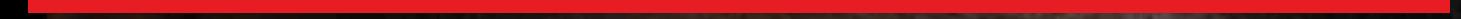


NEW PEOPLE

No. 217 July – August 2025

The African Church open to the World



BROKEN SIMPLY BECAUSE OF **THEIR GENDER**

Turkana Cultural Practices and GBV

By Kaaman Phoebe

In Memory of Wanjoki

By Joy Achungo



“Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violence, and it knows no boundaries.”

Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary-General

NEW PEOPLE



NEW PEOPLE MEDIA CENTRE
P.O. Box 21681 - 00505, Nairobi, Kenya
Cell: 0714637090
www.newpeoplemedia.org

Editor
Christopher Silwembe, mccj
director@newpeoplemedia.org

Sub-editor
Pedro Carbonero Percy, mccj
percycm68@hotmail.com

Editorial Board
Andrew Wanjohi, mccj
Anthony Kibira Kimbowa, mccj
John Korir, mccj

Collaborators
Kanyike Edward Mayanja, mccj – John Webootsa, mccj – Fr. Odomaro Mubangizi, SJ – Elias Opongo, SJ – Wilfred Sumani, SJ – Tom and Lynnette Lichuma – Benedict and Edel Sakwa – Robert and Joyce Waiganjo – Peter Knox, SJ – James H. Kroeger, MM – Maximilia Muninzw – Esther Kamweru

Layout: Trick Sign Andy
Secretary: Lornah Chenang'at
secretary.newpeople@gmail.com

Administrator
Pedro Carbonero Percy, mccj
administrator@newpeoplemedia.org

Marketing
administrator@newpeoplemedia.com

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION (6 issues)

Kenya: Kes 1,500
East Africa (Uganda/Tanzania): US\$ 55
Rest of Africa: US\$ 65
Europe: Euro 75
Rest of the world: US\$ 110

Printed by: Franciscan Kolbe Press
P.O. Box 468, 00217 Limuru
Email: press@kenyafriars.org

Registered at the G.P.O. - Nairobi
Published every two months by:

NEW PEOPLE MEDIA CENTRE
COMBONI MISSIONARIES

NEW PEOPLE is an international Catholic magazine of missionary awareness. All editorial correspondence should be addressed to the Head Office. Signed articles reflect only the views of the authors; the unsigned represent the views of the editorial staff. All correspondence addressed to the editor is assumed to be for publication. Letters must include writer's name and address, and may be edited for clarity and space.

Editorial

Confronting Gender-Based Violence Before It's Too Late

Gender Based Violence (GBV) remains one of the most pervasive and largely under-recognized crises of our era. An endemic blight that damages families, erodes communities, and shatters lives.

Globally, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime report 2023 avers that almost one in three women has experienced physical or sexual violence at least once in her life, most often at the hands of an intimate partner.

Alarmingly, an average of 140 women and girls are killed every day by a partner or family member over 51,000 lives lost in 2023 alone. These harrowing figures barely scratch the surface of a deeper iceberg. While it is evidently true that women bear the brunt, men too suffer, though their pain is often marginalized. Domestic violence against men is also frequently dismissed or minimized.

Statistics further shows that fewer than 20% of male victims report abuse to authorities, with many fearing ridicule or disbelief. The emotional toll of such violence contributes to a "silent epidemic" of mental health crises among men, as toxic societal expectations of masculinity suppress help-seeking behaviour.

In Kenya, the situation is equally dire. A study from Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) 2022, found that roughly one in three women aged 15–49 has experienced physical violence since age 15, and 13% have

been sexually assaulted. Between 2016 and 2024, at least 678 women and girls were murdered by intimate partners. In the first four months leading to December 2024, 100 women were killed, signalling the scale of the crisis

Beyond these statistics lies a subtler crisis: many Kenyan survivors remain silent. Cultural stigma, weak enforcement, and societal expectations often pressure victims into submitting to marital or relational authority.

Shockingly, some religious institutions compound the problem. Rather than facilitating access to professional counselling or legal aid, victims especially women are frequently directed only to prayer, reinforcing a silence that prevents healing and justice.

This is not to condemn faith communities, wholesale many churches and mosques actively fight GBV. But where spiritual authority substitutes professional intervention, vulnerable individuals remain trapped. A 2024 study by Le Roux et al. (2024) found that despite frequent violence, church-based marriages offered little support, underlining the risk of spiritualized ignorance.

Faith communities remain a trusted source of guidance globally and particularly in Kenya. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that the clergy get trained to offer both spiritual support and referrals to clinical, legal, and mental health services. By doing so, they could become powerful allies in ending GBV. Men suffering in silence must also be heard, challenging toxic norms and broadening the narrative of pain and accountability must include male voices.

Fr. Christopher Silwembe, Mccj

Dialogue

By Terry Anne Awuor

At around 13 or 14 years of age, I thought silence meant safety. I never once received the "Most Humble" award in primary school. I questioned too much. I asked why things were the way they were. Why girls were told to sit "properly" while boys roamed free. Not once did I fit into what society defined as humble. I was loud, curious, and defiant and that made me "too much."

Let's rewind for a moment.

We used to sing a song

"These are my private parts, private parts. Nobody should touch them, nobody should see them..."

And while I give credit to the song (it is a good one), I now wish that anatomy had been

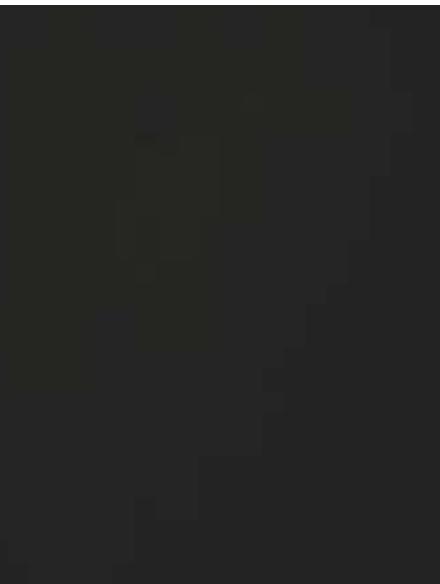
introduced to me much earlier. I wish I knew that it was not just about what is under my clothes. That my hands, my neck, my hair; literally every part of me, is MINE. That no one should touch me unless I say yes. Unless I consent, and even then, only if I am informed, aware, and in control.

I wish I had known, at 14, that internalized sexism is not just an



attitude, it is a system, well structured system if I would say so. It works to deny most women and girls their voice and agency. It seeps in through songs, rules, silences, and generations of "just the way things are." It teaches us not to question authority. Not to speak when something feels wrong.

Now, do not get me wrong; respect matters. But let's not confuse respect with obedience to injustice. Gender-based violence is about power, unequal power. Power rooted in patriarchy, in money, in positions, in privilege. S/GBV thrives when one gender is viewed as superior, as default, as king, second to none and it festers in silence.



Prayer Intentions

July

For formation in discernment

Let us pray that we might again learn how to discern, to know how to choose paths of life and reject everything that leads us away from Christ and the Gospel.

August

For mutual co-existence

Let us pray that societies where co-existence seems more difficult might not succumb to the temptation of confrontation for ethnic, political, religious or ideological reasons.

So, to dear younger me, that defiant soul; silence is not safety. Silence is dangerous. Because perpetrators rely on silence to keep violating. They rely on your confusion, your shame, your fear of being "too much." So, maybe it is time we start teaching children that it's *okay to question*. That questioning gives us power. That in questioning is where consent lives. It is how we say no, it is how we walk away. It is how we realize that love should never hurt.

I wish I had known, back then, that my entire body belongs to me. I wish someone had taught me that teaching consent starts by affirming this:

- You are allowed to speak.
- You are allowed to question.
- You are allowed to leave.

REGULARS

3 EDITORIAL

4 DIALOGUE

6 CHURCH BEAT

Dignity in Every Drop:
Fighting Menstrual Poverty in West Pokot, Kenya

32 OUR EARTH

Failing Families
By Peter Knox, SJ

36 VOCATION STORY

By Brian Onyango

COLUMNS

9 TALKING
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
By Wilfred Sumanzi, SJ

11 FAITH AND POLITICS
*By Mibangi zi
Odomaro, SJ*

30 VATICAN II SERIES
By Fr. James H. Kroeger, M.M.

33 FAMILY AND MISSION
By Benedict and Edel

35 THROUGH
A WOMAN'S LENSES
By Maximillia Muninzwia

Gender Based Violence

14 Gender Based Violence and Substance Abuse.
By Dr. Susan Gitau

17 Women Empowerment and its Impact on Fighting Gender-Based Violence
By Jessica Edung

19 Silent Wounds: Confronting Gender-Based Violence Against Men
By Elizabeth Nasambu Barasa

21 Why Don't You Hear My Silent Cries?!
By: Daniel Murimi Nyaga

23 In Memory of Wanjoki
By Joy Achungo.

26 Turkana Cultural Practices and Gender-Based Violence
Kaaman Phoebe



Dignity in Every Drop: Fighting Menstrual Poverty in West Pokot, Kenya

Marzena Gibek, CLM

Marzena Gibek, a Comboni Lay Missionary in West Pokot, Kenya, launched a project to fight menstrual poverty after hearing girls share their struggles. By training local women to sew reusable sanitary pads, the initiative is slowly proving to be a game changer; restoring dignity, keeps girls in school, and breaking harmful taboos.

A Global Injustice Hidden in Plain Sight

Menstrual poverty is the lack of access to feminine hygiene products during menstruation. It is one of the most overlooked issues affecting women and girls worldwide. In an age of advanced technology, global health breakthroughs, and increasing awareness of women's rights, it would seem that such a basic need should already be universally met. And yet, reality tells a different story.

According to data from UNICEF and the World Health Organization, nearly 500 million women and girls suffer the consequences of menstrual poverty globally. While the crisis is more visible in developing countries like Kenya, Uganda, India, Malawi, South Sudan, and Lebanon, it is not limited to them. In Poland, my home country, the Kulczyk Foundation estimates that around 500,000 women live with menstrual poverty. These numbers

are not just statistics, they represent human dignity compromised, dreams interrupted, and opportunities lost.

Life and Mission in West Pokot

Since May 2023, I have been living and serving as a Lay Comboni Missionary in Kitelakapel, a remote area in West Pokot County, Kenya. I joined a small but dynamic missionary community comprising of Linda from Italy and Pius from Uganda. Together, we serve the people through a blend of pastoral care, education, healthcare, and community development.

Linda and Pius dedicate much of their time teaching in local secondary schools. My contribution draws on my background as a physiotherapist, which allows me to support two different clinics; one where I provide therapy for children with physical challenges, and another where I assist in routine check-ups for expectant mothers. I

check their weight, measure blood pressure, and complete medical documentation.

But mission life is holistic, it doesn't stop at physical needs. I also conduct sessions in schools focused on personal development, emotional awareness, relationships, and communication. We support people in need of orthopaedic surgery, helping them access hospitals, accompanying them to check-ups, changing dressings, and sourcing medications.

Building Faith and Community

Our mission is deeply rooted in pastoral and spiritual outreach. We organize Sunday school for children, sacramental preparation classes, and lead youth groups such as Young Christian Students (YCS). Our compound becomes a hive of joy every Saturday and Sunday afternoon when children gather to play, draw different shapes on the ground, and dance.

Each Thursday, I visit a nearby nursery school to run basic development activities like drawing, which helps children improve eye-hand coordination. Beyond these, we're engaged in capacity-building projects, such as creative teaching workshops for primary school teachers and managing a microcredit association aimed at empowering women financially. And of course, our home is a place of hospitality; we regularly welcome visitors, volunteers,

and collaborators from near and far.

The Listening That Led to Action

I clearly remember the first few weeks of my mission. Everything was new, the language, the customs, the geography, and the underlying struggles of daily life. I made it my priority not to act too quickly, but to observe, to listen, and to understand. This quiet attentiveness is often the foundation of meaningful missionary work.

Accompanying Linda and Pius to the schools, I began to hear from young girls about their struggles during menstruation. They spoke of missed classes, embarrassment, and deep isolation. Some confided that they lacked even the most basic hygiene supplies. It was through these testimonies that the idea of creating reusable sanitary pads began to take shape.

A Silent Suffering That Demands a Voice

Menstrual poverty in West Pokot is not merely an inconvenience, it is an obstacle to dignity, education, and safety. Without sanitary products, many girls in boarding schools are forced to stay in their dorms, missing out on days of valuable learning. For others, menstruation means staying home, sitting on the sand until their cycle ends. Some resort to using old pieces of cloth, that is if they have any.

The most painful stories, however, are those of young girls forced into transactional sex in exchange for sanitary pads. Tragically, this is not rare. In Kibera, one of Africa's largest urban slums, UNICEF reports that 65% of girls engage in sex just to access sanitary products. In Lebanon, 66% of women cannot afford menstrual products, and in Ghana, 95% of girls miss school during their periods. These are stories of lost innocence, of traded dignity, of rights denied. Menstrual products should be a right, not a luxury.

From Compassion to Creation

I felt moved to do something. I wanted other women to have access to the very things I had always taken for granted. I began researching reusable sanitary pads, reading articles, talking to health workers, and reaching out for help. Eventually, I connected with a Comboni Sister and a tailor in Nairobi who specialized in sewing reusable pads.

We tested various materials: a waterproof inner lining, three layers of pure absorbent cotton, and a bright kitenge fabric on the outside. A small button secures the pad to the underwear. Reusable pads, if properly washed and dried, can last for up to two years—an affordable and sustainable solution in areas with limited resources. The process from sourcing materials to testing durability, from shipping pads to remote Kitelakapel to planning a training, took more than a year and a half.

Empowering Women Through Skill and Solidarity

Thanks to the generous support of my home parish in Poland, we were



finally able to organize a six-day sewing workshop at our parish in Kacheliba, West Pokot County, Kenya. We invited 12 women from Kacheliba and Kitelakapel. Under the guidance of our skilled instructor from Nairobi, the women learned to sew reusable sanitary pads, diapers, and bags.

At the end of the course, we distributed the finished products to local women to familiarize them with the design and encourage usage. The tailors received materials and tools to begin producing more pads for sale, creating an income-generating activity while also serving a vital social need.

Beyond Products: Changing Hearts and Minds

The sewing workshop was just the beginning. The mission now is to reach even the most remote and neglected areas of West Pokot, where the stigma and suffering surrounding menstruation are greatest. Our trained tailors are already producing more sanitary pads, and we are preparing to distribute them to women most in need. But providing products is not enough. One of the biggest challenges is education not only for girls and women but especially for men and community leaders.

During a recent meeting with village leaders, the topic of menstruation came up. Many participants acknowledged the widespread misinformation and cultural taboos about it. In some communities, a woman is considered “unclean” during her period or shortly after childbirth.

She may not touch cooking pots, drink cow's milk, or enter certain spaces for fear she might cause death or misfortune. These superstitions and stigmas are deeply ingrained and cause immeasurable harm to women's self-worth and social standing.

A New Vision for Womanhood

Through this project, we hope to ignite a cultural shift, a transformation rooted in knowledge, compassion, and equality. We want every girl and woman to know that menstruation is not a curse or a shameful secret. It is a biological gift, a sign of life, and a core part of the feminine identity. We are working toward a future where menstruation can be discussed openly, where boys are taught respect, and where no girl misses school or sacrifices her dignity because of her period.

The Long Road to Restoration

This change will not come overnight. It may take years, even generations, to dismantle these deep-seated beliefs and to replace silence with conversation, stigma with support. But I believe it is possible. To realize my own dignity, to understand that it is God-given and not dependent on societal acceptance, is like being born again. It is a kind of inner healing, one that mends invisible wounds and restores a woman's sense of self.

I hold hope that this transformation will come to every woman we reach. That through education, empowerment, and empathy, menstrual poverty will be replaced by menstrual dignity. And that one day, no girl, whether in West Pokot or Warsaw, will ever feel ashamed of the very body that gives life to the world.

Dates to Remember

JULY

- 1 Independence of Somalia (1960).
- 2 First legal Conference of the African National Congress (ANC) in Pretoria, South Africa (1991).
- 3 Independence of Algeria (1962).
- 4 International Declaration of the Rights of People (1976).
- 5 Assassination of Tom Mboya, Kenyan nationalist leader (1969). Independence of Cape Verde (1975).
- 6 Heroes' Day Zambia
Independence of Malawi.
- 7 Saba Saba Day (Tanzania).
- 11 World Population Day.
- 18 Nelson Mandela Day.

AUGUST

- 4 Farmers Day (Zambia).
- 5 Independence of Burkina Faso (1960).
- 7 Independence of Ivory Coast (1960).
- 8 Nane Nane day (Tanzania).
- 9 International Day of the World's Indigenous People.
- 11 Independence of Chad (1960).
- 12 International Youth Day.
- 13 Independence of Central Africa Republic (1960).
- 15 Pope John Paul II beatified Congolese Clementine Anuarite (1985).
- 22 International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief. Death of Jomo Kenyatta, father of modern Kenya (1978).
- 23 International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition.

By Wilfred Sumaní, SJ.



COMBATING SEXUAL CORRUPTION IN FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP



Jacqueline (not her real name), a 28-year single mother, runs a second-hand clothing business. She sources the clothes from Tanzania and sells them in Lilongwe. To circumvent customs charges, she offers sex to a senior Malawi Revenue Authority officer at Songwe Border. Sometimes, when she is short of cash, she asks a

truck driver to transport her goods in exchange for sex. For Jacqueline, sex is a tool she routinely uses to overcome various business obstacles. This phenomenon is known as sexual corruption.

The problem of sexual corruption in female entrepreneurship is widespread across the world – from



the beaches of Lake Victoria where female fishmongers sleep with fishermen in exchange for dwindling fish, to the corporate boardrooms of Tokyo where female entrepreneurs succumb to sexual harassment to secure scarce start-up capital.

Drivers of Sexual Corruption

There are a number of motivations for sexual corruption in female entrepreneurship. To begin with, in countries where capital is a dominant business constraint, the struggle to access limited start-up capital can occasion sexual exploitation. When competition for capital is high, female entrepreneurs may acquiesce to sexual solicitations from male gatekeepers to outdo the competition.

The second driver of sexual corruption is limited access to sustainable markets. In many countries, the largest and most sustainable customer is the government or large private corporations. However, in small markets, government tenders are highly coveted and easily become breeding grounds for sexual exploitation of female entrepreneurs.

Third, sexual corruption can also arise due to stringent business regulations,

including business registration and standards compliance. Product certification, to give an example, can be laborious and cost intensive. Such roadblocks easily generate opportunities for sexual corruption, initiated by male gatekeepers (culprits) or female entrepreneurs (victims). Sometimes, as Doris Aja-Eke and others find (“Sexual corruption, informal network, and female entrepreneurship: Evidence from Burkina Faso”), there is a ‘silent code’, whereby sex is not explicitly asked for but it is assumed that both parties know what to do to get things done.

Next, sexual corruption can arise when there is competition for limited stock. The case of female fishmongers offering sex to fishermen is a case in point. Finally, sexual corruption can emerge as a cost-cutting tactic. To remain profitable and competitive, businesses need to manage operating expenses. In desperate circumstances, female entrepreneurs may wield sex as a cost-cutting machine.

Effects of Sexual Corruption

Sexual corruption has a number of adverse effects. First, it can create any number of market inefficiencies. For instance, capital and contracts may be allocated to inept businesses thereby

compromising overall outcomes. Second, using sex to bypass product certification standards can expose consumers to health hazards, which may, over time, create a public health crisis.

Third, at the micro-level, sexual corruption corrodes female entrepreneurs' self-esteem and sense of dignity, as their bodies are reduced to items for sale. Some female business women have a reputation of selling 'everything' – their merchandise and their bodies. For married female entrepreneurs, such behaviour may engender marital conflict.

The Way Forward

Sexual corruption, like corruption in general, can be difficult to overcome, largely because it comes across as a win-win arrangement. Sexual corruption is also occult in nature, which makes it difficult to track. Nonetheless, something can be done to address this socially corrosive practice. One possibility is to sharpen female entrepreneurs' business skills so they can efficiently run their businesses without taking recourse to sexual corruption.

Secondly, the plague could be addressed by placing women as gatekeepers of business processes prone to sexual corruption, such as customs clearance and product certification. A third possibility is to disintermediate male brokers through backward or forward vertical integration. For instance, empowering women to own fishing boats can significantly reduce the 'sex-for-fish' culture. Having a critical mass of female venture capitalists could also address the 'sex-for-capital' complex.



Why the World Watches Rome: The Political and Spiritual Impact of the Papacy

Odomaro Mubangizi SJ

A Moment That Captivated the World

The world is still reflecting on and fascinated by the recent election of Pope Leo XIV, following the death of Pope Francis, who has left a lasting impression on the global political imagination. What made these two global events, subjects of great speculation and heated debate, is to a great extent the ubiquitous social media. Why does the head of the Roman Catholic Church, attract such global media attention and heated debates, whenever the Petrine office falls vacant? Why does the secretive and mysterious conclave that elects the Pope attract much drama more than any election in the world? What is

the deeper meaning of the “Black” and “White smoke” over the Sistine Chapel, where popes are elected?

A Fire That Spreads Across the Globe

More than ever before, an event in one corner of the world, quickly spreads like wild-fire to the rest of the world. This is exciting but it is also dangerous, since fake news and rumours spread very fast, before many people can process what is being disseminated. We truly live in a global village where there is no chief. It is precisely because there is no chief in the global village, that billions of people are hungry for global moral icons, who seem to embody the yearnings and aspirations of multitudes of people, regardless

of creed, race, ideology, gender and geographical location.

A Church Called to Shape the World

In our reflection on faith and politics, we rarely associate the papacy housed in the Vatican City or the Holy See, with global politics. It is indeed the world's best kept secret, just like the Catholic Social Teachings (CSTs). I will share some few thoughts on the role of the papacy in global politics, as a manifestation of the enormous influence of Catholic Church. Hopefully this reflection will also shade some light on the persistent question of the relationship between Church and State, where the latter tends to assign the former to mainly sacred responsibilities, forgetting



the dual mandate entrusted to the Church by Christ: to bind things on earth and in heaven, but also to contribute to the common good.

Papal Authority and Power: Secular and Sacred

Among many ordinary people, it is not well known that the Pope, holds both secular and sacred authority and power. Even among some world leaders, whenever a Pope attends a UN General Assembly and addresses heads of state, and takes a strong moral stand on some controversial issue like abortion or climate change, there is some grumbling. The Lateran Treaty of 1929 gave the Vatican City an autonomous status as a sovereign state. This is why when the Holy Father pays a visit to another country, he is accorded the honour of a head of state. Moreover, the Vatican has foreign diplomatic missions

popularly known as Nunciature or Vatican Embassy. At the same time, the Holy Father is head of the Roman Catholic Church and is charged with its spiritual, doctrinal and moral well-being.

A Network of Global Influence

The small size of the Vatican City in Rome is a bit deceptive. The Vatican coordinates a very complex global system that operates in the whole world, and currently takes care of the 1.4 billion Catholics. Just imagine how many Catholic Dioceses are in the world, with their elegant and imposing Cathedrals or Basilicas. Also imagine the thousands of educational, health, financial, media, humanitarian institutions, run by the Catholic Church globally.

In some countries the Catholic Church has even ventured into financial services by setting up a

bank, as is the case in Uganda and Malawi where the Centenary Bank is one of the most popular Banks. Catholic Universities are among the most sought after globally, because of their high-quality education. In the area of media, Catholic Radios, TVs, and Magazines are offering content to billions of people, even non-Catholics.

This is not being triumphalist, but to just point out how the Pope is entrusted with an enormous and complex global responsibility, that even includes guiding all people of good will. This explains why papal social encyclicals are addressed not only to Catholics but also to people of good will. It is not surprising that Pope Francis's much celebrated Encyclical 'Laudato Si', has caught the imagination of millions of enthusiasts, even among non-Catholics. Many are eagerly waiting for the first encyclical of Pope Leo XIV, since the first encyclical of a Pope is considered a sort of manifesto.

The Papacy as a Global Voice for Peace and Justice

As we eagerly await Pope Leo XIV's inaugural encyclical, he has already indicated some areas of priority that are of global concern. First, the issue of peace has featured prominently in his addresses and homilies. Pope Leo XIV took office while the world is faced with deadly armed conflicts that are threatening global peace. These include the wars in Gaza, Eastern DRC, South Sudan, Sudan and Ukraine.

There is even a high possibility that the Vatican might host peace talks between Russia and Ukraine. Pope Leo XIV has also hinted at the growing influence of AI and its negative impact on employment. Recall also that Pope Leo XIII from

whom he took his name, wrote the famous Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, that addressed issue of labour during the industrial revolution in 1891. Popes throughout history have always been looked up to as global peace champions.

Important to recall the famous Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* by St. John XXIII, who convoked the Vatican II in 1962. This Encyclical addressed, among others, issues of world peace amidst the threat of nuclear war, the tension between capitalism and communism that had given rise to the Cold War, and the struggles for independence from colonialism.

We can safely conclude that the papacy is a global moral custodian for humanity. A role that every Pope should perform with great humility, openness and courage. With courage since not everybody will agree with what the Pope says. With humility since the Pope is also a Vicar of Christ who was meek and humble of heart. With openness since we live in a world of divergent ideologies and philosophies that are not always in harmony.

Challenges in Global Politics for the Papacy

Global politics in the 21st Century are at cross-roads. From an international relations perspective, the papacy is a

major actor, given its global reach and especially strong networks in remote parts of the world. The Vatican can fill the gap in global politics at a time when the unipolar world that the USA has hitherto dominated, using the much talked about concept of "Soft power" that the late Joseph Nye Jr. has championed.

This is the power of attraction, as opposed to the power of coercion or militarism. The world today is increasingly resorting to brute force in settling interstate and intrastate conflicts. If this trend continues, the world can slide easily into a Third World War. The Pope can play a leading role in galvanizing peace-loving nations that still believe in multilateralism and support the UN Charter, to walk the path of peace.

There is also an increasing return to authoritarian and populist styles of leadership globally. Democracy is on the decline with regimes getting more repressive, wantonly violating human rights, and even closing their borders to foreigners. The Pope can play a leading role in championing global solidarity, global common good, and a spirit of positive cooperation among nations.

More than ever before, the world has unprecedented technological progress demonstrated by digital technologies, the most dramatic being AI with its infinite potential. The Pope can play a leading role in promoting ethical use of AI, championing accountability, transparency, safety, and access. Pope Leo XIV has come on the global scene, when global governance is at its most precarious delicate state. That he comes from the USA, is a strategic advantage that gives him greater visibility. This visibility can be used as a force for positive influence or soft power.





Gender Based Violence and Substance Abuse.

By Dr. Susan Gitau

It's 2025 and Kenya, a country leading in infrastructural development and technological advancements in Africa, struggles with a significant rise in gender-based violence (GBV), particularly femicide. In 2024, Kenya recorded 170 femicide cases. This was the highest annual

toll on record and nearly double the average of 85 cases reported annually between 2016 and 2023.

The majority of these femicide cases were perpetrated by intimate partners, with husbands or boyfriends responsible for approximately 70% of

the murders. Shockingly, 72% of these killings occurred within the victims' homes, where many would think they are supposedly "safe". These numbers are extremely worrying. How are we getting worse as a society? Why are we turning on each other in our own homes?

GBV is not a new age problem. It stems from complex factors. The link between GBV and substance use is also deep and complex. Substance use can be both a catalyst and consequence of GBV. Simply put, one can use substances and then become violent or one can use substances to deal with the outcome of the violence. Here we can see a loop effect that can cause the continuation of both GBV and substance use. This horrible cycle is lethal.

As an addiction counselor working within the country's diverse communities, I have witnessed firsthand how substance use not only exacerbates GBV but also masks deeper systemic and psychological issues. Substance use has a well-established link with aggression, impaired judgment, and reduced impulse control. These factors often create fertile ground for GBV to occur. In Kenya, alcohol remains the most abused substance, especially in rural and peri-urban areas.

Illicit local brews like *chang'aa* and *busaa* are cheaply available, poorly regulated, and potent often consumed in environments where law enforcement is weak and gender norms are deeply patriarchal. In areas like this, it is unfortunately very likely and normalized for GBV to occur. Being in the addiction field, I have encountered numerous cases where intoxicated individuals lash out at partners, children, or even parents. In such instances, substance use acts not only as a trigger but also as a way for perpetrators to justify or dissociate from their violent behaviors.

Kenya's cultural landscape complicates the GBV-substance use dynamic. In many communities, masculinity is

closely tied to dominance, toughness, and alcohol consumption. Men who abstain from alcohol may even be ridiculed or considered weak. This normalizes intoxication and the violent behaviors that accompany it.

Additionally, traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, such as elders' or family meetings, often prioritize family unity over victim protection. Women are encouraged to "tough it out" for the sake of children or to avoid shame, even when the violence is chronic and life-threatening. Religious sectors are not immune to this wrong. Many religious groups often encourage the abused to "pray the demon away" insisting that the devil is trying to break their holy matrimonial contract and they must turn into prayer warriors to defeat the demon in their abusive partner. Many suffer in silence, hoping for a miracle and blaming themselves for not being prayerful enough. This can also trigger substance use to numb the pain. And the cycle continues.

As an addiction counselor, I have also found that addressing substance

use in isolation is rarely effective unless these underlying cultural, religious and structural issues are also acknowledged. Hence, it is important to recognize that substance-related GBV manifests differently across gender lines:

Male Perpetrators, Female Victims

The most common scenario is male violence toward female partners. A significant number of women in my counseling sessions report being assaulted by spouses or partners under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. The violence ranges from verbal abuse to physical assault, economic deprivation, and sexual coercion.

Female Perpetrators, Male Victims

Many men experiencing GBV do not speak out due to the same societal structures that seem to support male aggression and dominance. For fear of looking weak, men will suffer in silence while experiencing trauma because they are led to believe that women cannot beat a man. This violence and lack of a safe space to turn to leads to substance use and mental health disorders.





Female Substance Users as Victims

Women who use substances themselves, often a coping mechanism for trauma or economic despair are particularly vulnerable. They face dual stigmatization: first for using drugs (which is seen as 'unwomanly') and second, for being victims of violence. Many are coerced into transactional sex, often with violent or exploitative partners.

Child and Adolescent Victims

Children raised in households where substance use is prevalent are at higher risk of both witnessing and experiencing GBV. They often suffer neglect, emotional abuse, or sexual exploitation, creating a cycle of trauma and substance use. Substance use frequently begins as an attempt

to numb past pain. Many people who abuse their partners have themselves experienced abuse, neglect, or poverty in childhood. Unresolved trauma becomes a breeding ground for substance dependency, which in turn fuels violent tendencies.

On the other hand, victims of GBV often develop co-dependent behaviors. They may stay with abusive partners due to financial dependency, low self-esteem, or the false hope that their partner will change if they stop drinking or using drugs. In these cases, substance use becomes a tool of control and manipulation within the abusive dynamic.

In my line of work, I struggle with getting people the comprehensive care they need. Perpetrators of GBV

are taken to prisons, which do not have the resources they may need to deal with their substance use disorder or trauma experiences that led them to GBV in the first place. On the other hand, many rehabs lack Trauma Informed Care. So as one goes to deal with the substance use disorder, they still are not getting the help they need to deal with the trauma that caused the substance use in the first place.

The result is a fragmented system that fails to address the root causes of violence or addiction. This needs to change. We need multidisciplinary centers that address GBV, addiction, mental health, and legal aid under one roof. Trauma Informed Care has to become the norm.



Women Empowerment and its Impact on Fighting Gender-Based Violence

By Jessica Edung

Gender-based violence (GBV) presents serious and far-reaching dangers to individuals and communities. It can cause physical injuries, psychological trauma, and sexual health problems, often leaving long-lasting scars. GBV undermines women's safety, dignity, and fundamental rights, perpetuating cycles of abuse and inequality. It also hampers social and economic development by limiting women's opportunities and well-being.

Furthermore, the trauma associated with GBV affects families and communities, creating a cycle that is difficult to break. Addressing and preventing GBV is essential for building safer, more equitable communities.

In the ongoing struggle to eradicate gender-based-violence (GBV), the role of women empowerment has gained increasing recognition as an important issue for governments, faith-based and civil society organizations and communities. A growing body of research provides evidence on how empowering women through education, economic independence, legal rights and societal participation, can significantly reduce prevalence and acceptance of violence against women worldwide.

This understanding is rooted in the awareness that gender inequality fuels many forms of GBV. Getting commitment from all sectors of society to address existing inequalities

can create environments where violence becomes less tolerated and less likely to occur.

Recent statistics from around the world demonstrate this connection clearly. The World Health Organization's 2018 report indicated that approximately 35% of women globally have experienced either physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or non-partner at some point in their lives. While this figure has remained relatively stable, the past five years have seen a growing recognition that empowerment initiatives can influence these numbers meaningfully.

For instance, a 2020 study published in *The Lancet* analyzing data from 20

countries found that women with at least secondary education were 25% less likely to experience intimate partner violence compared to women with only primary education. Education, in this context, acts as a protective factor by providing women with knowledge about their rights and fostering confidence to challenge abusive behaviors.

Economically, the past five years have seen remarkable progress in financial inclusion for women, especially in Africa. According to the *Global Findex Database 2021*, women's access to formal financial services increased by 20 percentage points across low- and middle-income countries between 2017 and 2021. This financial inclusion is closely linked with reductions in GBV.

In Kenya, a country that has made significant strides in women's empowerment, data from the Fin Access Household Survey (2021) revealed that women's access to formal financial services increased from 55% in 2016 to 73% in 2021. Moreover, a 2019 report by the Kenyan Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection indicated that women who are engaged in income-generating activities were 30% less likely to experience domestic violence than those without such opportunities. Thus, economic independence empowers women as it asserts their autonomy, ultimately reducing their vulnerability to violence.

Legal reforms and improved access to justice have also contributed to declining GBV rates. The UN Women's 2022 report highlights that in countries where legal frameworks criminalize domestic violence and enforce protective orders effectively, reports of violence tend to increase initially indicating improved reporting and awareness, but over time, the incidences of violence decrease. For ex-

ample, in Kenya, the 2014 Protection against Domestic Violence Act was a turning point, providing comprehensive legal protection for survivors.

A study conducted in 2019 by the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) found that awareness of legal protections among women increased from 45% in 2015 to 68% in 2019, and reports of domestic violence rose by 20% during this period. While higher reporting might initially suggest increased violence, subsequent surveys showed a decline in actual violence prevalence, indicating that legal protections and awareness boost both reporting and deterrence.

Recent data from the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS, 2022) reveals that reported incidents of domestic violence decreased from 39% in 2014 to 33% in 2022, suggesting a gradual cultural shift. Moreover, the survey showed that women's participation in community decision-making increased by 15% over the same period, attributing that to greater societal commitment to gender equality and GBV prevention.

Engaging men and boys in gender-transformative programs is also showing promising results. A 2020 intervention in Nairobi, Kenya, involving community-based programs targeting men and boys, demonstrated a 20% reduction in behaviors supportive of violence and attitudes that normalize violence against women. Such programs challenge harmful gender norms, fostering respect and equality. The World Health Organization's 2019 report emphasizes that gender-transformative interventions are among the most effective strategies for reducing GBV, especially when tailored to local cultural contexts.

Looking ahead, sustained investment in women's empowerment remains crucial. The UN's Sustain-

able Development Goal 5 explicitly commits to achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, recognizing that progress in this area is essential for ending GBV. The latest UN Global Progress Tracker (2023) reports that nations investing in education, legal reforms, economic opportunities, and cultural change have seen tangible declines in GBV indicators. For example, Ethiopia's recent efforts to increase girls' retention in school from 60% to 75% over five years have correlated with a 15% decline in early marriage and a 10% reduction in reported domestic violence.

Despite these positive trends, challenges remain. Negative cultural norms, patriarchal systems, and weak enforcement of laws continue to impede progress. In parts of rural Kenya and across Africa, stereotypes against women and negative traditional beliefs often justify violence against women, and legal protections are not always effectively implemented. The Global Gender Gap Report 2021 indicates that Africa still lags behind in achieving gender parity; women earn roughly 20-30% less than men on average across the continent, and economic dependence remains a significant risk factor for GBV.

In conclusion, recent research and statistics from the past five years, including data from Africa and Kenya, affirm that empowering women is one of the most effective strategies in reducing gender-based violence. Education, economic independence, legal protections, and societal transformation work together to decrease the prevalence, acceptance, and reporting of violence. While significant challenges remain, the evidence makes clear that when women are enabled to exercise their rights, communities become safer, healthier, and more equitable.

Silent Wounds: Confronting Gender-Based Violence Against Men

By Elizabeth Nasambu Barasa

An Unspoken Reality

When gender-based violence (GBV) is discussed, the focus almost exclusively centers on women and girls, a reflection of the widespread and well-documented abuse they face. However, this framing often overlooks a significant and underrepresented group of survivors: men and boys. Contrary to common perception, men too are victims of gender-based violence. From emotional and psychological abuse to physical assault and sexual violence, male survivors experience GBV in ways that are both complex and deeply silenced.

These forms of abuse occur across various settings, homes, schools, workplaces, conflict zones, and correctional facilities. Yet despite growing awareness, violence against men remains woefully underreported, underestimated, and underaddressed. To truly confront the scourge of GBV, society must be willing to widen its lens and include the suffering of male survivors.

The Silence of Shame and Stigma

One of the greatest challenges in addressing GBV against men is the lack of accurate data, largely due to underreporting. Many male survivors suffer in silence, weighed down by shame, stigma, and the fear of not



being believed. Traditional notions of masculinity, where men are expected to be stoic, strong, and emotionally impenetrable, play a damaging role in discouraging men from speaking out.

Men who are abused, particularly by female partners, face the added burden of disbelief. The prevailing narrative that men cannot be victims of women often leads to ridicule or outright dismissal when they seek help. This fear of being perceived as weak, unmanly, or even homosexual deters many from accessing formal

support systems. In some cases, survivors are wrongly assumed to be the abusers, especially when they defend themselves physically, further complicating their pursuit of justice and healing.

Forms of Abuse: Beyond the Physical

Gender-based violence against men takes many forms, but some of the most common and insidious are emotional and psychological. Male survivors often endure constant belittling, public humiliation,

gaslighting, and verbal assaults that erode their self-esteem and sense of identity. These forms of abuse are subtle but deeply damaging, and often harder to prove.

In domestic and institutional settings, men also face sexual violence, including unwanted sexual advances, coercion, and assault. These cases are among the least reported, not only due to stigma but also because of legal and procedural gaps in recognizing male sexual victimization. Physical violence such as slapping, punching, being pushed, or having objects thrown is also prevalent and extends beyond intimate relationships into spaces like prisons and public environments.

The Kenyan Context: Hidden in Plain Sight

In Kenya, recent studies confirm that men experience significant levels of physical and economic abuse. In many households, men report being slapped or assaulted by partners. Economic violence is another form that is gaining attention. Perpetrators, often intimate partners or family members, take control of a man's income, force them into debt, or coerce them into providing money under threat or manipulation.

Research from various Kenyan organizations also suggests that men face more intense stigma than women when reporting abuse, contributing to even greater isolation. This is a major barrier to accessing help and beginning the healing process.

The Hidden Costs: Psychological, Social, and Economic Toll

The consequences of GBV on male survivors are devastating and long-lasting. Psychologically, many experience depression, anxiety,

post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and emotional numbness. Feelings of shame and guilt often intensify internal conflict, leading to destructive coping mechanisms like substance abuse, self-harm, and even suicidal thoughts.

Socially, survivors may withdraw from friends, family, and their communities. The stigma attached to male victimhood can result in social ostracism, broken relationships, and loss of social standing. Abusers may manipulate narratives, spread rumours, or isolate the victim from their support networks.

Physically, survivors suffer injuries such as bruises, cuts, fractures, and sometimes long-term stress-related illnesses like hypertension or gastrointestinal issues. Those who experience sexual abuse may also contract sexually transmitted infections, adding to their physical and emotional burden.

Economically, the impact is profound. Many survivors struggle to maintain employment due to mental health challenges or physical injuries. Others may face financial ruin from debts incurred through coercive control or being denied access to their own resources.

Changing the Narrative

Addressing GBV against men requires more than awareness, it demands a cultural and institutional shift. First, society must discard outdated and harmful notions of masculinity that deny men the right to be vulnerable or seek help. Public discourse must embrace the reality that GBV affects people of all genders and adopt an inclusive approach to prevention and response.

Support services must be gender-

sensitive and inclusive. This means providing male survivors with access to safe shelters, trauma counselling, legal aid, and healthcare services tailored to their needs. Law enforcement officers, healthcare providers, and social workers must be trained to recognize signs of abuse in men and respond with compassion and professionalism not scepticism.

Education, Media, and Advocacy: Tools for Change

Schools, healthcare institutions, and media outlets all have a critical role to play in shifting perceptions and creating safer spaces. Comprehensive education on gender equality should address the full spectrum of GBV, including the experiences of male victims.

Media platforms can help break the silence by sharing stories of survivors, dismantling stereotypes, and promoting empathy and understanding. Community leaders, religious figures, and public influencers should also advocate for support systems that leave no victim behind.

Gender-based violence against men is a deeply misunderstood and under-acknowledged issue. Its consequences ripple through individuals, families, and society. To address it meaningfully, we must confront our biases and extend compassion and justice to every survivor regardless of gender.

By dismantling harmful norms, creating inclusive support systems, and encouraging open dialogue, we pave the way for healing, equity, and dignity for all. In the pursuit of a just society, we must ensure that no victim is silenced, and no wound however invisible is ignored.



WHY DON'T YOU HEAR MY SILENT CRIES?!

By: Daniel Murimi Nyaga
danielnyaga.dn@gmail.com

A Love that turned into Trauma

Wanjiku never thought the love of her life and the man she had built her life with would one day become the source of her deep pain and trauma. She recalls it like it was yesterday, on August 4th 2018, in the quiet of the evening, her husband struck her with so much violence and hate. The ferocity of his strikes, left the whole nation gasping when the video was leaked.

It wasn't the first time he had hit her, but it was the first time the nation saw what goes on behind closed doors. Her 9-year-old daughter was recording what Dad was doing. Yes, I just said her 9 - year old was recording. It's such a chaotic scene to

imagine, even though fiction in story, this is a reality faced by many men and women.

A shadow of Kenya's Gender Based Violence Crisis

Wanjiku's story is only a shadow of the alleys of Gender Based Violence in Kenya. In our nation, silence has been louder than justice. It's only after the video leaking that Wanjiku could get justice, but what about every other day before that? What about all the nights and days that her child saw her getting mauled by her husband, the love of her life?

The man who vowed to care for her come rain and sunshine, but I guess care is expressed "differently" huh? As some have joked, you are punishing

her because you love her? What then is love if it involves beating another person and inflicting physical, mental and emotional scars?

Alarming Statistics, Unspoken Realities

Kenya finds itself at a delicate point because statistics from studies and investigations are not only alarming but saddening. According to the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS), nearly 45% of women aged 15 to 49 have experienced either physical or sexual violence. However, this is the tip of the iceberg, these are the reported cases, what about the ones we don't know about?

Violence often seeps into homes, classrooms, workplaces, and even



onto the streets quietly, pervasively, and often, with impunity. The real numbers and facts lie behind the silence, fear and shame that victims have been faced with when they spoke up. Many women, like the pregnant survivor who was gang-raped on her way to hospital and ignored by the authorities, find their cries for help dismissed or unheard.

You'd think that the Sexual Offences Act, Protection Against Domestic Violence Act, and the Marriage Act, would offer protection to women and men. However, victims are faced with scorn and insensitivity from police, judicial officers, and delays in their pursuits for justice. Survivors recount being laughed at, verbally abused, or sent away without any support. The sad thing is it doesn't end here, what sends chills down one's spine is that some leaders who are tasked with safeguarding the rights of men and especially women, have been accused of perpetuating GBV themselves.

Rooted Patriarchy and Unequal Power

It's time to call a spade a spade and not an agricultural tool, and Kenya's fight with GBV is rooted deeply in patriarchy and unequal power dynamics. Women have been trained and reminded to submit, endure, and forgive their partners. Why is their pain being normalized? Why are their rights negotiable in the name of forgiveness and submission? *"This violence creates a wound that robs women of their dignity, integrity, and identity," notes a UAF Africa campaigner. "It is as if they exist but no longer live"* (UAF Africa, 2018).

A Man's Awakening to Women's Reality

GBV starts manifesting not just through physical violence and assault. FGM, harmful cultural practices, and emotional abuse have silenced women and girls. It's not that men are overlooked or ignored when it comes to GBV, but as the statistics and reality show, women are more preyed upon than men. There are many situations which are realities to women, that men may not be capable of relating unless privy of what they face. I remember a while back, I was having a conversation with a female friend and I was sharing how I love going on walks in the evening, because it is quiet and a lovely time to take a brief stroll.

I then asked her, "Why don't you take night walks?" To which she responded, *"It's not safe, I might be harmed when I am walking at night alone as a woman."*

I asked the question innocently, but it struck me, I have never had to worry about my safety as a man when walking at night other than robbery. I have never stepped out of the house and thought, I could get sexually assaulted or raped or harassed just because I have chosen to go on a night stroll. My eyes were opened to a reality that exists and which I was not privy to in all honesty. The 2023 KDHS reported that over 11 million women have experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner, with 2.8 million affected within the past year alone. Do you see these statistics? I ask you again my dear reader, do you see these statistics? And this is what we know.

The Numbers we cannot Ignore

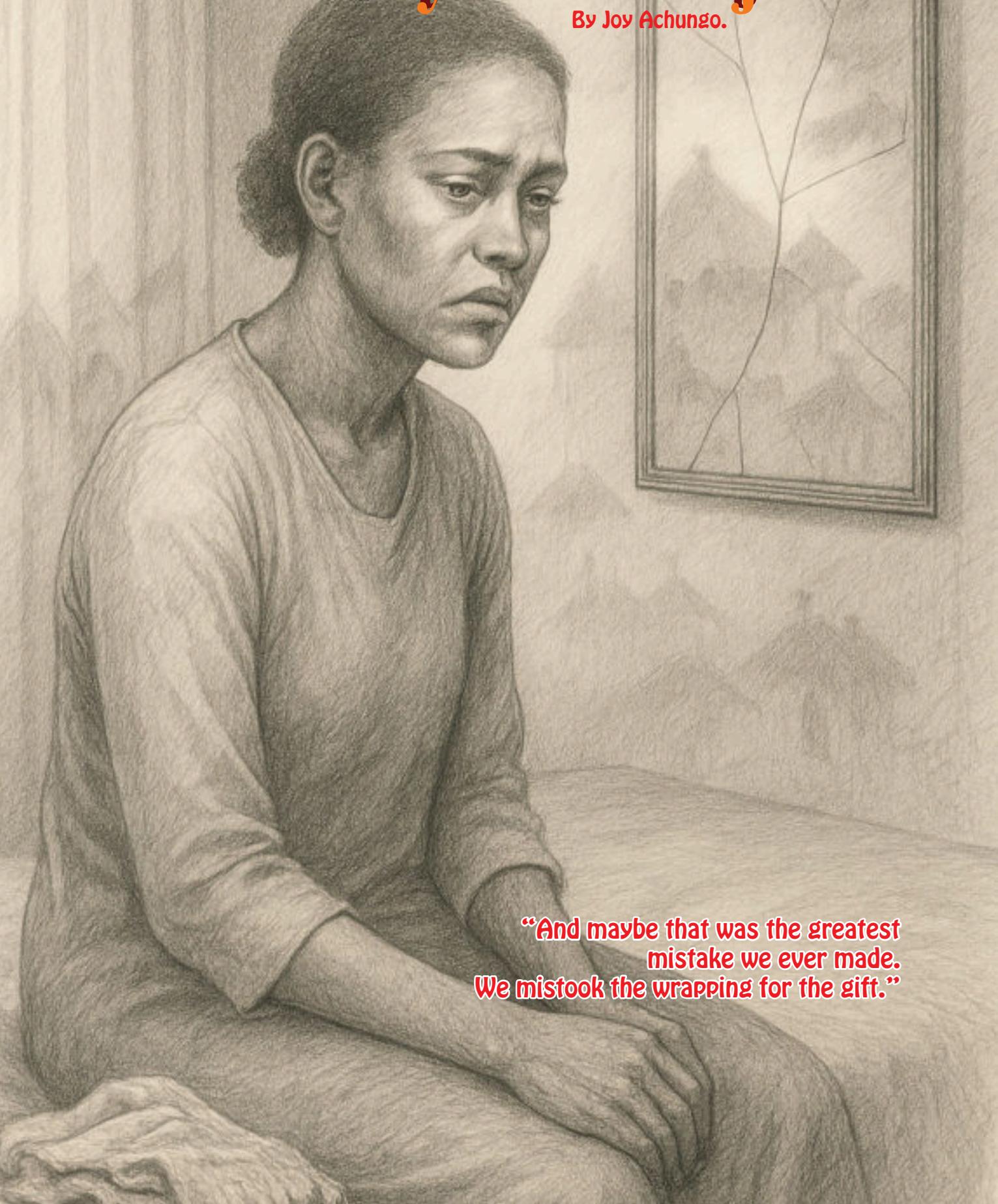
In 2023, Kenya recorded 97 femicide cases, and over 1,115 reports of sodomy involving young boys in Nairobi County alone. GBV is no longer lurking in the shadows, but it's now knocking loudly on the nation's doorstep and conscience. What will we do about it? Ending GBV in Kenya, is not only a legal or political matter, but an issue that has to do with being human. We need to listen more, believe, and stand with survivors. We need to have a society where dignity is not a privilege but a birthright! Every minute delayed is another man or woman's life altered or lost.

GBV is a national crisis that requires urgent attention and action. It's time to speak up and break the silence! It's time that all perpetrators are held accountable regardless of their position or influence! It's time we empower survivors through legal, emotional, and social support! Let us champion for justice in every home, county and institution. Speak up, support change, and stand in solidarity, because ending GBV starts with each one of us taking a stand.



In Memory of Wanjoki

By Joy Achungo.



**“And maybe that was the greatest
mistake we ever made.
We mistook the wrapping for the gift.”**

A Memorial-Not Just a Mourning

We are gathered here today not merely to mourn, but to remember. To recall not just the tragic ending of Wanjoki's life, but the slow, painful unraveling of a woman whose existence became a silent cry for help. Her story, while hers uniquely, echoes the suffering of too many women across Kenya, Africa, and the world. This is not just about Wanjoki. This is about us. This is about the shadow that stretches quietly over homes and hearts, where gender-based violence wears the mask of normal.

The Illusion of a Perfect Beginning

When I last spoke to Wanjoki, she was half excited. Newly married. She glowed with the kind of hope that often accompanies new beginnings. Her marriage was praised, even envied. Her husband was the textbook definition of the ideal man. Presentable, polite, and employed. He was the kind of man our mothers told us to pray for. And maybe that was the greatest mistake we ever made. We mistook the wrapping for the gift.

When Hope Begins to Fade

The first year, she still talked about applying for her master's degree. She still laughed that loud, infectious laugh. She still wore her bright red trousers and bought white chocolate on weekends. It was her favorite, she said, because it tasted like her childhood. But then, slowly, the red disappeared. So did the laughter. The chocolate stayed on the shelves.

Violence That Wears a Smile

Gender-based violence does not always begin with bruises. Sometimes it starts with silence. With a raised

eyebrow at your outfit. A scoff when you speak your dreams. A password changed without your knowledge. A bank account you can no longer access. A question that begins with "Why are you always..." and ends with your confidence chipped a little more. Wanjoki began to stammer. Her words hesitated in her mouth like trespassers. She once corrected me for calling her husband 'nice.' "I don't think he's nice," she said. "I think he's careful. There's a difference."

Beyond the Numbers: A Nation's Tragedy

In Kenya, 45 percent of women aged 15 to 49 have experienced physical violence. Of these, 14 percent report severe forms of violence including strangling, choking, or burning. According to the 2022 Kenya Demographic Health Survey, over 30 percent of women have experienced at least one form of intimate partner violence. These statistics are not just numbers. They are mothers, daughters, friends, survivors, and casualties.

Behind these statistics are real lives. Real voices that often go unheard. Emotional abuse is invisible. It does not bleed. But it lingers in broken dreams, quiet sobs, and women who slowly vanish from themselves.

The Quiet Erosion of Identity

Wanjoki's journey into this vanishing began after the first year of marriage. The signs became more obvious, if only we had looked closely. She stopped dressing the way she loved. She no longer spoke of school. Her conversations were timed. He called every few minutes. Once, she told me she had to send photos of her lunch to prove she was alone. We laughed. But it wasn't funny.

Financial abuse is one of the least discussed forms of gender-based violence. It traps women, makes escape seem impossible. Wanjoki used to teach part-time and sell crafts online. Slowly, she stopped. He managed her finances, she said. It made things easier. But he also decided what she could buy, what she could wear, where she could go. At one point, she had to ask for fare to visit her sick mother. She said he was just being cautious. We nodded. But beneath that caution was control. Why didn't she leave? That's the wrong question. The right question is, why did he hurt her?

The Stigma of Leaving

Society worships the idea of marriage. We elevate it above wellbeing. Divorce is whispered like a curse. A divorced woman is seen as broken. So, Wanjoki stayed. Her parents loved him. At home, he brought flowers. At church, he quoted scripture. She once told me, "Everyone loves him more than they love me." She said it with a smile, but her eyes were heavy.

In 2021, Kenya's Ministry of Public Service, Gender, Senior Citizens Affairs and Special Programmes estimated that only 2 percent of survivors of gender-based violence received comprehensive post-violence care. Only a handful of hospitals are equipped to offer holistic support. The Polycare model, once introduced to provide medical, legal, psychological, and forensic services under one roof, was hailed as groundbreaking. But years later, most Polycare centers remain understaffed, underfunded, or closed entirely.

The promise of Polycare fell victim to the very culture it aimed to cure.



A culture of silence. A culture of prioritizing appearances. A culture where violence hides in plain sight. For women like Wanjoki, help was never just a hotline away. It was miles, whispers, shame, and silence away.

The Silence That Killed

The slow erasure of Wanjoki's identity was not enough to alarm the world. It took the last straw. One day, she was found unconscious at the foot of their staircase. The official statement said it was an accident. Some of us knew better. She had been in the hospital twice before. She had slipped into silence. She had become a ghost long before her body gave up.

Today, at this memorial, we remember a woman. Not someone's daughter. Not someone's wife. Not someone's friend. Just someone. And that should have been enough to keep

her alive. There is something wrong with a society that needs a woman to die to recognize her pain. There is something broken in us when we require bruises to believe women. There is something unforgivable about a world where dignity must be earned through tragedy.

This Is About All of Us

Wanjoki's story is not unique. That is what makes it so terrifying. It could be your sister. Your friend. Your neighbor. It could be you. That is why we must name it for what it is. Abuse, whether physical, emotional, psychological, financial, or sexual, abuse is violence. Abuse is death wearing a patient face.

As we mourn her, let us also rise for her. Let us advocate for better policies, stronger protections, and urgent implementation of existing

frameworks. Let us push for Polycare centers to be fully revived, fully funded, and accessible across all counties. Let us audit the broken promises made in glossy brochures and policy documents that remain unread.

Let us educate our children, especially our sons, about respect, boundaries, and love that does not control. Let us hold our institutions accountable. Let us make gender-based violence not just a national shame, but a national emergency. Gender-based violence is a pandemic. Its cure lies not just in law, but in culture. In how we raise boys, in how we create safe spaces for stories like Wanjoki's to be told while their tellers still breathe. We did not save Wanjoki. But we can honor her by ensuring the next woman who speaks up is heard., believed, helped, and protected.



Turkana Cultural Practices and Gender-Based Violence

*Kaaman Phoebe,
Advisor, Culture, Heritage, and Arts: Turkana County Government*

Turkana Community: An Overview

The Turkana community is an indigenous Nilotic ethnic group living in the arid and semi-arid lands of northwestern Kenya, and is known for its rich cultural heritage, resilient pastoral lifestyle, and deep-rooted social systems. The Turkana community has maintained its cultural vibrancy despite the challenges it faces which include, poverty, marginalization, environmental hardship, and gender-based violence (GBV).

Understanding the interconnectedness of Turkana cultural practices and gender-based violence (GBV) is important particularly in the promotion of human rights, advocating

for gender equality as well enhancing sustainable development. This understanding allows for governments; both National and County and development partners to design interventions that are culturally sensitive and respectful while encouraging communities to change practices that perpetuate violence without eroding cultural dignity like early and forced marriages, polygamy and gender role rigidity.

Cultural Richness and Resilience

The Turkana culture is characterized by various factors like livestock herding which besides being an economic asset is also regarded as carrying social, spiritual and symbolic

meaning. The cultural ceremonies and rites of passage include the birth and naming of children which is usually based on the time of the day, place or events, initiation (Asapan) referred to as transition to manhood therefore preparing one for marriage, marriage traditions where polygamy is common and involves bride price.

Death and burial rites vary in the Turkana culture according to the status of the dead. The existence of clans in the Turkana culture determines one's identity and where they can marry whereas the age sets define the gender roles and responsibilities thereby creating a clear social order and support system.





Adornment of traditional attire with women wearing layers of colorful necklaces that signify marital status, age, and social standing promote the cultural identity of the Turkana community.

Understanding Gender-Based Violence

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) refers to any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and is based on gender norms and unequal power relationships. It includes threats of violence and coercion and can be physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, or economic in nature.

GBV disproportionately affects women and girls, though men and boys can also be victims. GBV stems from cultural, social, and economic power imbalances, often reinforced by traditional practices, systemic discrimination, and social norms that accept or normalize violence.

GBV takes many forms like physical, emotional, economic which involves controlling a person's access to financial resources, early/forced marriages where girls are often married off at a young age for dowry ending their education prematurely. Domestic or intimate partner

violence which is normally seen as a private issue thus is underreported. Sexual violence which is often under-addressed due to the shame and stigma associated with it as well as weak enforcement of the legal frameworks protecting people from sexual violence.

Lack of women empowerment due to the patriarchal norms limit women's participation in decision-making and property ownership. These forms of GBV are caused by power imbalance, lack of respect for human rights, and gender inequality. Some of the contributing factors

may include poverty, cultural beliefs that promote male dominance, polygamy which promotes unequal status of women in marriage, drug and substance abuse, low literacy levels, inadequate awareness on support systems, disability status as well as media which sometimes commodifies women's bodies.

Intersections of Turkana Culture and GBV

In the Turkana culture, it is normal for girls to be married off at an early age where marriages are often arranged by parents or elders, with little or no input from the girl. This intersects with GBV since it contributes to sexual and emotional violence due to lack of informed consent, and increased risks of early pregnancy, childbirth complications, and long-term health issues as well as denial of education opportunities and future independence.

Bride price involves the groom's family giving livestock or goods to the bride's family as part of the marriage agreement as a form of honor and respect in the Turkana culture. This leads to commodification of women as they are seen as property rather than partners thereby increasing the risk of control, violence and exploitation and may as well act as a barrier to leaving abusive marriages. Bride price may not benefit women as they do not have control over it and this reinforces economic dependence on the husband or on the in-laws.

Polygamy is traditionally very acceptable in the Turkana culture and is normally seen as a way of expanding kinship ties and increasing household labor. However, the unequal status of women in marriage

may lead to emotional and economic violence.

Widow inheritance leads to emotional abuse as well as forced sexual relationships since women are denied the right to remarry freely or to manage their own lives and resources. It also increases the risk of HIV and other infections.

Traditional norms promote male superiority by encouraging men dominance in decision-making both in household and in community affairs while women are seen as subordinate, submissive and focusing on domestic roles. These norms justify domestic violence, emotional abuse, and denial of rights and often leads to GBV survivors being silenced for the sake of family and tradition.

Towards Cultural Evolution and Gender Justice

While the Turkana cultural practices serve important social and cultural functions, some intersect with GBV in harmful ways. Addressing GBV in Turkana society requires a balanced, respectful, and inclusive approach—one that honors cultural identity while upholding the fundamental rights of all individuals. It should not reject tradition but should instead evolve in ways that affirm the human dignity of everyone.

Strengthening GBV Prevention and Response in Turkana County

The Catholic Diocese of Lodwar, through its Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Program and with funding from the Kenya National Highways Authority (KeNHA), has partnered with national NGOs, women-led community-based organizations (CBOs), and Community Owned

Resource Persons to deliver quality care to survivors and work toward the long-term prevention of violence against women and girls.

Initially, efforts focused on enhancing access to quality clinical care for survivors of sexual assault. This was achieved through training and ongoing support for health service providers within the Ministry of Health and faith-based facilities. The Diocese also provided technical assistance and capacity-building training to partners to improve their skills in handling survivors' cases and to strengthen GBV referral pathways and coordination mechanisms.

In the current phase of implementation, the Catholic Diocese of Lodwar GBV Program has achieved the following: Supported the provision of individualized services that meet the specific needs and preferences of survivors at Caritas-supported health facilities. Participated in the development of the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Policy for Turkana County.

Actively engaged in the Gender Sector Working Group, serving as chair of the GBV thematic area. Contributed to the increase in the number of health facilities offering comprehensive and high-quality care for GBV survivors. Collaborated with clinical staff to implement a consent-based referral system that ensures survivors receive immediate and competent care within 72 hours. These efforts continue to build a more coordinated, survivor-centered response to GBV in Turkana County.



Francis, a Vatican II Pope

Our beloved Pope Francis guided the church for just over twelve years (2013-2025), all filled with intense activity. As the 266th pope, Francis has garnered many “firsts.” He is the first pope to take the name “Francis” in honor of Saint Francis of Assisi; both shared a special love of the poor and needy. Francis’ first pastoral visit

outside of Rome was to the island of Lampedusa, one of the nearest gateways to Europe for Africans fleeing poverty and conflict. He is the first pope coming from the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and the first pope from the Americas.

Francis, clearly a “people’s pope,” has visited at least 60 states and territories on his international trips, traveling

about 255,000 miles. In addition, he is the first pope to visit the Arabian Peninsula, birthplace of Islam. Francis led the church of 1.4 billion (over one-sixth of the world’s population). In his late-2024 visit to Asia, he covered over 20,000 miles (32,000 kilometers). He has canonized over 900 saints, including Mother Teresa of Calcutta and martyred Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero.

Additional Facts

Francis has issued a variety of major documents, including four encyclicals: *Lumen Fidei* (2013) [faith], *Laudato Si* (2015) [environment], *Fratelli Tutti* (2020) [social fraternity], and *Dilexit Nos* (2024) [Sacred Heart]. He has published seven apostolic exhortations, the first being *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013) [Joy of the Gospel], encouraging us to be active “missionary disciples.” His writings include the 2015 papal bull on mercy, *Misericordiae Vultus*, where he describes Jesus as “mercy made flesh.” He has personally attended three World Youth Days (Brazil, Poland, and Panama). He wisely governed the church during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Council Affirmation

However, one remarkable “achievement” which is not included in these many statistics is that during his pontificate, Pope Francis canonized three popes: John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul II. In the mind of this author, it is significant that all these three “pope-saints” were active participants in Vatican II. Thus, one could validly assert that Pope Francis has not simply canonized three “Vatican II Popes”; he has also canonized the legacy of the Second Vatican Council.

Remarkably, Pope Francis is the first pope in six decades who did not personally participate in Vatican II. He had his formation during the Council, having entered the Jesuits in 1958, the same year that Pope John XXIII, the “Father of Vatican II,” became pope; he was ordained in 1969, soon after the Council concluded. He has remarkably assimilated the spirit and vision of this marvelous, Spirit-inspired event. With Francis, the Council is almost as alive today as it was sixty

years ago when it concluded in 1965. One can identify several core Council themes clearly reflected in the life and teaching of this popular pope.

Foundational Principles

First, Vatican II gave attention to collegiality, the principle that all bishops, together with the pope, have responsibility for the church. This guideline intends to promote a participatory church, an involved People of God. Francis further expands this vision with his emphasis on synodality, which is a readiness to enter into dynamic, respectful, and prayerful speaking, listening, and dialoguing, following the Holy Spirit’s lead. Francis successfully concluded two international gatherings on synodality, involving all members of the church, in 2023 and 2024.

A second Council emphasis focuses on the local church. This vision was highlighted in the Council document on missionary activity, *Ad Gentes*. In short, the “center of action” is the local church; this principle extends to liturgy, evangelization, episcopal conferences, leadership, as well as numerous other areas of Christian life. Full, active, conscious participation in church life is both a right and duty of all the baptized; Francis sought to concretize this vision in all local churches around the world.

Additional Guidelines.

Vatican II emphasized the importance of dialogue. This word was introduced into the Council by Paul VI, another Vatican II “saint-pope” in his encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964) [His Church]. This broad principle emphasizes that the church is to be a community of dialogue, not monologue, a truly listening church, hearing voices from within the

church, from other Christians, from people of other faiths, and from the world at large. Francis proved to be a superb example of open-hearted listening!

A fourth principle is captured by the popular expression “servant-leadership.” Again, this vision is applicable to all Christians who seek to aid others in their diverse needs. Even if the actual assistance may be rather small, it is the attitude of sensitive compassion that touches the other person’s heart. Truly, Francis embodied Cardinal Newman’s episcopal motto: *cor ad cor loquitur*, heart speaks to heart.

Profound Appreciation. A short article can only present a sampling of pivotal ways that Francis is truly a Vatican II pope; we have only explored four items. However, underlying various specific items is Pope Francis’ profound sensitivity and deep compassion. We all rejoice in heartfelt gratitude for the marvelous gift of *Franciscus*!



James H. Kroeger, M.M.

Roeiger, MM, served mission in Asia for over five decades; recently he authored *Walking with Pope Francis*; *The Official Documents in Everyday Language* (Paulines Publications Africa – 2023) and *A Joyful Journey with Pope Francis* (Faith Alive Books, USA – 2024).

By Peter Knox, SJ



Gender-based violence: A South African Perspective



Speaking Out on a Painful Truth

This is a very painful topic to address, and one about which everybody justifiably has strong feelings. Many would say to me: "What right do you have to talk about this, because you are a man?" Men are most often perceived to be the perpetrators, and not the victims of gender-based violence. Indeed, in South Africa eleven women are killed every day, and the country has the highest rate of femicide in Africa.

Women are five times more likely to be murdered by a partner in South Africa than anywhere else in the world.

This makes relationships, the home, and the bedroom the most dangerous places for a woman to be. One woman once said during a live radio program that "being a woman in South Africa is an extreme sport."

Even though they escape with their lives, some women never recover from the violation they have undergone. They never feel secure again, and are terrified to leave their homes. The experience leaves emotional scars that can be passed from one generation of a family to the next. Some women, violated in their homes - by intimate partners or relatives - are trapped, because they do not

have the means to get out of the place of danger.

Suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, they can become withdrawn, passive and submissive, and often experience nightmares. What's worse is that they are repeatedly the victims of violent crime. And let us be quite clear: IT IS A CRIME for a husband to inflict sexual relations on his wife if she does not give assent – at least in South African law. For many years, this was labeled “domestic violence,” until South African law recognized it as a criminal assault of the wife.

In this reflection, I do not want to excuse the horror that women are being murdered and assaulted in their thousands in South Africa (and elsewhere on the continent) every year. However, it is important to consider additional details that might add nuance to the way we understand gender-based violence. Everything we do is necessarily gendered, because we are animals that are gendered. For the most part this means that we are either male or female. However, there are some people who are not at home in these binary categories, or the gender that is assigned to them at birth. But this is a discussion for another time.

Rape as a Weapon of War and Power

Not every instance of rape – despicable and traumatic as it is – is necessarily based on gender. For centuries, rape has been used as a weapon of war and politics. In the past forty years, it has also been used as a means of spreading HIV into a population, and so the trauma of the conflict continues for generations. I know a man who was raped by soldiers while he was escaping conflict in his own country, and who now lives as a refugee, humiliated, yet building up his self esteem and generously helping other people to overcome their own trauma.

In South Africa, we have had the tragic situation in which young girls are raped by men who are infected with HIV. Apparently, they believe that having sex with a virgin will reverse the HIV infection. And there is also an epidemic of young girls being raped by close family members or friends of the family. This trauma remains with a girl for life, and occasionally the physical injury she has received means that she can never have normal sexual activity.

Also, women expressing their preferential love for women are often raped, and sometimes killed, to “correct” their lesbian tendencies. This is despite the fact that same-sex relations and marriage are perfectly legal and not uncommon in the country. Some men simply

cannot tolerate the fact that a woman would prefer the intimate company of another woman. Occasionally, men are raped or killed by other men for the similar pretext of “correcting” their homosexual tendencies. This is patriarchy at its worst, and criminal, in a country that respects the human rights of all its citizens, irrespective of their colour, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or nationality.

Environmental Violence with Gendered Consequences

Another form of violence that has specifically gendered dimensions is the violence done to our environment. Repeated credible large-scale studies in the global north have shown that on average, men eat more red meat and buy more fuel than women. This stereotypical pattern of consumption means that men are responsible for up to 26% more climate-change-inducing greenhouse gases than women.

In addition, women and children are considerably more vulnerable to the effects of climate change than men. Women often carry greater responsibility for the provision of food and the care of children than their menfolk. This means that they are less able to simply move when climate-related disasters strike. This violence has women more frequently as the unintended victims.

Bodily and mental integrity are the most fundamental human rights. No society should permit violence against anybody, whether it is for ethnic, party political, robbery, ageism, xenophobic, gender-based, genocidal, or “corrective” reasons. Most African legal systems outlaw many kinds of assault. However, some legal systems in Africa do not give sufficient protection to women, or in some cases, specifically target women. But often the law to protect citizens is observed more in the breach than in the application. And sometimes the very state institutions that are meant to uphold the law are those that abuse their authority and victimize women.

A society is defined by what it tolerates. Our police and judicial systems are not as zealous about enforcing the law as they ought to be. People often shrug their shoulders, or “tut-tut” when they hear yet another story of violence. We are so accustomed to hearing about other people’s pain, that we can no longer work up justifiable outrage. If we allow ourselves to become hardened and less compassionate to other people’s suffering, then we have lost some of our basic humanity.



Restoring Love and Dignity: The Family's Role in Preventing Gender-Based Violence



Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a pervasive issue with far-reaching consequences for individuals, families, and society. It often starts subtly within family dynamics and, if unchecked, escalates into harmful behavior. An example is a domestic incident where our young boy almost resorted to violence over a minor dispute with his sister. We intervened as parents, teaching him that violence is not an acceptable response, while reflecting how early guidance is vital in shaping attitudes toward conflict and respect within families.

Jubilee of Families

The family plays a central role in instilling values, as emphasized during the Vatican's Jubilee of Families on June 1st, 2025. Pope Leo XIV highlighted the importance of the family as a space of faith, love, and reconciliation. He reiterated that within the family moral foundations are laid, love is nurtured, and respect for human dignity is taught. When these values are lost or neglected, families become breeding grounds for violence rather than safe havens.

GBV core causes and Impact to affected

Men and women: The core of GBV lies in the erosion of love and humanity. As individuals drift away from compassion and mutual respect, they lose hope and connection with others. Any disconnect fosters conditions for violence, including lack of respect for oneself and others. GBV affects men and women differently. Women are often vocal about their suffering, while men may endure silently due to societal expectations tied to masculinity. Both genders experience trauma, social stigma, and potential economic loss, especially if the abused is the family's breadwinner.

Children: Whether direct or otherwise, victims or witnesses of GBV, suffer long-term effects. Exposure during formative years can lead to behavioral problems, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These effects can persist into adulthood, affecting relationships and the ability to function normally in society.

Societal level: GBV causes significant harm. It leads to economic losses due to reduced productivity and medical expenses, while also perpetuating social instability. A culture of fear and silence may emerge, particularly affecting women and girls, who face limited access to education and employment opportunities. GBV is not only a personal issue but also

a national concern that hinders development and progress.

GBV preventive measures

To address GBV effectively, preventive measures must start within the family and extend to the community. First, individuals must recognize their moral failings and strive to restore the divine love instilled in every human being. Forgiveness, compassion, and active listening are essential behaviors that can prevent conflict and promote healing.

Communities must become proactive in supporting GBV prevention efforts. This includes being vigilant, reporting abuse, and fostering a culture of respect. Survivors need easy access to support services such as counseling, legal aid, and healthcare, tailored to the type of violence experienced.

Furthermore, judicial systems must enforce deterrent penalties and ensure perpetrators are held accountable. Addressing underlying causes like gender inequality and regressive social norms is crucial. Society must acknowledge that all humans, regardless of gender, are created in God's image and deserve equal respect and dignity.

In conclusion, ending GBV requires collective action rooted in love, faith, justice, and equality. Only then can families and societies thrive in harmony and peace.

By Maximillia Muninzwa



The Humiliation and Injustice of Gender-Based Violence

“Today, I do not raise a fist to retaliate. I raise my voice to break the silence and chains of gender-based violence...”

Have you ever told people, “I am fine,” while silently falling apart? Too ashamed, too afraid, or too embarrassed to admit you were dehumanised by someone who thought your gender made you less than human. For many survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), this silence is not a choice. It is a tactic. And I know this too well. Let me take you into a memory I wish I didn't carry.

Steven, my late husband, never once laid a hand against me. It's an irony that after his death, I encountered the most brutal violence of my life. Not from a stranger, but from someone I called family. My brother-in-law. In the name of “tradition”, he beat me almost to death, leaving me with a rugged set of broken ribs, a bloodied body, shattered self-worth, and a splintered spirit.

My “crime”? I was a woman. A widow. And I had refused to “be inherited” like I were some property up for grabs in some dusty open-air market.

For years, I hid my bruises behind some modest clothing and buried my pains with dread in silence, but the emotional wounds ran deeper. I began to question myself, as many survivors do. Was I at fault? Did I deserve this? At my most vulnerable moment, I turned to my brother, a priest, for spiritual comfort. His counsel, “Just go along with your brothers-in-law's demands. You can sort it out with your God later,” hit like another blow. I still can't speak of some of the experiences without trembling.

Gender-based violence is a global crisis and one of the most pervasive human rights violations in the world. Every day, people are harassed, assaulted, silenced, and broken simply because of their gender. Millions suffer, some in situations more brutal than mine. But many remain silent, bleeding in the shadows, or dying without ever being heard.

According to UNHCR's *Global Appeal 2025*, more than 60 million women and girls displaced from their

countries are at risk of GBV. And that is just what has been documented. The true numbers are likely far higher, buried under shame and stigma.

Think of children whose innocence is stolen in dark alleys and deserted paths.

Think of young boys molested by adults, whose traumas are ignored.

Think of women disfigured by their husbands because they “are barren”.

Think of women whose “no” were twisted into “yes”, and raped.

Think of women judged by their dressing, and stripped to “teach them a lesson”.

I think of the women in Afghanistan, who today are forbidden to attend school, walk freely, or even breathe freely. I think of Iranian women and girls facing prison, flogging or death, simply for refusing to veil their heads. I think of all the men and women walking through life wearing their pain like a second skin hidden beneath forced smiles. And I think of the legal systems and leaders who choose to look away.

Every stinging slap, every mocking smirk, every visible or hidden scar is not just a personal tragedy, but a testament to a broken promise and a society that has failed to protect its own.

The right to dignity is not a privilege; it is a birthright, protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and enshrined in the Constitution of Kenya. And yet, despite years of advocacy, training, and global commitments, the violence continues in ever more brutal forms. We should ask ourselves why violence thrives in an age that prides itself of being modern, educated, and enlightened.

So, today, I do not raise a fist to retaliate. I raise my voice to break the silence and chains of gender-based violence and obliterate its murky tracks.

Vocation story

The article shares the vocation journey of a Comboni Brother from the Korogocho slum in Nairobi, inspired by the witness of missionaries who lived among the poor. From altar service to formation and studies, his path reflects a deep commitment to serve with love, presence, and professionalism. His life as a Brother is a living witness of Christ's compassion and hope for the marginalized.

By. Br. Brian Onyango, Mccj



“I have indeed seen the misery of my people... I have heard them crying... I am concerned about their suffering.” (Exodus 3:7).

A Call Born from the Margins

My vocation story is rooted in the narrow alleys and dusty paths of Korogocho slum, one of Nairobi's most impoverished and forgotten corners. It was there, among shanty houses and resilient souls, that I first heard the silent cry of the poor, a cry not only for bread, but for

dignity, presence, and hope. Raised in this environment without much family support, I was nevertheless nourished by the sacraments and the silent strength of the Catholic faith. It was through service as an altar boy and later a church youth leader that I began to perceive the quiet yet persistent whisper of God's call.

But this call did not thunder from the clouds. It came to me through the lived witness of Comboni Missionaries who had given their lives to dwell among

us, not above us, not beside us, but with us. They didn't come with quick fixes, but with deep compassion. Their presence was incarnational; they became part of our lives. They preached not only from pulpits, but through blistered feet, tired hands, and hearts on fire for justice.

I remember watching them walking alongside the destitute, comforting grieving mothers, educating children, advocating for dignity, and praying in the simplicity of our poor chapel

at St. John's Korogocho. Through them, I encountered Christ again and again: in the broken bread of the Eucharist and the brokenness of our people. I realized that the mission is not first about doing, but about being *present, available, and attentive* to the voice of God in the cries of His people.

The Awakening of a Missionary Heart

Something began to stir deeply within me, an inner urgency, a flame that could not be extinguished: A call not to escape the slum, but to *embrace* its wounds with love. A call not to admire missionaries from afar, but to walk the same narrow and demanding path. A call not simply to serve, but to *belong*, wholly and joyfully, to God and his poor. The words of St. Daniel Comboni became a fire in my soul: "Save Africa with Africa." (*Writings*, 2741)

I realized that, as an African son of the soil, I was not just a recipient of God's mission but an active agent of transformation, a brother called to lift others by the power of Christ's love and presence. A brother called to light the candle of hope where hope fades; a brother ready to listen to the voiceless children of God, whose dreams are shattered and talents buried.

I longed to be a brother who loves where there is pain, serves where there is need, and shines as a light where darkness lingers.

This passion renewed my hope that God might make me His vessel of mercy. I believed that the tears of the suffering would fuel my faithfulness. I was determined to respond to a call whose sufferings and struggles heal wounds and comfort the sorrow, because my presence among them would mean a lot to them.

Formation: Preparing the Heart, Mind, and Hands for Mission

For the time I have been with the Comboni's I have learned that Comboni vocation is not something you simply step into. It is a journey, a deep, transformative process of becoming more like Christ the Missionary, more like Comboni the Shepherd of the marginalized. And so, with trembling faith and burning desire, I entered the formation house in May 2017, after a period of *Come and See*.

Pre-postulancy Experience

I was sent to Mukuru slums for the pre-postulancy experience, where I served as a social

worker. Mukuru became a school of the heart for me. The people's struggles, their sacred stories of survival, became the fuel of my prayer and perseverance. It was there that I began to understand that *to serve the poor is to walk on holy ground*. It was there that I began to realize that indeed a call to Comboni life is to be very close to the poor and the most abandoned.

Postulancy at Layibi, Gulu, Northern Uganda

In May 2018, I was admitted to the Postulancy at Layibi in Gulu, Northern Uganda. It was a season of personal growth, communal living, and intercultural exchange. It was an essential stage of being formed intellectually, pastorally, spiritually, and humanly. I began to see how formation does not remove me from reality; it immersed me more deeply into it, preparing me not just to know Christ, but to reflect Him.

Upon returning to Kenya in May 2019, I pursued a Bachelor of Arts in Sustainable Human Development at Tangaza University. This was not merely an academic degree; it served as a vocational tool. The Brothers' vocation calls us to evangelize not only through catechesis but also through works of mercy, justice, innovation, and human development. Our hands and hearts must convey the Gospel.

Novitiate: Embracing the Radical Yes

On August 20, 2022, I began the Novitiate experience in Namugongo, the most sacred and intense phase of initial formation. It was a time of deep inner conversion, listening more attentively to God, studying the Comboni charism, and embracing





the demands of the three evangelical counsels: poverty, chastity, and obedience.

The novitiate taught me that being a Brother is not about being less than a priest, it is about being *completely* what God wants you to be. It is about becoming a *visible sign of fraternity, a bridge of communion, and a minister of God's tenderness*. On May 11, 2024, with great joy and trust in God, I professed my first vows as a Comboni Brother. This was a very propitious prerogative in my life because it was such a unique experience that helped me to embrace a new experience.

Formation in Action: Equipping for Mission

Today, I am stationed at the Comboni International Brothers Centre in Nairobi, I am pursuing a Master's in Business Administration (MBA). You may ask why an MBA? Because in today's world, the mission demands more than a good heart; it requires good planning. As Brothers, we are often entrusted with development projects, formation programs, and

administrative roles.

This academic journey is equipping me to integrate faith with professionalism, charity with competence, and spirituality with strategic leadership. It is not a detour from the mission; it is the mission. Every skill I acquire is aimed at *serving Christ better in His poor*, ensuring our missions are sustainable, accountable, and transformative.

The Brother's Vocation: A Living Witness of Christ the Servant

Comboni once said: "The missionary must be ready to die for the people he serves." (*Writings, 3159*). To be a Comboni Brother is to lay down one's life, not in grand gestures, but in daily fidelity: Being a voice for the voiceless, a shoulder for the weary, and a builder of bridges in broken places.

As a Comboni Brother, I am called to embody Christ through fraternity, service, and simplicity, bringing hope to a broken world. Strengthened by formation, I strive to be a beacon of light amid life's darkest clouds.

Vocation Directors

EGYPT

Giovanni Antonelli
22 Ahmed Onsi Street,
11421 HÉLWAN

ERITREA

Fr. Bahta Uqbaghiorghis
Comboni Missionaries
P. O. Box 191 ASMARA
Tel. 00291-1-64-0-38
bahtamccj@gmail.com

ETHIOPIA

Bro. Dessu Yisrashe
Comboni Missionaries
P. O. Box 5581 ADDIS ABABA
Tel. 11/551.5210
dyesrashe@yahoo.co.uk

GHANA

Fr. Boris Ketemepi
Comboni Missionaries – P.O. Box KN 556,
Kaneshie, ACCRA / Tel. 0302 301 493
mccjvocationdirector@yahoo.co.uk

KENYA

Fr. John Korir
Comboni Missionaries
P. O. Box 503-00521 NAIROBI
Tel. +254 705 321 811
johnkkorir@gmail.com

Vocation Animator
Comboni Missionary Sisters
P. O. Box 64491 - NAIROBI 00619

MALAWI

Fr. Martin Jere.
Comboni Missionaries
P. O. Box 144 LUNZU
Tel: +265 997 730 841
mjere717@gmail.com

MOZAMBIQUE

Fr Felizardo João Jone Nsicuzacuenda
Missionários Combonianos
P. O. Box C. P. 36 1114 MATOLA
Tel. +258-21 / 72 05 12

SOUTH SUDAN

Fr. Matthews Kutsaile
Comboni Missionaries
P. O. Box 148 JUBA
Tel. +265 992357530 (WhatsApp)
+211 927575300
matthews.kutsaile@gmail.com

SUDAN

Fr. Diego DC
Comboni Missionaries
P. O. Box 13209 KHARTOUM
Tel. 0910594508
vodirector@gmail.com

UGANDA

Fr. Ben Chola
Comboni Missionaries
P. O. Box 3872 - Kampala (Uganda)
tel. +256-77/62.42.40
vpmccj@infopoint.co.ug

SOUTH AFRICA

Fr. Raul Tabaranza
P. O. Box 912-266
0127 SILVERTON-PRETORIA
rtabaranza774@gmail.com

ZAMBIA

Fr. Simon Agede
Comboni Missionaries
P. O. Box 35892 - LUSAKA (Zambia)
tel. +260 978 867 319
simonagede@gmail.com



JUBILEE 2025

CALENDAR OF MAJOR EVENTS

DECEMBER 2024

24 December

Opening of the Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica

Photo Vatican Media



JANUARY 2025

24-26 January

Jubilee of the World of Communications

FEBRUARY 2025

8-9 February

Jubilee of Armed Forces, Police and Security Personnel

15-18 February

Jubilee of Artists

21-23 February

Jubilee of Deacons

MARCH 2025

8-9 March

Jubilee of the World of Volunteering

28 March

24 Hours for the Lord

28-30 March

Jubilee of the Missionaries of Mercy

APRIL 2025

5-6 April

Jubilee of the Sick and Health Care Workers

25-27 April

Jubilee of Teenagers

28-29 April

Jubilee of People with Disabilities

MAY 2025

1-4 May

Jubilee of Workers

4-5 May

Jubilee of Entrepreneurs

10-11 May

Jubilee of Marching Bands

12-14 May

Jubilee of the Eastern Churches

16-18 May

Jubilee of Confraternities

30 May - 1 June

Jubilee of Families, Children, Grandparents and the Elderly



JUNE 2025

7-8 June

Jubilee of Ecclesial Movements, Associations and New Communities

9 June

Jubilee of the Holy See

14-15 June

Jubilee of Sport

20-22 June

Jubilee of Governments

23-24 June

Jubilee of Seminarians

25 June

Jubilee of Bishops

25-27 June

Jubilee of Priests

JULY 2025

28 July - 3 August

Jubilee of Youth

SEPTEMBER 2025

15 September

Jubilee of Consolation

20 September

Jubilee of Justice

26-28 September

Jubilee of Catechists

OCTOBER 2025

4-5 October

Jubilee of the Missions

4-5 October

Jubilee of Migrants

8-9 October

Jubilee of Consecrated Life

11-12 October

Jubilee of Marian Spirituality

31 October - 2 November

Jubilee of the World of Education



NOVEMBER 2025

16 November

Jubilee of the Poor

22-23 November

Jubilee of Choirs

DECEMBER 2025

14 December

Jubilee of Prisoners

Bright people read New People...



Mode of Payment

Bank deposit or transfer

- ▶ Bank details: CitiBank
Account Number: 5102588039, Bank Code: 1600
Branch: Upperhill – Cheque payable to New People
- ▶ Cash payments at our offices: Kilimani Road
(Kilimani Estate), Nairobi (Monday to Friday 8:30 – 16:30).
- ▶ Please send your proof of payment to:
secretary.newpeople@gmail.com
or administrator@newpeoplemedia.com

Subscribe Now

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION (6 issues)

- ▶ Kenya: Kes 1,500
- ▶ East Africa (Uganda/Tanzania): US\$ 55
- ▶ Rest of Africa: US\$ 65
- ▶ Europe: Euro 75
- ▶ Rest of the world: US\$ 110

Lipa na Mpesa: PAY BILL No. 174532