategy and a holistic approach towards addressing gender based violence. To be given priority thus is research, documentation and learning on best practices of gender based violence. This should be possible through the undertaking of quantitative and qualitative research.

Reliable data on gender based violence should therefore be made and made available to the public. This information will be central to informed policy and programme development and monitoring. This includes population based surveys on the multiple manifestations of violence against women and girls, their prevalence, causes, consequences and the impact of interventions over the medium to long term. As Zimbabwe will be conducting a national census in 2012, this will be the chance to include a module on gender based violence.

In Zimbabwe, there is limited linkage of gender based violence with other themes such as economic empowerment of women. Economic empowerment is still the single most important intervention for changing the status of women. In a state of poverty, women cannot afford to take the risks of rattling the cage that is their safety nets.

Poverty reduction strategies should therefore include programmes to address the special needs of all women, to economically empower them. Women's empowerment has to go beyond micro finance to include skills development and access to productive resources that include finance, access to markets as well as removal of market barriers and trade value addition.

Strengthening of organisations that handle gender based violence is critical in curbing gender based violence. Strengthening these organisations so that they are more accessible and usable by women and well equipped to handle victims of gender based violence in a timely manner is also of paramount importance.

There is need to emphasize education of the girl child through reinforcing of early childhood education. Furthermore, the education curriculum in Zimbabwe needs to be reviewed to include gender based violence and human rights. Education of women and men on changing of the mindset vis-à-vis cultural, traditional, religious beliefs, norms, values and practices that is harmful to women through adult education and awareness raising campaigns that incorporate gender based violence.

As stipulated in the Domestic Violence Act, there is need to promote measures to sensitize and create awareness on gender based violence specifically targeting law enforcement agencies. In addition, religious leaders, traditional and cultural leaders and institutions and schools should also be trained on gender based violence.

Political will and commitment is a key aspect in ensuring that gender based violence issues are taken seriously. Commitment by the leaders to critical and open advocacy by leaders at the highest level to end gender based violence is the key to mobilizing leaders at all levels and in all sectors. Commitment can even be evaluated through the national budget allocations towards gender activities. Financing of gender based violence programmes has been a challenge. A typical example is the closure of the gender and learning department at MASO as a result of the lack of funding. Thus, the government should finance the programmes and policies against gender based violence.

Few programs addressing gender based violence have been rigorously evaluated. Instead, there are a handful of promising interventions in the health, justice, education, and community development sectors that, if collectively supported and implemented, could have even more meaningful impact on the prevention of gender based violence.

These include a systems approach to reforming health services, from implementing policies and protocols to address violence to the training of providers and provision of specific gender based violence needs. Strengthening schools through policies that do not tolerate violence perpetrated by teachers or students and through capacity building of teachers and students on principles of gender equity and its role in gender based violence. Community mobilization, through television, radio, text messages through cell phones, community forums, drama, and other popular media. Effecting these changes and ensuring their sustainability means that the foundation for each of these interventions is gender sensitisation to promote gender equity, as well as increased understanding of gender based violence as a human rights problem that is detrimental to the community as a whole.

There is need to strengthen a multi sectoral approach that pools efforts from a variety of fields of work, which is essential in preventing and responding to gender based violence. Each field or sector has its role to play in helping survivors of gender based violence and preventing incidents of gender based violence. Health providers detect cases and treat survivors while promoting healthy relationships through sexual and reproductive health programs whilst law enforcement agents puts sanctions on perpetrators of gender based violence and educators impart the message that gender based violence is a violation of human rights and should not be tolerated or perpetrated. It is imperative that these roles are well coordinated to be fully effective which has not been the case in Zimbabwe.

Targeting youth is perhaps one of the most efficient ways to prevent gender based violence, albeit in the longer term. This is against a background that that youth are more open to change, including their attitudes and behaviour regarding violence. Nonetheless, such strategies should not undermine the need to work with the community at large to curb gender based violence.

To promote community ownership of gender based violence as a problem, community mobilization should involve all members of the community, from civilian beneficiaries, to health and legal service providers, teachers, and community leaders. Individual behaviour change is not enough as it has to be linked to and reinforced by norms and messages in the surrounding community in order to be sustainable.

Preventing gender based violence is a long term investment. Raising awareness is only the beginning of the processes of influencing change. Individual behaviour change and community mobilization requires long term follow up that may take years. Additionally, helping individuals think through alternatives to violence and creating informal and formal systems of accountability and support are essential for individuals to sustain a change in attitude and behaviour. However, limited funding allows for only short term support hence losing the gains along the way. The case of MASO can be taken into account were the gender department was closed as a result of lack of funding.

While the dearth of existing information illustrates the need for increased research on risk factors and promising interventions for gender based violence, much can be done to stop the problem now. The victims of GBV who are suffering in silence at the hands of their perpetrators can no longer wait for the best approach or strategy. As much as there are strides that are being made to curb gender based violence the urgent nature of gender based violence whose victims lives are at risk as the beg communities, local, national and international to act immediately.

## **VIII. Conclusion**

*Appreciated is the pervasiveness of gender based violence and its effects. Gender based violence is a deterrent to development as it inhibits realisation of full potential which is critical to development. In Sub-Saharan Africa, HIV and AIDS is not only the most challenging problem, it tends to affect women and children more negatively than men. Poverty makes women in the 19-24 age group twice as likely to be infected as men,*

due to prostitution, limited power in decision making and intergenerational sex. Poor women affected by HIV and AIDS, already economically insecure, are often deprived of their rights to property, adequate health services and displaced from their usual habitat with gender based violence further accelerating women's exposure to HIV infection.

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