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# An Exploration into Success Stories as A Means of Combating Gender Based Violence-A Case Study of T/A Zulu in Mchinji District

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### Abstract

Gender Based Violence (GBV) is a global health, human rights, and development issue that transcends geography, class, culture, age, race and religion impacting every community on the globe. Violence against women, men girls, and boys is a severe impediment to poverty reduction (TOT IASC Guidelines, 2006) <sup>[19]</sup>. In Malawi Gender issues are very controversial with women and girls being the main victims. Malawi has seen an increase in the GBV cases both in Rural and urban areas. Acts of gender-based violence are among the most common forms of violence in many Districts. The research Strives at exploring Success stories as a means of combating GBV. For this to be achieved, a qualitative method of research design will be implored accompanied by questioners and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The fight against GBV has been there for a while now in Malawi, yet the problems seem to be growing each day, hence a need to look for other un explored means of combating GBV with the case study in Mchinji District by taking a look at the profound role of success stories in GBV. Within the 3 villages of T/A Zulu respondents will be selected at random. It has been estimated that at least one in every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced in to sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. Violence is also a more serious cause of death and incapacity among women of reproductive age than cancer, and greater cause of ill-health than traffic accidents and malaria combined.

**Keywords:** Gender, Violence, GBV.

### 1. Introduction

Gender Based Violence (GBV) is a global health, human rights, and development issue that transcends geography, class, culture, age, race and religion impacting every community on the globe. Violence against women, men girls, boys and is a severe impediment to poverty reduction. The public health implications of GBV are overwhelming. It has been estimated that at least one in every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced in to sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. Violence is also a more serious cause of death and incapacity among women of reproductive age than cancer, and greater cause of ill-health than traffic accidents and malaria combined. GBV also has an impact on vulnerable groups in relation to the prevalence of HIV and STIs associated with it (Spotlight Malawi, 2020) <sup>[13-6]</sup>.

in Malawi as well Gender issues are very controversial in a sense that, many people both learned and illiterate tend to speak of gender being equal yet on the practical aspect of it, there has been rampant gender inequalities, equities, as well

as Gender based Violence (GBV) with women and girls being the main victims. Malawi has seen an increase in the GBV cases both in Rural and urban areas.

Gender-based violence is defined as violence that is directed against a person on the basis of their gender or sex, including acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty. It includes physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned within the family, the general community or by the State and its institutions; such violence can take many different forms which will be elaborated later (John Simister, 2008) <sup>[18]</sup>.

### 2. Problem Statement

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a grave human rights violation that can cause long-term and life-threatening injury and trauma to victims/survivors. All human rights and humanitarian actors must ensure that efforts are made from the onset of an emergency to prevent and respond to acts of

gender-based violence and provide adequate care, treatment and support to its victims/survivors. Scholars has it that, Gender-based violence (GBV) is any act of violence directed at an individual based on his or her sex, gender identity or expression of socially defined norms of masculinity and femininity (Population Services International, 2016) [22]. Men and women can both experience GBV.

Moving on, Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a global phenomenon and Malawi is no exception. The 2015/16 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey found that 34% of the women aged 15-49 reported experiencing physical violence, 14% experienced sexual violence while 23% experienced emotional violence within the 12 months' period prior to the survey (National Statistical Office, 2017) [21]. The world at large has never tired on its emphasis to fight GBV, likewise the national GBV Technical Working Group (TWG), comprising government and civil society representatives from various sectors (i.e., health, social welfare, education, justice, and faith), "consolidate[s] and coordinate[s] the activities of all relevant stakeholders to improve and support the prevention of and response to GBV amongst Malawian population in line with the National Response to Gender based Violence" (GBV TWG, 2008, p. 1). Yet with all the efforts still GBV cases are still on the rise, especially in Mchinji District, T/A Zulu

In Malawi there are also a number of traditional practices that prevent women and girls from fully realizing their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) as well as other human rights, there by being victims of GBV. Having that in mind brings a need to add force to the already existing interventions in the fight against GBV with the aim of intensifying the strategies as well as the interventions; the case of Success Stories.

The problem confronting the study is to Explore Success Stories of a means of combating GBV.

### 3. Literature Review

#### Understanding Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence is deeply rooted in patriarchy and culture, making it difficult to address it without analyzing such key drivers for violence. Gender-based violence is reflective of existing power imbalances within societies and acts as a strategy to maintain the status quo by power holders. Heise, Ellsberg and Gottmoeller, (2002) [23] assert this finding by stating that "violence against women is most common where gender roles are rigidly defined and enforced and where the concept of masculinity is linked to toughness, male honor, or dominance".

#### Sexual Violence

Sexual violence includes actual, attempted or threatened (vaginal, anal or oral), Rape; including marital rape, sexual abuse and exploitation, forced prostitution; transactional/survival sex and sexual harassment, intimidation and humiliation. Mwanza, J. (2012) [24] hinted that; Sexual exploitation is any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. Exchanging money, shelter, food or other goods for sex or sexual favours from someone in a vulnerable position is sexual exploitation. Sexual abuse is the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

#### Physical Violence

Physical Violence includes actual, attempted or threatened physical assault or battery; slavery and slave-like practices; and trafficking. Concerning Physical Violence, Malawi records has it that, 18.8% of males and 29.5% females have been victims of physical violence: beating, hitting, or battering; female genital mutilation; human trafficking; abduction; property grabbing; and threat using a weapon (Lichand, Munthali and Bueno, 2020) [6].

#### Emotional and Psychological Violence

Emotional and psychological violence includes abuse and humiliation such as insults; cruel and degrading treatment. Compelling a person to engage in humiliating acts, placing restrictions on liberty and freedom of movement. In Malawi records revile that, 42.0% of Males and 43.6% of females have been victimised psychologically like; criticism in front of children, friends, relatives, or others; humiliation; unpleasant remarks about one's appearance, dressing code, hair style, or behaviour; dictating one's dressing code, hair style, behaviour, or conduct in public; hurt you by staying away from you or isolating you from friends, relatives, or other people; threatened to kill you; preventing you from seeing or talking to a friend, relative, or other people; being denied freedom of movement; refusing to give you food or refusing to eat from you; refusing to talk to you or choosing to stay silent; refusing to have sex with you when you ask for it; shouting at you in presence of people; belittling your action, decisions, or achievements; and other violence respondents regarded as psychosocial (Lichand, Munthali and Bueno, 2020) [6].

### 4. Scope of the Study

The study is an exploration of Success stories as the means in combating GBV in Malawi-a case study of T/A Zulu Mchinji district, thus the study will target Women and Girls of T/A Zulu in Mchinji District who happen to be the main victims of GBV. Success Stories of GBV involves the participation of stakeholders who are involved in programs, support, advertisements, content development, publication as well as sharing and spreading the Success. This leads to sustainable fight against GBV which borders around Human Rights. Respondents from a purposive sample of this study will represent the entire community of T/A Zulu in Mchinji and all relevant stakeholders. They include: The Traditional Leaders, NGOs, Government agencies, focal persons and the Community itself.

### 5. Research Objectives

#### 5.1 Main Objective

To Explore Success stories as a means for Combating Gender Based Violence-A Case Study of T/A Zulu in Mchinji District.

#### 5.2 Specific Objectives

- i) To explore the socio-economic conditions of the participants those who victimized under gender-based violence
- ii) To investigate the lived experience of the participants those who victimized under gender-based violence
- iii) To Explore the potentiality success stories in combating gender-based violence
- iv) To explore the strategies of the victimized participants to combat against gender based violence

### 5.3 Research Questions

- What is the Lived experience of the GBV Victims in Mchinji District/in Malawi?
- What are the Social-Economic factors being faced by GBV victims and their families?
- What is insinuating the prevalence of GBV in T/A Zulu, Mchinji District?
- How effective are the existing Interventions in the campaign against GBV?
- What are Success stories and what purpose do they serve in the society?
- What are the potential success stories and strategies to be employed in the fight against GBV

## 6. Methodology

### 6.1 Research Approach and Design

This study will solely use qualitative research approach, in that it will seek to induce an understanding of why campaign in the fight against GBV should utilize Success Stories as part of the interventions, and under what context and process does Success Stories contribute positively to the fight against GBV. Research design is the explorative structure within which research is conducted (Kombo & Tromp 2006) <sup>[25]</sup>. It is also used to structure the research showing how all major parts work together to address the central research questions. This study will be conducted through an explorative research design with a case study design that seek to describe a unit in details, in context and holistically.

### 6.2 Study Population

The population for FGDs of this study will be residents of Mchinji District, central western part of Malawi. Mchinji District is very big, with the population of almost 602,305 people both male and females, it will not possible to interact with the entire population and therefore the FGDs settled for a sample and targeted communities in and around Mchinji-Boma; T/A Zulu and participants from the area represented the entire district.

### 6.3 Sample and Sampling Technique

This study will obtain sample selected from a larger population in Mchinji district. This study will apply purposive sampling technique where the researcher will target specific people that will be reliable (main stakeholders) for the study. Purposive sampling technique will be relevant for this study since the researcher wants to understand Prevalence of GBV and potentiality of Success stories in aiding the campaign. Participants will be sampled from the groups above and will represent the entire population in answering questions on GBV status in the area. This study will use interviews, Focused Group Discussions and in-depth Interview.

### Study Sample by Category

**Table 1:** Study sample by category under sample and sampling techniques

Category	Size of Sample	No of Interviews
Women	15	15
Government Agencies	3	3
NGOs-Gender experts	2	2
Community leaders	2	2
Total	22	22

Raw data will be stored and recorded interviews and Focused Group Discussions will be transcribed and stored as well. Major themes will be identified and categorized into related topics. Information relevant to research questions and objectives will also be identified. A coding system will be developed based on collected data.

## 7. Research Findings, Analysis and Discussion

### The Findings from the FDGS with Women and Girls on Awareness on Gender Based Violence and Prevention

Through both the FDGs and the individual Questionnaires, participants indicated that majority of them were aware of the prevention campaigns and other related activities.

“Effective awareness-raising efforts can help reduce the stigma surrounding GBV, encourage survivors to seek help, and promote social and cultural changes that challenge the acceptance of violence against women and girls. It can also help to create a culture of respect and equality, where violence is not tolerated, and victims are supported”.

### On the Models of GBV Prevention Mechanism

Women were reluctant and almost au aware of the typical mechanism for preventative measures in the GBV.

“Education and awareness-raising can be models, where by focusing on educating women and girls about their rights and providing them with information about available support services.” “Economic Empowerment as model can focus on empowering women and girls economically, which can reduce their vulnerability to violence. It involves providing women and girls with education and training opportunities, access to financial resources, and promoting their participation in the workforce”.

### On Socio-Cultural Factors Playing a Vital Role in Insinuating GBV

Women together with women groups expressed their grievances on the Social factors that have been insulating GBV as follows;

“The Patriarchal system (a patriarchal society is where men hold more power and privilege than women). Happens to be the root of all evil of GBV.” She added that “this power dynamic of Patriarchal system has been leading to the belief that men have the right to control and dominate women, hence leading to GBV”.

Next in the talk was Gender roles and expectations, Participants bemoaned Traditional gender roles and expectations as a yet another contributor of GBV. In particular Mrs. Tonse said that;

“Women are often expected to be submissive and obedient to men, and men are expected to be dominant and assertive. When these roles and expectations are not met, the end results are always conflict and violence”.

Norms around sexuality have another impact in GBV, she continued that there are strict social norms around sexuality in Malawi, particularly for women. Women who are seen as “loose” or “promiscuous” have always been subjected to violence and other forms of abuse.”

“Belief in witchcraft is common in Malawi, and women are often accused of being witches. This accusation exposes women to violence and other forms of abuse”.

“Women who are financially dependent on men may be unable to leave abusive relationships, because on their own they can’t survive financially, and also men who are unemployed or underemployed may feel powerless and frustrated, leading to violence”.



### **On Education and Employment Empowerment's Capacity to Boost Women and Girls to Fight Against the Gender-Based Violence**

Women participants all agreed that education and Empowerment is the undoubted solution to their endangerment to GBV.

"When women and girls are educated and employed, they are more likely to be aware of their rights and less likely to tolerate abusive behavior. They are also more likely to have access to support services, such as counseling and legal assistance, that can help them address and prevent violence."

"Education and employment can also provide women and girls with a sense of purpose and identity beyond their roles as wives and mothers, which can increase their self-esteem and help them assert their rights."

### **On the Roles and Responsibilities of the Family, Community and Society and Social Institution to Combat Decade Old Problem of Gender Based Violence**

"The family is the primary social institution where gender-based violence often occurs. Women and girls should advocate for families to prioritize, respectful and recognize equal treatment of all members and to create a safe and supportive environment that promotes positive relationships."

"Women and girls should also request and advocate for communities to promote gender equality and to create safe spaces for women and girls. This should be done through creating community-based programs that provide education and training on gender-based violence prevention, as well as advocacy campaigns that raise awareness about the issue and promote change."

### **On Socio-Economic Conditions of those who were Victimized under Gender-Based Violence**

"Victims of GBV live in extreme Poverty. Likewise, Individuals living in poverty are more likely to experience gender-based violence, as they may have limited resources, limited access to education and employment opportunities, and may be more vulnerable to exploitation."

"Individuals who have suffered GBV will always Shave away from group or the public in general hence they can even go to School or other developmental meetings and activities."

### **The Findings from the FDGS for the Government Officials, NGOS and Focal Persons in the Sector of GBV**

The following are the findings from the FGDs conducted with the focal persons, Government officials as well as the NGO officers.

#### **Awareness on Gender Based Violence and Prevention**

All the members in the FGD agreed that the awareness and prevention measures were available in the District.

"Awareness of GBV is crucial in addressing and preventing it. It involves understanding what GBV is, how it manifests, and its impact on individuals and society. Awareness-raising can take many forms, including education, advocacy, and public awareness campaigns."

"Effective awareness-raising efforts have helped in reducing the stigma surrounding GBV, encouraged survivors to seek help, and it has promoted social and cultural changes that challenged the acceptance of violence against women and girls. It has also helped to create a culture of respect and equality, where violence is not tolerated, and victims are supported."

"And a number of awareness campaigns were already being carried out like; initiatives from Spotlight Malawi, Girl-Guide

Malawi. And also the ratification of international conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the African Union's Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa."

### **On the Models of GBV Prevention Mechanism**

One expert defined Gender-based violence (GBV) prevention mechanisms as referred to "the various strategies and actions aimed at addressing and preventing violence against women and girls. There are several models of GBV prevention mechanisms that have been developed and implemented around the world". (Patoari 2012) <sup>[14]</sup>.

"Education and awareness-raising programs can help increase knowledge and understanding about GBV, its causes, and its impacts. These programs can also help to promote gender equality and challenge harmful gender stereotypes and cultural practices that perpetuate violence."

"Legal and policy reforms can help strengthen laws and policies aimed at preventing GBV, such as criminalizing violence against women, providing protection orders for survivors, and increasing penalties for perpetrators".

"Economic empowerment programs can help women and girls become more financially independent and less dependent on men, which can reduce their vulnerability to violence".

"Community mobilization efforts can involve a wide range of stakeholders, including community leaders, civil society organizations, and government agencies. These efforts can help to raise awareness about GBV, promote gender equality, and support survivors of violence".

### **On the Strategies of the Victimized Participants to Combat against Gender Based Violence**

Experts and GBV officials discussed that GBV victims may use a variety of strategies to cope with and respond to their experiences of violence. Here are some strategies which were mentioned:

"GBV victims may seek support from family, friends, or professional support services, such as hotlines, shelters, or counseling services".

"GBV victims may create a safety plan to protect themselves and their children from further violence. This may involve finding a safe place to stay, memorizing emergency phone numbers, or developing a code word to alert others to danger."

"GBV victims may seek legal action to protect themselves and hold their abuser accountable. This may involve obtaining a restraining order, pressing criminal charges, or seeking a divorce or custody of their children."

## **8. Suggestions and Recommendations**

### **Potentiality of Success Stories in Combating GBV**

This researcher has found that in T/A Zulu of Mchinji District, interventions for combating GBV had been introduced, but Success stories were something new for them to hear of it in the context of GBV. None the less, after Knowing What Success stories are, Participants uploaded the Success stories to be a possible breakthrough in the fight against GBV.

This Research Study has also found that, success stories can serve as a call to action, inspiring individuals and communities to take action to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. This can be achieved by showcasing examples of effective interventions, such as community-based education and support programs, success stories can help build momentum and support for efforts to address the issue of GBV.

It has been found out that Success stories are an Inspiration in the fight against GBV. This is to mean that; Success stories can inspire individuals and communities by demonstrating what is possible and providing a roadmap for achieving success. When GBV victims through success Stories hear about the challenges and obstacles that successful individuals have overcome, they will be motivated to persevere in their own pursuits for justice against GBV.

GBV Success Stories are also learning opportunities, this is to mean that, Success stories have the potential of providing valuable insights into the strategies, techniques, and practices that successful individuals in GBV have used to achieve their goals. Through sharing and listening to these GBV success stories, individuals and organizations can learn from the experiences of others and apply these lessons to their own work.

The research has also found out that GBV Success stories can Building confidence. This is to mean that; Success stories have the potential of helping in building confidence of individuals and communities who have suffered under GBV by demonstrating that GBV success is possible and achievable. Seeing others succeed can help individuals believe in themselves and their abilities, which can be a powerful motivator for continued progress and growth.

The study has also discovered that GBV Success stories are Positive reinforcement. This in the case because, GBV Success stories can serve as a form of positive reinforcement, recognizing and celebrating the accomplishments of individuals and communities who were once the victims of GBV. This can help build momentum and excitement around a particular Victim, issue or cause, and encourage others to get involved in Combating GBV.

The study has also revealed that GBV Success stories are the mantle to Advocacy. This is the case bearing in mind that, GBV Success stories are stories and stories can also be used as tools for advocacy, helping to build support for a particular cause or issue in GBV by demonstrating the positive impact that can be achieved through collective action.

#### **Willingness of Actors, (Wounded Healers, GBV Officers, NGOs and Community Members) in Engaging Success Stories in the Fight against GBV**

This study has found that, the respondents also uploaded the Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society groups for their efforts. They singled out that, the NGOs and Civil Society Groups have played a crucial role in raising awareness and preventing GBV in the district. NGOs such as Women's Voice and Leadership (WVL) and the Malawi Women Lawyers Association (MAWLA) provide support and legal services for survivors of GBV, as well as training and advocacy programs to raise awareness and prevent GBV; which is the plight for women and Girls

The study has also found out that, Social institutions together with their workers, such as schools, healthcare facilities, and the justice system, have a responsibility to address gender-based violence and support survivors. This can include implementing policies and procedures to prevent and respond to instances of violence, providing training to staff on how to recognize and respond to instances of violence, and ensuring that survivors have access to comprehensive support services. Yet these efforts must be accompanied by the easiest, smartest and the preferable channel of Success Stories, through plays, motivation talks, radio programs as well as palaver discussion at the community and peer levels. Social institutions can also work to promote gender equality and challenge harmful social norms and attitudes that perpetuate violence.

In the eyes of the FGDs respondents are of the idea that, gender-based violence requires a comprehensive and coordinated effort that involves all members of society. By working together in disseminating Success Stories of GBV in all forums, institutions and other gatherings of people, families, communities, and social institutions can help create a safer and more equitable world for all, courtesy of all the mechanisms and intervention through Success Stories.

#### **9. Recommendations**

From the findings of this study, this researcher has drawn and put forward some recommendations for GBV Actors, NGOs, Victims and the Local community to adopt and implement as strategies and solutions to combat the prevalence of GBV acts:

1. Local community to provide space and spectrum for sharing success stories; this will help shy victims who are suffering and dying in silence to gain the courage and confidence to speak out and have justice served on their story.
2. NGOs and Civil Society should fund the process of disseminating Success Stories so that the stories should reach to the outskirts of every village and town in Mchinji District and were else the evil of GBV is still prevailing.
3. Institutions like Schools and healthy centers should have the programs of empowering young girls and women through success stories whereby they should organize sessions like at school; they can dedicate specific periods of learning for sensitizations through success stories.
4. A need for a Swift and fast justice granted through judicial proceedings. This research has found out that a lot of victims remain silent about their ordeal because they have seen other cases failing to yield fruitful results. Hence they feel de-motivated and prefer to suffer in silence without the community knowing it.
5. On the Social-Economic conditions of those who were victimized under GBV; the researcher recommends that, NGOs and Civil Societies should beef up their Material and monetary support to the victims, so that those who are silent about their ordeal can learn and get encouraged. This is the case because other victims prefer to remain silent for the sole reason that the perpetrator of the GBV is a sole bread winner of the family, hence bringing him to book means another set of miserable life economically for the victim and the entire family.

#### **Conclusion**

The study has unveiled a number of approaches towards utilizing Success stories as a means of Combating GB. In the case of T/A Zulu of Mchinji District, there were some existing interventions in the fight against GBV which only need a booster and a more strategic approach through the use of Success Stories. The study has also revealed strategic solutions and recommendations which the community, NGOs and the Civil Societies can use to reach out the most abandoned areas of the society, and help them to fight the Social-Economic Conditions that comes about in the course of fighting GBV.

The Community, NGOs and the Civil Societies also needs to put in place measures to enhance proper sharing and dissemination of Success Stories by creating networks and partnerships with the wounded Healers (those who were once victims but now they overcome their ordeal) so that they can source out these success stories and have them readily available for the society to hear and celebrate them.

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