

**TUESDAY, 28 MARCH, 2017**

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

ON

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN ZAMBIA

GIVEN BY

THE HON. MINISTER OF GENDER, MS KALIMA

Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me this rare opportunity to deliver a ministerial statement on the situation of Gender Based Violence (GBV) in Zambia. GBV is a violation of basic human rights and freedom to which all humans are entitled regardless of their gender. The right to life, freedom of thought and expression and equality before the law are compromised by acts of GBV. GBV takes the form of physical, mental, social or economic abuse against a person because of that person's gender and includes violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to the person, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.

Mr Speaker, I note with sadness that cases of GBV have continued to rise, in some cases resulting in loss of lives and if one survived, they are left with lifelong mental disorder, stigma and physical disabilities. A recently released annual survey by the Victim Support Unit (VSU) of the Zambia Police Service revealed that in 2016, the country recorded 18,540 cases as compared to 18,088 cases recorded in the previous year of 2015, showing an increase of 452 cases of GBV. These statistics imply that barely a day passes without the Zambian communities witnessing about fifty cases of GBV.

Mr Speaker, the report further indicated that cases of assault occasioning actual bodily harm stood at 6,769. Defilement cases were at 2,363 and cases of neglecting to provide accounted for 1,530. These offences were top on the list of commonly committed cases of GBV in 2016. Other commonly reported GBV cases included; rape, assault on a child, indecent assault, murder, incest, sexual harassment, child desertion, use of insulting language and unlawful wounding.

**TUESDAY, 28 MARCH, 2017**

Sir, there are indications that these figures are only a fraction of what is actually obtaining on the ground, especially in rural areas where most cases go unreported. This is a very sad situation which needs concerted efforts to deal with.

Mr Speaker, the root causes of GBV can largely be narrowed down to gender inequality for women and associated violence and harmful and controlling aspects of masculinity as a result of patriarchal power imbalances imbedded in much of our traditional and cultural beliefs. This imbalance, it is argued, has led to pervasive cultural stereotypes and attitudes that perpetuate the cycle of GBV. Communities, especially in the rural areas, have continued to embrace negative cultural beliefs, where GBV is a norm such that if a man does not beat his wife, it means he does not love her.

Also, some beliefs condone men's infidelity as compared to female infidelity leading to increased domestic violence and health complications.

Sir, the dependency syndrome, where most of the female victims or survivors depend on the perpetrators of violence against them for survival put them in much more vulnerable situations as compared to their male counterparts. I do not want to rule out the fact that most of the members of the community in particular the women are now aware of the various forms of GBV and are able to take steps to report such cases unlike before. In the past, most cases of GBV were considered as family or private issues and went unreported. As a ministry, we will leave this for further interrogation by researchers and academicians to empirically ascertain whether this could be the major factor contributing to the rising cases of GBV.

Mr Speaker, GBV is a hindrance to the attainment of gender equality as well as realisation of social and economic goals of this country as it erodes confidence of the survivors to participate in development efforts. In this regard, my ministry has been coordinating the implementation of the Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) and the United Nations (UN) joint programme on GBV. This programme has a multi-sectoral approach and involves enhancing access to health services, legal services and social protection systems for survivors of GBV. Under this programme, two fast-track courts in Kabwe and Lusaka have been established to ensure that

**TUESDAY, 28 MARCH, 2017**

there is speedy disposal of GBV cases. In addition, village-led One Stop Centres have been established in Nyamphande, Sandwe, Mumbi, Kalindawalo, Nyanje and Mwanjabanthu Chiefdoms. Four more village-led One Stop Centres have been established in Nalolo, Mulobezi, Chongwe and Kapiri Mposhi Districts. The village-led One Stop Centre is a concept where community members are trained to handle GBV cases and refer those they cannot handle to the police. The centres provide health services, legal advice and social protection services under one roof.

Sir, child marriage is another form of GBV and a human right violation that robs girls of their right to health, live a secure life and choose when and who to marry. It is a harmful practice which severely affects the rights of a child and further deprives a child a chance of attaining other aspirations of life such as education. The 2013/2014 Zambia Demographic and Health Survey (ZDHS) found that child marriage was more common among girls than boys. Seventeen per cent of girls aged fifteen to nineteen are married compared to only 1 per cent of boys of the same age group. Further, 42 per cent of women aged twenty to forty-nine reported having married before age eighteen compared to only 4.2 per cent of men. However, the practice seems to be on the decline as older generations are more likely to report a younger age of first marriage at 13.2 per cent of women aged forty-five to forty-nine getting married before the age of fifteen compared to 5.9 per cent of women aged twenty to twenty-four. My ministry is consolidating the efforts already made that are yielding the desired results in reducing child marriage in Zambia. In this vein, my ministry is coordinating the implementation of the national strategy on ending child marriage in the consortium of eleven ministries that are bringing on board various expertise to prevent the vice and provide support services to victims of child marriage. The implementation of the strategy is aimed at accelerating national efforts to end child marriage by 2030 by providing an operational framework to achieve this target. Some of the specific interventions that the ministries in the consortium will implement include; awareness raising and ending child marriage, facilitating the review of policy and legal framework related to children and marriage, building capacities of stakeholders at all levels, mobilising funds and facilitating service delivery related to addressing the vulnerability and consequences of child marriage.

**TUESDAY, 28 MARCH, 2017**

Mr Speaker, allow me to inform the nation that my ministry is committed to creating an enabling environment in which civil society organisations, faith based organisation, private sector and individuals can work and thrive and hence, contribute to the reduction of GBV cases and incidences of child marriage to make the lives of our people worth living. I therefore, wish to encourage our partners who are already working with us on GBV campaigns and child marriage not to relent for the sake of that Zambian girl child in Sikongo, Chienge, Chadiza, Dundumwezi, Kaputa, Chibombo, Muyombe, Chavuma, Lufwanyama, Mandevu or indeed, Lusaka. In the same vein, I want to take advantage of this platform to appeal to would be partners to join us in this effort to eliminate GBV and child marriage for a better tomorrow for Mother Zambia.

Sir, as I conclude, I would like to draw the attention of the House to the Anti-Gender-Based-Violence Act No. 1 of 2011 which interprets sexual harassment as:

“Engaging in a pattern or conduct that induces in a person the fear of imminent harm or feeling of annoyance and aggravation including:

- (a) sexual contact without the consent of the person with whom the contact is made and making unwanted sexual advances;
- (b) following, pursuing or accosting a person or making persistent, unwelcome communication with a person and includes:
  - (i) watching, loitering outside or near a building where the harassed person resides, works, carries on business, studies or happens to be;
  - (ii) repeatedly making phone calls or using a third party to make phone calls to the harassed person, whether or not conversation ensues;

**TUESDAY, 28 MARCH, 2017**

- (iii) repeatedly sending, delivering or causing the delivery of offensive or abusive letters, telegrams, packages, facsimiles, electronic mail or other offensive objects or messages to the harassed person; or
- (iv) engaging in any other menacing behaviour.

Sir, I wish to take this opportunity to urge hon. Members of this House to familiarise themselves with the contents of this piece of legislation and sensitise their constituents on the provisions of this important Act and lead by example, as hon. Members of Parliament. As Government, we shall continue to review and amend relevant legislation in order to make it responsive to the needs of our people.

I thank you, Sir.