



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT DELIVERED  
BY THE MINISTER OF GENDER AND CHILD  
DEVELOPMENT ON THE ACTS OF GENDER BASED  
VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT TOWARDS WOMEN AND  
GIRLS IN ZAMBIA**

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Lusaka

25<sup>th</sup> March, 2015

Let me take this opportunity, **Mr. Speaker**, to thank you for giving me this opportunity to deliver a Ministerial Statement, as Minister responsible for Gender and Child Development, on the continuous acts of Gender Based Violence (GBV) obtaining in Zambia and continued harassment of women and girls in Zambia.

Right from the onset, I want to state that Human rights are basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled to, regardless of their gender. These rights include the right to life, freedom of thought and expression, and equality before the law.

Sadly, our society has continued to witness the violation of these rights leading to vices such as Gender Based Violence which has not only claimed lives, but survivors are in some cases left with life-long mental disorder, stigma and physical injuries. Ultimately, such survivors require intensive counseling and rehabilitation in places where the environment is conducive.

In the recent past, reports of GBV in Zambia have shown more brutal forms. These range from physical, sexual, psychological, emotional abuse and harmful traditional practices. Records at the Victim Support Unit (VSU) of the Zambia Police Service have recorded an upward swing with 6, 716 cases reported in 2008, 8,382 in 2009; 8467 in 2010, 11, 914 in 2011, 12, 924 in 2012, 10,217 in the first three quarters of 2013 and 12,998 in 2014 countrywide. GBV is clearly not an isolated problem but rather, a widespread violation of human rights and has had serious implications on Zambia's development agenda that transcend geography, sex, class, culture, age, race, religion, political affiliation.

**Mr. Speaker,**

Let me share with the honourable members of this house and through you inform the nation that my Government is taking DBV as a very serious issue. To this effect we shall continue to provide leadership in coordinating the establishment of Shelters for survivors of Gender Based Violence as well as One-Stop Centres that will offer integrated services as provided for in the Anti-Gender Based Violence Act No. 1 of 2011.

There are also several laws or legal frameworks which we shall continue to implement, which currently embody acts of violence and harassment towards women and girls in Zambia. These include:

- i. The Republican Constitution, Chapter One of the Laws of Zambia;
- ii. The Anti Gender Based Violence Act No.1 of 2011;
- iii. The Penal Code Chapter 87 of the Laws of Zambia;
- iv. The Penal Code (Amendment) No. 15 of 2005;
- v. The Criminal Procedure Code Chapter 88 of the Laws of Zambia;
- vi. The Education Act No. of 2011;
- vii. Anti Human trafficking Act No. 11 of 2008;
- viii. The Marriage Act Chapter 50;

- ix. Matrimonial Causes Act No. 20 of 2007;
- x. Legitimacy Act Chapter 52 of the Laws of Zambia;
- xi. Affiliation and Maintenance Act Chapter 64 of the Laws of Zambia; and
- xii. The Employment Act chapter 268 of the Laws of Zambia.

These laws are adequate to address these acts of violence and harassment and serve as a deterrent to would be offenders as they provide for prevention, protection, rehabilitation and empowerment. For example, the sexual offences carry a penalty of a minimum sentence of 15 years. In addition, the legal frameworks embodies international and regional standards. However, more work needs to be done especially regarding awareness raising, implementation framework and activities. My Ministry is currently in the process of developing a robust communication strategy that can match the size of the problem, an implementation framework that takes into account the benefits of partnerships with the Civil Society organizations, progressive Traditional and Religious leaders.

**Mr. Speaker,**

Let me also inform this house that, Gender based Violence is taking many forms, the most common ones being:

1. Physical violence that includes spouse battering, slapping, kicking, punching, hitting, pinching, chocking, throwing things at the spouse, using or threatening violence or use of weapon;
2. Psychological, emotions and mental torture;
3. Rape, defilement (statutory rape) and incest;
4. Forced or child marriages;
5. Sodomy;
6. Prostitution;
7. Sexual harassment;
8. Sexual cleansing
9. The language we use;
10. Murder.

**Mr. Speaker,**

According to a Report of the Technical Committee on the Strengthening of Laws: Enforcement Mechanisms and Support Systems Relating To Gender Based Violence, particularly Against

Women and Children of July 2000, the following were cited as causes of Gender Based Violence among others:-

1. Poverty especially amongst women and young people;
2. Women low social economic status in our society;
3. Unequal power relationships due to patriarchal nature of society;
4. Early or Forced Marriages;
5. Poverty;
6. Adultery and suspicion of infidelity;
7. Excessive alcohol and substance abuse by the perpetrator;
8. Denial of conjugal rights especially sex;
9. Bride price. This reinforces a man's proprietary sense over wife to control even if it means using force;
10. Polygamous practices that lead to suspicion of unfaithfulness as men are not able to satisfy all their wives sexually;
11. Intermarriages lead to conflicts of cultures if not properly handled;
12. Traditional beliefs that allow a husband to chastise his wife once in a while as a form of discipline; and

13. Children who witness or are the victims of violence may learn to believe that violence is a reasonable way to resolve conflict between people. Boys who learn that women are not to be valued or respected and who see violence directed against women are more likely to abuse women when they grow up. Girls who witness domestic violence in their families of origin are more likely to be victimized by their own husbands.

14. Socialization and society norms.

**Mr. Speaker,**

In order to address challenges experienced on issues of violence and harassment against women and girls, my Ministry will continue to play the following roles:

- i. Coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Anti Gender Based Violence Act 1 of 2011;
- ii. Capacity building of stakeholders in society including women, men, boys girls and member of various political parties;
- iii. Promoting rights of women and girls, across the country;
- iv. Awareness raising targeting men, women, boys, girls and children; and
- v. The economic empowerment of women and girls.

## Mr. Speaker

In order to spearhead community response to GBV issues, the Ministry has been establishing District GBV Taskforces across the country as part of the District Development Coordinating Committees (DDCCs). So far, ten (10) district taskforces are operational in Chipata and Katete in Eastern Province; Lusaka in Lusaka Province; Chinsali and Nakonde in Muchinga Province; and Choma, Kalomo and Livingstone in Southern Province. Other District Taskforces in the remaining provinces will be operational in due course with a view to ensuring countrywide coverage.

In addition to these efforts, we shall continue working with editorial teams in both the print and electronic media. Although there is increased reports of gender and child development issues, a lot still needs to be done especially regarding the manner in which women and girls are portrayed in the media. The success achieved so far by working with the media, can be attributed to our partnership and training of journalists and reporters from the public, private and community media stations as well as the quarterly media tracking meetings which serve as points of interaction, monitoring and evaluation. However, although there is increased reporting of GBV, the choice of what can be reported and the language used is still gender biased and demeaning to women. I must say some of the articles published should not find their way to the media. We need to reach a point where the media stoops publishing articles where women are being abused and articles encouraging abusive language. This again shows that a lot needs to be done.

I am also glad to report that, public awareness is on the increase and members of the communities are responding in accordance with the Anti-Gender Based Violence Act No. 1 of 2011 when matters bordering on abuse of men, women and children take place. It is evident that if we continue to empower our people with information to take community action, cases of gender based violence will significantly minimise in society.

Notwithstanding these successes, more still needs to be done to eradicate negative attitudes and practices in society.

**Mr. Speaker,**

Allow me to inform this August house that there are a number of stakeholders such as the progressive traditional authorities, law enforcement agencies, community, opinion and religious leaders and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) that complement our efforts in addressing issues of violence and harassment against women and girls and enforcing the laws against such acts. Some of our Traditional, religious, opinion leaders in communities and CSOs for example:

- i. Continue to advocate for zero tolerance to GBV;
- ii. Discourage negative cultural practices;
- iii. Provide for stiffer punishment for perpetrators of GBV;
- iv. Provide leadership in breaking the culture of silence, reporting to police GBV cases;
- v. Provide counselling; and
- vi. Encourage citizens' arrest among the subjects.

The law enforcement agencies on the other hand help in:

- i. Enforcement of the law;
- ii. Ensuring protection;
- iii. Informing the victim of their rights;
- iii. Informing the victim of available services such as shelters, medical treatment, legal, counseling, and right to lodge complaint;
- iv. Discouraging the trivialisation or making fun of men and boys, women and girls who are victims of GBV; and
- v. Providing for user friendly victim services such as hearing cases in camera and provision of private consulting rooms.

**Mr. Speaker,**

It is important for me to share some the challenges both the Ministry and stakeholders face. For example, the Ministry faces challenges of inadequate human resources, limited budgetary allocation, office equipment, transport among others to enable the Ministry execute the activities at preventing or reducing GBV. Our stakeholders are also faced with:

- i. Inadequate Judicial Officers to attend to GBV cases;
- ii. Distances to stations where GBV cases can be reported;

- iii. Delay in disposal of cases by the Judiciary;
- iv. Inadequate knowledge on GBV among Judicial officers, traditional, religious, opinion leaders and CSOs;
- v. Inadequate forensic expertise in the country;
- vii. Inadequate social and medical personnel to attend to GBV cases promptly;
- vii. Absence, costly and cumbersome referral system;
- Viii. Inadequate One Stop Centres; and
- ix. Medical staff not willing to testify in cases of GBV.

**Mr. Speaker,**

As I conclude, I want to share with you all and advise all stakeholders that as we address issues of Gender Based Violence and harassment toward women and girls, it is important that we also intensify and create as much awareness as possible and intervention programmes. No amount of laws, one stop centres and arrests can eliminate the scourge except through effective and consistent public awareness and advocacy aimed at attitude and behavioral change targeting the entire nation. Furthermore, laws and awareness programmes must be matched with empowerment programmes for the vulnerable in society.

**Mr. Speaker,**

Behavioural change is a long tedious process. In fact it calls for a very robust investment such as:

In ourselves as gatekeepers, education, human resources capacity in all our key players, religious leaders, the Media, programmes and activities that minimize poverty, programmes and activities that prevent early child marriage, family life, the right leadership and the promotion of a five letter word;

Called Love "love thy neighbour as you love yourself".

"Do unto others as you wish it be done to you.

**I thank you Mr Speaker and beg to move.**