



Breaking the SILENCE



Isis-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange
We Link Women Internationally

Isis-WICCE's 3rd Peace Exposition

Zero Tolerance for Sexual and Gender Based Violence Lira, Uganda 2012

Isis Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE)

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ISBN:15 978 9970 29 014 7

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Foreword

I would like to salute the women and girls of Lango sub region in Northern Uganda who stood up and broke the silence against Gender Based Violence during the 3rd Peace Exposition held in Lira in November 2012.

The Peace Exposition is a space where women, girls, survivors of all forms of Gender Based Violence, civil society members, grassroots women groups and organisations; meet with their national and local leaders for an open and frank assessment of development and progress towards ending all forms of gender based violence. This space reaffirms that just like men; women too are important and should be actively involved in the reconstruction of their communities.

Lango Sub region was also the epicentre of the Lord's Resistance Army rebellion where for close to twenty years, armed combatants used all forms of violence against the civilian population. As in conflicts everywhere, women and children were the major victims.

The 2012 Peace Expo came to the region after six years of relative peace and resettlement efforts. Since 2006 when the guns fell silent, a lot of promises have been made for the people of this area in form of recovery efforts. Billions of shillings have been spent through donor and government support to facilitate structural developments that are meant to support the recovery processes.

It is in this space that women who experienced some of the worst forms of violence speak out and demand that government and local leaders provide immediate answers on how the existing structures should respond effectively to their needs. The opportunity also offers space for reflection on the status of women's rights

for them to demand acceleration on improvement on reproductive health as well as rein on the threatening spectre of sexual and gender based violence.

It is a creative space where all forms of expressions are used in order to ensure that everyone participates. It also forms part of the activities to mark the annual global 16 Days of Activism against gender based violence, a time when globally, all stakeholders in the women's movement re-energize their commitment towards women's rights. At the end of the day, women's concerns and voices are picked and fed into the national and regional spaces and development programs.

However during the Peace Exposition, the women have something more to take home. Throughout the three days, women got access to free health screening for reproductive health complications like cervical cancer, fistula and others. Those found to be with complications were given immediate treatment while the more complicated cases were referred to specialized hospitals for treatment. This remains our greatest commitment to the women we represent in conflict and post conflict settings because we know that responding to reproductive health needs accelerates their healing which enables them to participate effectively in the recovery process.

I want to extend my gratitude to all the partners who made this process possible. We are grateful to the many miles you have enabled us to travel in responding to the needs and concerns of women as well as enabling them to participate in shaping a brighter and more democratic future of their communities.

Ruth Ojiambo Ochieng

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Executive Summary

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence (GBV) campaign was launched by the CWGL (Center for Women's Global Leadership) in 1991. During the 16 Days of Activism campaign held between 25 November and 10 December every year, over 2,000 organizations from over 154 countries around the world participate, each demanding the elimination of all forms of violence against women.

During the 16 Days of Activism campaign in 2012, Isis-WICCE held its third annual Peace Exposition in Lira, Uganda. The theme of the third Peace Exposition was "Zero Tolerance Against Sexual and Gender Based Violence". This report summarizes the discussions, recommendations and interventions during the Peace Exposition.

The first section of this report introduces the concept of the annual Peace Exposition, and describes the way the third Peace Exposition was designed. The second section summarizes the discourse and subsequent recommendations generated during the Peace Exposition. The third section summarizes the medical intervention and media advocacy activities conducted and the fourth section concludes the report with recommendations.



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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CBO	Community Based Organisation
CC	Conversation Circles
CEDOVIP	Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention
CEWIGO	Centre for Women in Governance
EPRC	Economic Policy Research Centre
GBV	Gender based Violence
ICGLR	International Conference for the Great Lakes Region
Isis WICCE	Isis- Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange
KIWEPI	Kitgum Women's Peace Initiative
LC	Local Council
MP	Member of Parliament
NUWODU	National Union of Women with Disabilities in Uganda
PEP	Post-exposure Prophylaxis
PRDP	Peace Recovery and Development Plan
RH	Reproductive Health
SGBV	Sexual and Gender based Violence
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VISO	Voluntary Initiative Support Organisation
WOPI- U	Women's Peace Initiative Uganda
WWD	Women with Disabilities



Part I

About the Peace Exposition

National

1.1 Introduction

Isis-Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE) is an international feminist organization based in Kampala, Uganda. Isis-WICCE ignites women's leadership, amplify voices and deepen their activism in (re)creating peace through its core programs of skills building, documenting women's realities, networking for peace and leadership, providing free medical services, and advocating for redress of the spoils of armed conflict. Since 2010, Isis-WICCE has held an annual Peace Exposition; an event designed to provide a platform for women and their communities to exchange ideas and engage leaders on social and development issues affecting women survivors of conflict. For a few days every year, the Peace Exposition brings thousands of people together under a relevant theme to address violence against women; an excellent tool for identifying and addressing gaps between policy and reality.

According to UNHCR’s guidelines on prevention and response to Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) against refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons, the most common forms of SGBV in crisis areas may be categorized as follows¹:

1. Sexual Violence (for example: rape, marital rape, child sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, forced prostitution, and sexual harassment);
2. Physical Violence (for example: physical assault, human trafficking, and slavery);
3. Emotional and Psychological Violence (for example: verbal abuse, humiliation, and confinement);
4. Harmful traditional practices (for example: female genital mutilation, early marriage, forced marriage, widow inheritance, denial of girls’ education on the basis of their gender); and
5. Socio-Economic Violence (for example: discrimination and or denial of opportunities and services, social exclusion and obstructive legislative practices).

¹ http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/documents/projects/UGA/00042004/SGBV1_PRODUC.pdf

This indicates the broad and pervasive nature of SGBV in communities affected by conflict. Isis-WICCE’s Peace Exposition took a solution-oriented approach to SGBV in Lango sub region; engaging people from all walks of life on SGBV – its underlying causes and possible solutions – with the goal of achieving zero tolerance on SGBV.

1.2 Design

In 2012, Isis-WICCE held its third Peace Exposition in partnership with Lango District Leaders Forum, Women Peace Initiatives Uganda (WOPI-U), the Norwegian Embassy in Uganda, and Care International, under the theme “Zero Tolerance against Sexual and Gender Based Violence”. The Peace Exposition was purposefully held during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence, and lasted three days (29 November 2012 - 1 December 2012). Lira, home to many women survivors of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) war, was selected as the host town for the 2012 Peace Exposition, in response to a request by Lira district leaders during the 2011 Peace Exposition which was held in Kasese District, Western Uganda.

The Peace Exposition was held at the Mayor’s Gardens in Lira; adequate shelter, security and



Isis-WICCE Executive Director Ruth Ochieng setting on the pace of the campaign on zero tolerance to SGBV.

ablutions were provided. T-shirts, flags and banners with clear messages against SGBV were distributed among participants. Free meals were served for all participants, and accommodation was provided for participants who were invited from other parts of the country. In attendance were women peace activists from different parts of Uganda, the people of Lira and representatives from the eight districts of the Lango region, district leaders, religious and cultural leaders, journalists, as well as representatives from partner organizations.

At the opening of the Peace Exposition, a brass band led a Peace March through Lira town,

attracting the attention of the entire town and drawing more participants to the event. The women peace activists and participating organizations were provided with exhibition stalls to showcase their creative approaches to addressing SGBV. Many of the stalls displayed products for sale, demonstrating how women's economic independence, and a reduction in poverty, can help address SGBV. Many stalls also distributed relevant information in the form of documents, aimed at addressing SGBV. Situated near the exhibition stalls, the Uganda Blood Bank was able to attract blood donors at the Peace Exposition, responding to the blood supply needs of Lira Referral Hospital.



The peace exposition is a point of reflection and for voices to be heard.

Educational entertainment, mostly in the form of skits performed by popular performance artists, was used to illustrate key issues for discussion, to trigger thought, and to keep participants engaged during intervals.

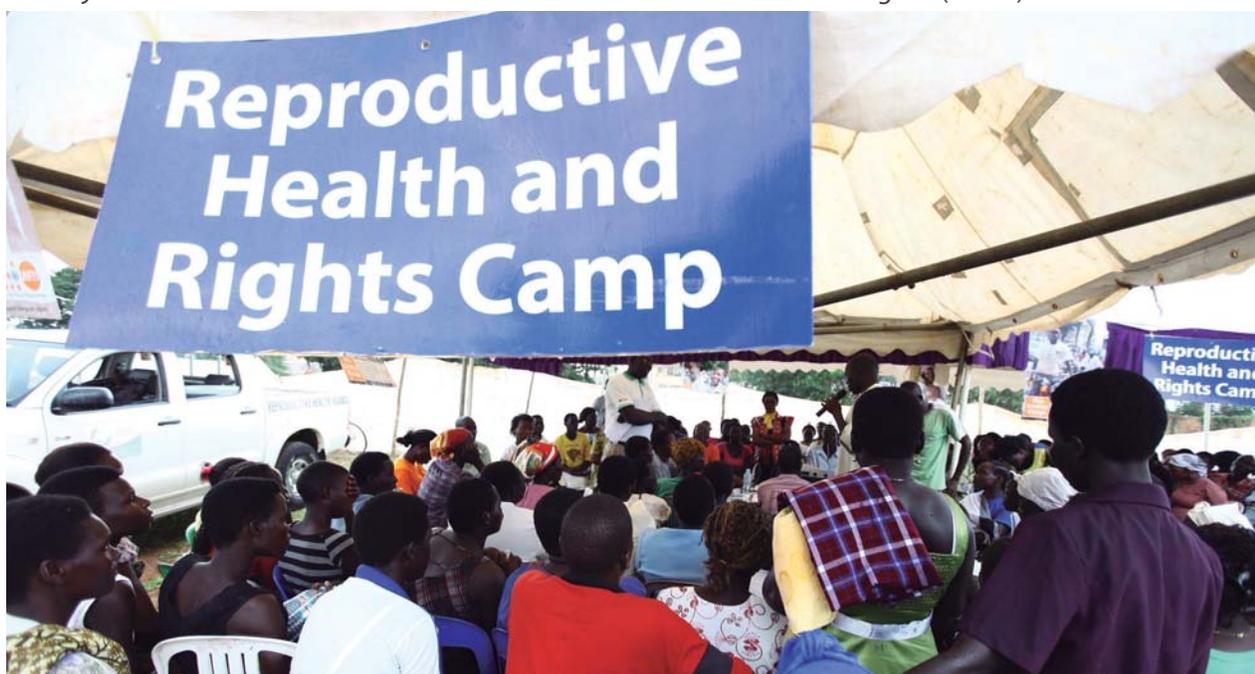
Conversation circles were held on selected topics related to eliminating SGBV in Lira. Facilitated by relevant and skilled moderators, the discussions were open to the public, provided a safe space for women and all participants to speak out, and generated several recommendations. At the conclusion of each session, the groups would meet to exchange deliberations through plenary discussions, which generated further

recommendations based on emerging themes identified in the group and plenary discussions.

During the Peace Exposition, several reports were launched: Centre for Women in Governance (CEWIGO) launched the National Action Plan on UNSCR1325 monitoring report for Uganda. The report indicates that Uganda has made progress in terms of passing laws to protect women's right, most notable the Domestic violence Act of 2000 and the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act 2010. Despite the laws put in place sexual violence is on the increase and there is no access to justice for GBV survivors. Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP) and Economic

Policy Research Centre (EPRC) also launched a research report on the Costs of Domestic Violence, which indicated that the economic costs (at the macro-level) directly associated with SGBV was an alarming 55 billion Uganda Shillings, absorbed by the referral system (which includes health, law enforcement and judicial responses). While some may be impressed that such resources are available for the SGBV referral pathway, the report illustrated the costs not as the costs of addressing SGBV but rather the expenses incurred in addressing a problem which draws resources away from other development needs.

Throughout the Peace Exposition, Isis-WICCE offered free cervical cancer screening to hundreds of women through a medical camp. During the Peace Exposition, Isis-WICCE also engaged in advocacy work via the media. The 2012 Peace Exposition provided a glimpse into the nature of Isis-WICCE's work, and the creative approaches taken by Isis-WICCE to respond to needs and concerns of women survivors of conflict for example during the period Lira Women's Peace Initiative (LIWEPI now Women Peace Initiatives – WOPI-U) launched their peace house, a space that will provide counselling for women war survivors. Bringing its international outreach, Isis-WICCE in conjunction with the Civil Society Forum of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) launched the Zero





Part II

The Discussions

2.1 Real Men

As revealed through discussions with participants during the Peace March through Lira town, the term “Sexual Gender Based Violence” has different interpretations. Many of the participants, including women, felt that since both women and men belong to a gender, the term gender based violence refers to violence suffered by both women and men from members of the opposite gender. However, the term gender based violence emerged after it was recognized that the term violence against women was limited. This is because it did not explicitly capture the broader nature of violence against those who do not conform to gender roles as defined by their communities, including those who do not identify themselves as women. It included all people, especially women, who suffer violence at the hands of systems of patriarchy which seek to virulently enforce gender roles. Isis-WICCE’s work focuses on addressing violence against women in armed and post conflict situations. The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defined gender-based violence as “any act of violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm



Women demanded the dismantling of patriarchal mindsets that continue to perpetuate GBV in communities.

or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life". This include marital rape, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, trafficking, forced prostitution, systematic rape in armed conflicts, female infanticide and prenatal sex selection, as well as the economic exploitation of women.

For one to understand the complexity of the virulent patriarchy which perpetuates violence against women, one must take a closer look at gender roles as defined by society. When examined more closely, societal definitions of "real men" and gender roles provide insight into the ironies that fuel violence against women, and

how more accurate re-definitions can be used to address violence against women. To achieve this, one of the discussion groups during the Peace Exposition was termed "Real Men".

This attempted to explore violence against women as fuelled by patriarchal definitions of a "real man" as well as more appropriate definitions of a "real man" that seek to challenge violence against women. If all men were to appreciate and adhere to more sensible definitions of a "real man" than those provided by patriarchal systems, then all forms of violence against women, particularly sexual and gender based violence, would have better chances of being eliminated from society. This was underlined by Bishop John Odur Kami in



Bishop John Odur Kami launching Zero tolerance campaign in Lango sub region

his address to Peace exposition participants thus; “Real men are responsible towards their families, are stable, are progressive, and are godly. If you as a man do not deserve respect because of your conduct, smelling of alcohol and demanding sex and becoming violent when she refuses, then you do not deserve respect. Men are raping their wives; this is unacceptable. Everybody must play their roles, respect each other. Then violence will end.”

The discussion was facilitated by partners from Care International, and sought to challenge unfavourable definitions of a “real man” in the Lango sub-region by juxtaposing those definitions with contemporary realities and various manifestations of violence against women.

Below is a summary of the issues that emerged from the “Real Men” discussion group:

LOCATING DEFINITIONS OF A “REAL MAN” IN THE FIGHT AGAINST SGBV		
Unfavourable definitions of a “real man”	Consequences and Realities	Favourable definitions of a “real man”
Head of the home	Whereas women are expected to take responsibility for running homes, many men feel that their masculinity is challenged when women provide input into decision making in the home, and often react violently.	A genuine supporter of peace and development in the home.
Primary breadwinner	Whereas prevailing circumstances in northern Uganda have seen women increasingly becoming the breadwinners in their homes, many men insist on controlling resources, in ways that often result in violence against women in forms such as economic exploitation and neglect. Whereas women tend to share their economic growth with their families and communities more than men, many men react violently to their wives’ economic growth, as they feel this challenges their masculinity as the primary breadwinners.	A partner who respects and supports his spouse’s economic initiatives.
Purchaser of wives	The cultural practice of paying bride price has been interpreted by many men as the purchasing of wives. On payment of bride price, many men believe that they own their wives, behaving in ways that constitute violence against women.	A resourceful partner who values culture and respects his spouse as an equal human being.
Sex machine	Many men feel that showing sexual prowess, to the point of infidelity, unsafe sex, and disregarding the concept of consent, somehow affirm their masculinity as “sex machines”. This results in sexual gender based violence, particularly marital rape. In reality, this definition seeks to justify rape, results in the spread of STIs, creates families of unmanageable sizes, and perpetuates violence against women.	A man who understands and respects the concept of consent, practices safer sex, supports family planning, and promotes the sexual and reproductive health rights of women.

LOCATING DEFINITIONS OF A “REAL MAN” IN THE FIGHT AGAINST SGBV

<p>Excessive consumption of alcohol</p>	<p>Whereas many men are led to believe that “real men” drink alcohol excessively, this often results in domestic violence. Typical scenarios included sexually charged drunken men in unsanitary conditions returning home to demand sex from their sober spouses, easily resorting to violence in the event of any disagreement from their spouses. Excessive consumption of alcohol was also linked with violence-inducing poverty and incidents of child sexual abuse. The shame and guilt induced by alcoholism create a cycle in which some men beat their spouses in a hopeless attempt at regaining respect lost due to alcoholism.</p>	<p>A man who does not surrender his faculties and self-control to substance abuse.</p>
<p>Do not “cry”</p>	<p>Many men are led to believe that expressing their feelings and emotions with their spouses will damage their status as “real men”. In reality, this results in poor communication and emotional absenteeism, both of which constitute domestic violence and lead to other forms of violence against women, particularly when feelings and emotions develop into mistrust and eventually erupt into violent misunderstandings. Polygamy was often linked to SGBV, particularly in cases where poor communication resulted in competition among spouses, jealousy, mistrust, and bitterness.</p>	<p>A man who is open about his feelings and emotions, gives his spouse respectful audience to air her feelings and emotions, and appreciates the value of communication.</p>

Recommendations

Men and women need strategies to improve trust and communication and methods to resolve conflicts peacefully. Psychosocial counselling by NGOs, government and consultation with village elders in times of trouble were suggested as courses of action. It was however noted that elders must strive to resolve disputes objectively, rather than counselling women to be submissive as has been a custom in the past. Women's Peace Initiatives - Uganda (WOPI-U) provides psychosocial counselling to address residual trauma from war and attempts to teach communities to resolve disputes peacefully. Such services are necessary to reduce alcoholism and violence.

Men have largely been excluded from empowerment programmes. This has contributed to their limited success and inability to engage in development initiatives thus fuelling their violent reactions to women's attempts to assert their rights. To achieve real change to the status of women, and ensure a reduction in incidents of SGBV, men must be integrated into empowerment programming. Kitgum Women's Peace Initiatives (KIWEPI) and CARE International with Voluntary Initiative Support Organization (VISO) are running programmes to engage men

“As a married man I interpret “Real man” to mean that I should not adhere to cultures that hold women lower than men. I must be in agreement with my wife, inform her of all my movements, come home early. If I do all these things, I'll be fighting against SGBV.” — Police officer from Dokolo

and change their attitudes to women. Men are identified to serve as models for their community of a “real man” who cares for his family, respects his wife and shares decision making. The impact of these programmes should be measured, and if successful, replication is recommended.

Cultural leaders should contribute to demystifying traditional beliefs. Bride price does not entitle a man to control a woman. Beating is not a sign of love. Cultural leaders should lead communities to recognise the intelligence and independence of women, and insist that there is greater equality in marriages and decision making, and guide community members especially men

“In the olden culture, it was believed that if you don’t beat a woman, she will think you do not love her. That is no longer the case. Times have changed... Attitudes such as “You have paid for a woman” (bride price) (therefore you can do as you wish with her)” are not God’s will. There is no room for violence. Mutual respect is long overdue.”
– Bishop Odur Kami

to understand that sex must be consensual. A number of human rights organizations in Uganda, such as PLAN and Isis-WICCE are working to establish community structures that fight SGBV and promote the rights of women.

Participants resolved that individuals must take responsibility in their relationships; exhibit greater patience and understanding of their partners; seek out the source of problems rather than reacting to gossip; and recognise both the

strengths and weaknesses of their partners. Partners should share responsibility for care for children and in-laws and jointly determine the use of family finances.

Economic empowerment programmes that involve women and their spouses would reduce poverty and therefore stress and conflict over finances. Savings should be encouraged in families together with purchases of assets that can be sold for emergencies.

2.2 Women With Disabilities (WWD)

In Uganda, sexual gender based violence (SGBV) against women and girls with disabilities are common. Women with disabilities experience particular forms of vulnerabilities and discrimination. Below is one example which was shared by Women with disabilities (WWD) during discussions at the Peace Exposition.

Lydia suffered from polio paralysis. At 24 years of age, she became so thin that she looked like a 10 year old. Her parents were negligent, and would leave her at home with the domestic worker. The domestic worker would routinely put Lydia into a large basket, cover the basket with grass,

and take Lydia to a secluded place outdoors where he would rape her. As a result of the rape, Lydia lost her virginity and contracted HIV/AIDS. She has since died.



Like everybody else, women with disabilities deserve more respect and protection from SGBV

According to a report published in 2010 by Human Rights Watch titled “As if We Weren’t Human”, women with disabilities in northern Uganda are subjected to continuous discrimination and sexual and gender based violence. Over one-third of the 64 women and girls with disabilities

interviewed by Human Rights Watch reported that they had experienced some form of sexual and gender-based violence, including rape. Stigma, discrimination and isolation conspire to make women with disabilities more vulnerable to rape, sexual abuse and domestic violence. The stigma and discrimination manifest as negative attitudes in the community, lack of access to government services and programs, obstacles to full participation in the community, and challenges to economic self-sufficiency. Abuses against women and girls with disabilities are not limited to physical and sexual violence. They include denial of justice, denial of property rights, and denial of child support. Further, women with disabilities are often denied access to general health care, reproductive and maternal health care².

During Isis-WICCE’s Peace Exposition in 2012, National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda (NUWODU) presented some challenges faced by women with disabilities for discussion. The main issues that emerged from that discussion indicate that little has changed since Human Rights Watch published its report in 2010.

2 Human Rights Watch. “As if We Weren’t Human” Available online: http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related_material/uganda0810_accessible_0.doc

Below is an insightful summary of the challenges presented by communication barriers as explored by the “Women with disabilities” discussion group.

Q: “If you were a nurse, a doctor, a social worker, or a police officer, how would you communicate with a deaf woman who uses sign language?”

A: “I would ask her to write”

Q: “What if she has not gone to school and cannot write?”

A: “I’ll find a translator”

Q: “What if it is an emergency and the nearest translator is out of town?”

A: “I’ll find a way to communicate with her”

Unfortunately, “finding a way to communicate”, as noble as it may sound, has resulted in horrific incidents. For example, a woman with disabilities who only used sign language went to a hospital in Gulu when she was six months pregnant. Through “finding a way to communicate”, the nurse on duty misinterpreted the sign language and thought that the woman was constipated and had malaria. She gave the patient medication that she thought would relieve the constipation and malaria, which resulted in the patient losing her baby. Another incident in which “finding



Communication is important in supporting women with disabilities

a way to communicate” proved disastrous happened when a woman with disabilities went to a police station to report that she had been raped. The officers on duty misunderstood what she was communicating and gave her transport money to go home. As they were unable to communicate with her, she did not know why they had given her money. She thought that the money was to help her access health services as a survivor of SGBV, and so she went to hospital. At the hospital, “finding a way to communicate” resulted in more confusion as they sent her back to the police to get a form. She struggled to access the relevant services until NUWODU intervened.

SUMMARY OF INPUT FROM THE “WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES” DISCUSSION GROUP

Challenges faced	Consequences and Realities	Recommendations
Vulnerability: Ignorance and myths	Several myths continue to increase the vulnerability of women with disabilities. In some homes and communities, many people live in fear of “contracting” disabilities and as a result will not use water collected by women with disabilities. This sort of myth contributes to the isolation of women with disabilities, making them more vulnerable to SGBV. Another myth that emerged during the discussion was the belief that having sex with a disabled girl will cure HIV, putting girls with disabilities at increased risk of being raped and infected with HIV. It also emerged that the vulnerability of women with disabilities in patriarchal societies is increased by beliefs (fears) that ultimately deny them the security of marriage or stable relationships. The belief that women with disabilities are not fit to be mothers or wives has resulted in rejection and isolation, making them more vulnerable to SGBV as they are treated as sex objects.	Services should be provided for deaf children and their families to learn sign language – Braille for blind persons themselves. Improve access to education and employment opportunities for women with disabilities. In addition, sign language should be included in the curriculum as a basis of improving communication with the people with disabilities.

SUMMARY OF INPUT FROM THE “WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES” DISCUSSION GROUP

<p>Inaccessible services: Poor communication and discrimination</p>	<p>When women with disabilities approach health service providers and law enforcement officers, they often find difficulties in accessing services. This presents a challenge for all women with disabilities, but especially for survivors of SGBV. Repeatedly referenced during the discussion at the Peace Exposition was a story about nurses who, rather than assisting a woman with disabilities to reach the hospital bed in the labour ward, taunted the woman, asking her; “How did you climb your husband’s bed? Go ahead and climb onto the bed and show us how you did it”. The ridicule of their questions reflects their disdain for people with disabilities and their disbelief that disabled people can function as full human beings. This indicates how inaccessibility at public offices constitutes discrimination as it deprives women with disabilities access to services, and creates room for further discrimination.</p>	<p>Government should offer bursaries for girls with disabilities, especially orphans because their education is not prioritised by the communities. Government programs should be made for women with disabilities to improve access to services at schools, hospitals, police stations and other offices. Every sub-county should employ non-hearing people and or sign language translators.</p>
<p>Inclusion</p>	<p>Women with disabilities felt the need for more inclusion and consideration from organizations within the human rights and women’s movement.</p>	<p>Women’s organizations should always remember that WWD have unique challenges and if those challenges are not addressed, then women with disabilities will not be able to attend events, functions and meetings. When budgeting, consider everybody including women with disabilities. When buying things for or donating things to beneficiaries (such as bicycles), alternatives should be considered for women with disabilities</p>

2.3 The Voices of the Youth on SGBV

When discussing SGBV at a platform such as the Isis-WICCE Peace Exposition, the youth represent hope. They are energetic, creative and passionate about social justice. The youth also represent a community's future, and need to be actively engaged in addressing SGBV³. Sadly, the youth are also particularly vulnerable to SGBV mostly due to their age and socio-economic dependence on others⁴.



Even as youths, SGBV is a near reality which we must face head-on

3 <http://gender.care2share.wikispaces.net/file/view/Advocacy+guide+for+grassroots+activists+for+GBV,+Uganda.pdf>

4 http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/dimitra/pdf/guidance_note_gbv_livelihoods.pdf

During the Peace Exposition, the youth aired their views on SGBV and issues of vulnerability to SGBV as summarized below:

SUMMARY OF INPUT FROM THE “YOUTH” DISCUSSION GROUP		
Challenges faced	Consequences and Realities	Recommendations
Weakened family structures	<p>Many children in the Lango sub-region are orphans as a result of the conflict, disease or abandonment. Issues of vulnerability to SGBV emerged when the youth spoke of being responsible from a young age for other siblings, and the difficulties they faced as a result. Others spoke of the pain and void created by absence of parents, particularly the ones of their gender. Children of remarried parents or polygamous fathers spoke of conflict and jealousy from step-parents and the instability that result thereof. Many young people who see their parents fighting will likely adopt the same mentality of violence as a solution, and may know of no other way to resolve disputes. Often children are also victims of violence in families. Some of them run away from the beatings, while others speak of losing their self-esteem and their ability to communicate with their families. Relations with violent parents were driven by fear. Some spoke of running away from the house as their fathers enter; while others spoke of beaten women venting out their pain and frustration on their children.</p> <p>The youth expressed a different attitude to gender roles and marriage than their parents. As a result, though perhaps unconnected, several older participants accused younger people of not listening to the elderly any more, going to bars to drink and lacking morals.</p>	<p>People responsible for orphans to treat them as their own children, as most felt the pain of exclusion.</p> <p>Stop child abuse as violence witnessed by children ingrains violence behaviour as a means to solve problems.</p> <p>Child Fund and TPO-Uganda provide child protection services for children experiencing physical and sexual violence. Kitgum Women’s Peace Initiatives and AVSI are implementing the USAID SCORE project, providing a sustainable and comprehensive response for vulnerable children and families through family and economic strengthening, food security and nutrition, child protection and legal services.</p>

SUMMARY OF INPUT FROM THE “YOUTH” DISCUSSION GROUP

	<p>Where younger people advocated greater openness in marriage, older people argued that speaking about personal issues causing problems. Among the youth, there appeared to be a greater willingness to engage with problems, rather than try to hide them.</p>	
<p>Education</p>	<p>Education is a powerful tool against SGBV. While girls expressed strong commitment towards education, it emerged that girls face discrimination in schools; their participation in class is often met with scorn and ridicule as many boys feel challenged. Parents tend to invest less in the education of girl children than boys. Many parents feel that it would be a wasteful investment as they imagine their daughters’ future to be just that of uneconomically dependent housewives. Many girls are actually encouraged to drop out of school. Corporal punishment in schools emerged as a challenge with adverse effects on the self-esteem of girl children and their schooling. Anger was expressed concerning the unsatisfactory quality of newly built schools in the region.</p>	<p>Education for girl children should be encouraged. Attitude change is needed in communities and in schools, including among boy children, so that girls are not discouraged from expressing their opinions. Successful women leaders in communities should be held up as role models.</p>

SUMMARY OF INPUT FROM THE “YOUTH” DISCUSSION GROUP

<p>Marriage</p>	<p>Both boys and girls insisted that they would have financial independence before considering marriage. All asserted that marriage was not an option while they remained at school (for at least one girl; this included tertiary education). Arranged marriages were described as a thing of the past. Girls said that they would fight or even run away and turn to the government or to NGOs if they were forced by their parents to marry a man they did not want. They also displayed acute awareness of their rights, and that the government and NGOs were there to defend those rights. The boys agreed that a change had taken place to traditional marriage practices, whereby now the girl must first agree to marriage before seeking approval from her parents.</p> <p>Boys expressed concern that some women partner with men just for their money, and quickly discard them if these men can no longer support them. Conversely, girls expressed a desire to provide for themselves without having to rely on men.</p> <p>The youth expressed interest in marrying for love; and that in that case they desire partners who are loving and caring, responsible, and will be around in times of problems and in times of peace. At the same time, they also advocated for sense and logic in choosing a partner, making sure that both partners share a vision for the future.</p> <p>Youth were warned by their elders to be cautious of confusing lust with love, having seen many young people rush into marriage, only to regret the decisions within only a few months.</p>	<p>Cultural institutions should pass a by-law prohibiting marriage of minors.</p> <p>Communities must know that the age of consent is 18 and any marriage before this age is illegal.</p> <p>Muslim Women Associations should work together to speak out against child marriage and cross-generational coupling. Parents should not look at their daughters as a source of wealth. Promoting income-generating activities for women will prevent girls from relying on their bodies for survival.</p>
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SUMMARY OF INPUT FROM THE “YOUTH” DISCUSSION GROUP

	<p>The youth supported the idea of dating/courting before marriage, as it is essential in ensuring that they take ample time to be sure of the partner they would be choosing.</p>	
	<p>Among the village youths, many young girls face the threat of child marriage. Some parents see the bride price as a form of income, and rush to marry their daughters off even when they are under age. Jolly Acen, the Gender Officer of Lira District, noted that in the villages, the majority of pregnant women are underage; between the ages of 14 and 17. Minors under the Ugandan constitution are therefore victims of defilement. Many of these girls do not have access to antenatal care, and due to their underage status, they have higher chances of reproductive health complications during delivery, exhibiting high rates of cervical cancer.</p> <p>Furthermore, there were reports that many husbands abandon them after producing two or three children, leaving the young mothers to care for themselves and their children. These children are also at a higher risk of suffering from abuse. Within Islamic communities, the demand for young girls who are still virgins as wives apparently encourages child marriage, with many young girls married off to older men who are fit to be their fathers or grand fathers. Cross-generational sex in a polygamous marriage exposes the young girls to a higher risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS.</p>	

The youth spoke vehemently against child marriage that disrupts their education

Recommendations:

- Activities like those of the Concerned Parents' Association that runs 72 youth groups and 162 community action groups, and utilises drama and music to advocate for equality, and transformation of gender roles among the youth aged 10-19 should be encouraged.
- Sex education among the youth should be encouraged as a means of bridging the information gap created by parents who still believe that sex education is a taboo. UNFPA and Reproductive Health Uganda provide these services which have helped the youth to understand their bodies and be responsible with their lives.
- It is important to engage with the youth separately from adults to solicit their opinions, encourage positive attitudes and confront negative cultural practices.
- Greater investment is needed in youth, particularly girl children living in villages as they are not yet benefiting from progress towards equality that can be seen in towns.

“I never saw my father hitting my mother. A couple that communicates effectively has a greater capacity to avoid domestic violence.” –Maurice Odong, Mayor, Lira

2.4 Government's Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) for Northern Uganda

“Men make wars but women pick up the pieces. This is done at the cost of suffering. All the efforts made by women towards peace-building and healing should be rewarded – never again should there be war in this land”.

Hon. Miria Matembe

In response to the need for post-conflict recovery for Northern Uganda, the Government of Uganda with support from Development Partners put in place the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) for Northern Uganda. The key tenets of this plan are: Consolidation of State Authority; Rebuilding and Empowering Communities; Revitalisation of the Northern Economy; and Peace-building and Reconciliation. Women's rights organisations noted that the PRDP has displayed a lack of gender analysis and planning. To advocate for greater gender sensitivity in recovery efforts, they together established a Women's Taskforce for a gender-responsive PRDP, which is coordinated by Isis-WICCE. The PRDP and its performance was an engaging topic of discussion during the Isis-WICCE peace exposition.

Districts have developed ordinances as part of a legal framework to support post-conflict recovery. Lira district passed the Child Protection Ordinance 2009 for this purpose but implementation remains a challenge. Suggestions were also made for the districts in the region to put in place ordinances to curb excessive alcohol consumption by restricting availability; and perhaps to limit its sale after 5pm. It was noted that political will and leadership is important to ensure post-conflict recovery



Women at the grassroots want to participate in implementation of post conflict reconstruction programmes

generally and zero tolerance to SGBV in particular. To this end, specific discussion on the PRDP focused on two elements: Planning, Inclusion and Prioritisation; and Social, Economic and Political Accountability.

Planning, Inclusion and Prioritization

Even after three years of implementation where over USD\$ 500 million was spent, several participants during the discussion at the peace exposition had not heard of the PRDP. Others

– especially women - indicated that they had only come to know about it through the work of NGOs. Several participants could only associate PRDP with a programme to enable individuals accumulate personal wealth and self aggrandizement. An inclusive bottom-up planning approach was recommended as a better approach for development activities than the current centrally-controlled system as it would enable local priorities and local knowledge to direct the use of resources.

It was further noted that gender was marginalized in the PRDP and the key component of building peace was relegated to the last strategic objective. This raised particular concern by the Women’s Taskforce which recognized that both gender and peace building should be central to the planning process. The PRDP was criticised for its focus on infrastructure without the facilities to make sure infrastructure benefit the population. For instance, health centres were built without provision for staffing, drugs or equipment. Schools were built but high dropout rates particularly of girls persist. Post-conflict challenges such as mental health have not been addressed, contributing to the perpetuation of SGBV.

It was observed that it was difficult to

distinguish between PRDP and the on-going government programmes aimed at service delivery suggesting that the PRDP may not be playing the affirmative action role it is supposed to as it is possibly supplanting regular funding rather than supplementing it. While some participants – mainly implementers - remained adamant claiming that the results of PRDP implementation were evident, several people from the communities held a contrary view. Reference was made to the issue of conflicting instructions from the Centre government to the districts resulting into non-utilisation of PRDP funds as indicated in the box below.

The lowest absorption levels were registered with the PRDP funds. Some districts that receive the PRDP funds raised the issue of conflicting instructions from the OPM [Office of the Prime Minister] and the MFPED [Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development] in respect to the management of funds. OPM insisted that separate PRDP accounts should be opened in which PRDP funds should be banked while the MFPED insisted that sector PRDP funds should be banked on the sector program accounts.

Annual Budget Monitoring Report July 2009- June 2010, September 2010 MFPED, pg 14

Other districts also experienced contradictory instructions from OPM and MFPEP, some differing in the expected budget by an astounding 1000%.

Social, Economic and Political Accountability

Participants expressed extreme disappointment with the lack of transparency in the PRDP with several noting that their pain was being compounded as funds raised to treat the wounds of conflict were used to enrich Kampala. An example was given of a poorly constructed road in Ngariam and a community centre in Katakwi built with PRDP funds, which collapsed shortly after construction. In both instances, contractors were assigned the tasks from the central government. Hon. Alice Alaso, Woman MP Serere, drawing a link between the PRDP, SGBV and accountability observed that: “PRDP thieves must be made to repay money so that when women go to hospital they can get medicines. They have produced an air-conditioned car out of monies for fistula repair. Money that should have been used to repair leaking urine is being used to buy a Mercedes Benz.”

One local Councillor from Tugu Sub County noted that even the monitoring and evaluation process



Responsive post conflict programmes must address women's issues

was racked with controversy. She indicated that signposts are shifted when monitoring teams are visiting and local people are bullied to corroborate that work has taken place when in fact the structure being viewed was constructed through another project. One participant indicated that she was prompted to stand for elective office due to the corruption she saw in implementation of government programmes. She was elected and is determined to make a difference as a Councillor.

Recommendations:

- Suggestions were made on the modalities of channelling funds to the districts including direct transfer to local governments. It was however noted that this suggestion is made on the assumption that local governments are of high moral standing. Participants noted that the issue of theft of PRDP funds transcends individual weaknesses and points to a break down in public accountability. It was also suggested that funds are channelled through credible NGOs.
- Strengthen the monitoring mechanism through an independent audit of the PRDP
- Support to communities to understand the roles of their leaders:
 - Resident District Commissioners (RDCs) - Monitor Government programmes
 - Chairman and Council – Approve plans and budgets and oversee implementation
 - Members of Parliament – legislate and represent the interests of their constituents in parliament; including through raising issues of concern in parliament
- 50% of all PRDP committees should

comprise women

- Individuals responsible for the theft of PRDP funds must be held accountable and pay heavily.
- PRDP should be re-designed to give districts more decision-making powers
- Districts must publically declare funds received by the central government
- Public accountability of funds should be seen to be done where work has been carried out
- All projects implemented under PRDP should be published in a national gazette
- There should be increased support to women organisations engaged in the PRDP process.

2.5 Sexual and Reproductive Health

For decades, Isis-WICCE has been demonstrating the importance of attending to the urgent health needs of women affected by conflict. Through research, Isis-WICCE identifies the most prominent and urgent health needs of women affected by conflict, which are mostly related to sexual and reproductive health and mental health. In many instances, these urgent health

needs are neglected due to lack of political will, which results in low prioritization and ignorance of women's health needs while implementing post-conflict recovery programs and interventions.



The issue of RH is a major concern of women in conflict and post conflict settings.

During the Peace Exposition, a discussion group on sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) focused on the status of sexual and reproductive health rights in communities, access to services for survivors of SGBV and barriers faced in accessing those services. The discussion group also provided recommendations. A summary of the discussion group’s input is presented below:

STATUS OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS AS DISCUSSED BY THE “SRHR” DISCUSSION GROUP		
Issue	Status	Recommendations
Access to reproductive health services	Lack of information was generally noted as a big hindrance to access of RH services with both men and women indicating that they cannot access a service they are not aware of. However, there are underlying gender issues impeding women’s access to RH services with some women admitting that they are aware of the services but unable to access them because their husbands claim that as heads of families, they decide on what women should or should not do. Cultural norms were used to justify these actions particularly in relation to family planning with many men strung in the belief that a real man is one who fathers many children. Control of women’s mobility by their husbands is recognized as one of the factors that men use to subordinate women. Some women noted that this impedes their ability to access health services when ill, with their husbands claiming that they are using this as a reason to avoid garden work and other household chores.	Provide information on available RH services to increase accessibility.

STATUS OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS AS DISCUSSED BY THE “SRHR” DISCUSSION GROUP

<p>Marital rape</p>	<p>During the reproductive health camp, while a small number of women indicated that they enjoy a good sexual life with their husbands based on mutual understanding and respect; several women opined that their husbands have no mutual respect when it comes to sex. Specifically, some men regard it as a right that should never be denied no matter the circumstances. Marital rape was therefore said to be high among couples; although the specific rates of incidence are unknown. To illustrate this, a woman explained that her husband violates her physically when he returns home drunk, and demands to have sex; a common scenario described by many women during the Peace Exposition.</p>	<p>Need to expedite action on the legislation of the Marriage and Divorce bill as it specifically addresses the issues of marital rape.</p>
<p>Men having extra marital affairs</p>	<p>While this is believed to be the cultural norm rooted in the long held practice of polygamy and social acceptance of men having multiple female sexual partners; from the health perspective, it is increasingly recognized as a risk factor to contraction of HIV and other STIs. Some women noted that they were aware that their husbands had extra marital affairs but were totally opposed to the use of condoms as well as testing for HIV, putting their wives health at risk. While this is believed to be the cultural norm rooted in the long held practice of polygamy and social acceptance of men having multiple female sexual partners; from the health perspective, it is increasingly recognized as a risk factor to contraction of HIV and other STIs. Some women noted that they were aware that their husbands had extra marital affairs but were totally opposed to the use of condoms as well as testing for HIV, putting their wives health at risk.</p>	<p>Increased awareness on HIV/AIDS to enable couples take informed decisions, at the same time women need to be empowered on taking informed decisions on issues of sex to avoid being infected.</p>

STATUS OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS AS DISCUSSED BY THE “SRHR” DISCUSSION GROUP

This is said to stem from the belief that men cannot use condoms with their wives. A Participant noted that she contracted HIV from her husband in these circumstances but after a long period of acrimony during which her husband sent her away from the matrimonial home, herself, her husband and his new wife are now on ARV therapy. An HIV testing camp was available at the Peace Exposition camp during the 3 day event and provided testing services for participants. In addition, the final day of the Peace Expo coincided with World AIDS Day. Participants received testimonies on living positively with HIV and a demonstration on use of both the male and female condoms in response to indications that both women and men do not know how to use the condom. To illustrate how perceptions towards HIV and gender are slowly changing, one female participant described how she tested HIV positive while her husband tested negative. Her sero status did not separate them, and they now use condoms. Many participants listened to this testimony with incredulity.

Recommendations

Address the cultural practices which maintain women's subordination over their own bodies and deny them the ability to use modern family planning methods, seek reproductive health services and agree on sex amicably. This involves working with cultural and religious institutions, local leadership, health service providers, women and men through creative ways to ensure male involvement for attitudinal shifts. In addition, public education on reproductive health services and service providers is important.

The SGBV Referral Pathway

The Referral Pathway for response to SGBV includes the Police, Local Councils, Health services – for medical examination and PEP, and Safety shelters. During the Peace Exposition, information was provided on all these support services including the newly established Lira Safety Shelter which participated in the exhibition and provided information on its one-stop services including temporary shelter and linkage to Police, Prosecution and Medical facilities.

Discussion on the services for SGBV survivors noted the high incidence of reported cases –



Where is the re-assurance for survivors of SGBV?

particularly for defilement. While it was recognized that justice for a victim requires a systematic response from the point of reporting to obtaining evidence and the case management process, most of the information documented points to individual and systemic gaps in accessibility, efficiency and commitment of service providers.

ACCESS TO SERVICES AS DISCUSSED BY THE “SRHR” DISCUSSION GROUP

Challenge	Status	Recommendations
Poverty	<p>It was noted that several GBV cases especially SGBV are unreported due to factors that include poverty. The fact that one needs to report to police, get medical attention immediately before evidence is lost in cases of rape and defilement and follow through the legal process, implies that victims without the requisite resources are denied justice. To illustrate this, participants noted that some victims do not have the funds to access the Police Form 3 which is filled by medical personnel for evidential purposes in cases of SGBV. While the money for obtaining copies of the police forms is as small as shs600, many people said that it is a huge discouragement to some people.</p> <p>Poverty linked to the subordination of girls and women, leads to victim’s families sometimes negotiating with the perpetrators of SGBV to settle these cases out of court with total disregard for justice for the victim. Poverty also impinges on victim’s rights to seek justice. Participants noted that women whose husbands or other family members are the perpetrators of the violence are always unable to take action. One participant, Jackline Odule revealed that; “when I reported my husband to police after he beat me because I went to the hospital without his permission, he was arrested.</p> <p>But my mother-in-law drove me out of the house with my children. They said that I couldn’t sleep in the house while my husband (their son) is in prison. Because I had nowhere else to go, I had to plead with the police officers to release him.” Many women therefore choose to stay quiet.</p>	<p>Communities should be empowered to take the lead in curbing SGBV, through policies that reprimand perpetrators.</p>

ACCESS TO SERVICES AS DISCUSSED BY THE “SRHR” DISCUSSION GROUP

<p>Corruption</p>	<p>Most women and men accused the government structures at community level of frustrating efforts to access justice due to corrupt tendencies. A woman said that the leadership at community level was conniving with perpetrators who in exchange of some money or items refuse to provide victims with the necessary documents to seek justice at a different level.</p> <p>Women also said that the perpetrators were in the habit of negotiating with the LCs and frustrated efforts to seek justice for the victims.</p>	<p>Political and traditional rulers should be sensitized on the impact of SGBV; an avoid averting justice.</p>
<p>Poor handling of cases</p>	<p>Some women noted that the duration of cases in courts of laws or at police was long and tiring which prompted the victims to abandon the cases before their conclusion. Cases of defilement and rape are reported to take as long as one to two years before conclusion. Victims are expected to appear in court every time there is a hearing which they said was both time consuming and expensive.</p> <p>Bernadette Asiyu, a house wife noted during the Peace Exposition that she stopped following up a case in which her husband had assaulted her because it was becoming very expensive. “I went to court every month. It was about 38 kilometres away from my home village, so I needed money for transport. The case became a problem and I just left it”.</p>	<p>Police form 3 should be provided freely by the police to victims of rape and defilement.</p> <p>The doctor’s examination of victims of SGBV should be free.</p>
<p>Lack of political will</p>	<p>Political will and leadership in addressing SGBV is critical. As noted, during the peace exposition, political will on SGBV is not often as forthcoming as it should be. Although it was noted that some Political leaders have taken the step to address individual cases of SGBV, it is important that they also address the systemic issues by ensuring that the referral systems work. Taking responsibility for individual cases is noble but they must ensure that the systems work for all women.</p>	

Recommendations:

In response to the Articles of the 2011 ICGLR Heads of State Declaration to fast track response to the needs of SGBV survivors through provision of one-stop services, the Uganda government and development partners have put in place a one-stop centre in Lira. However, many people are not aware of such services; there is need for awareness on the SGBV referral pathway and provision of safety shelters.

A Review of Gaps in Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health Needs and Policy Interventions

This Isis-WICCE study outlines key sexual and reproductive health needs, policy interventions and informed discussion during the 3-day Peace Exposition in Lira. While the study addresses several aspects of sexual and reproductive health, specifically in relation to SGBV, it also notes the following challenges in the healthcare system:

- a. Lack of reporting of SGBV cases to the health services- The few cases who report to health facilities are those who would have reported to police and thus comes to health facilities to have the police form filled so that they can seek legal redress.
- b. Inadequate knowledge of SGBV among health providers- Most health workers lack knowledge on services to be provided to SGBV survivors.
- c. Inadequate capacity of health facilities to manage SGBV. Most health units lack facilities for managing SGBV survivors e.g. providing post exposure prophylaxis kits, medicines for prevention of STIs, etc.
- d. Poor linkage between health facilities, the community and other agencies such as Legal Aid involved in the prevention and management of SGBV.
- e. Lack of preventive measures in both health service units and communities.



‘As women, we must talk about the issues that affect our health’

The study recommends the following specific actions to support the health system’s response to SGBV:

1. Train all clinical officers and midwives in management of SGBV
2. Authorise clinical officers and midwives trained in management of SGBV to examine and endorse police forms for SGBV survivors
3. Ensure that at least all health centre IVs are able to render comprehensive service to SGBV survivors by providing adequate equipment, medical supplies and personnel
4. Make strategies to increase awareness and strengthen the linkages between the communities, health services, law enforcement and legal services responding to SGBV