

The Trajectory of Gender Based Violence (GBV) Impacts to Zimbabwean Children and Pathways for Child Safeguarding

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1 Introduction

As elsewhere in the world gender-based violence in Africa is a complex issue rooted in structural inequalities between men and women resulting in the persistence of power differentials between the sexes (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2010). Women's subordinate status to men, coupled with a general acceptance of interpersonal violence as a means of resolving conflict, renders women disproportionately vulnerable to violence from all levels of society, and by the state (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2010). Again, political economy analysis directs attention away from interpersonal relations and religious and cultural dynamics towards global and regional material structures as causes of violence and conflict such as gender-biased macroeconomic policies, supply-chains, labour markets and political norms (True , 2015). Despite the symbolic displays, children's exaltation as "common wealth" conceals their unfortunate fate in societies that violate their human dignity every day forced migration, violence of all kinds, rape and sexual abuse, genital mutilation, enrolment in conflicts ..." (Boukongou, 2006, p. 1998). The protection of children from all forms of violence is a human rights imperative. Though recognised by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) violence persists and is socially and culturally accepted constituting a harsh reality for millions of children worldwide.

Also, in most parts of the world including Zimbabwe, Kambarami (2006), attributes GBV to endemic and socially constructed patriarchy system reproducing itself from male members of a society endowed with power and authority. In this social system, men and women are socialized into gendered roles by such institutions as family and education. Men become breadwinners while women are socialized into caregivers (Medzani, 2013). Mainstream debates have unpacked core nature of the role of children and youths in development especially within the context of rights based approaches guaranteeing best interests of the child like the UNCRC and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) .

Furthermore, as Gwavuya notes, urban areas are highly associated with high levels of social fragmentation resulting in declining social cohesion and increased social exclusion especially for the poor women and children. Such an environment is a key driver for Domestic Violence.

The objective of the article is to:

1. Explore ways of enhancing the mainstreaming of child protection, child centred development and safeguarding in the milieu of Domestic Violence,
2. Unpack how Zimbabwe's comprehensive legal and child protection policy cushion children from impacts of SGBV
3. Proffer recommendations on possible approaches to enrich comprehensive enhanced child protection from SGBV in Zimbabwe.

2 Conceptual Framework

Children are the most victimized segment of the population an assertion rarely made in the crime, violence, or maltreatment literatures (Finkealor, 2011). The 1989 UNCRC stipulates that all children have the right to a core minimum level of well-being, including nutrition, basic education, survival, protection and the right to grow up in a family. Poverty and deprivation, robs children of their fundamental human rights (Manjengwa , et al., 2016). The epidemiology of child victimization, abuse, crime, and violence exposure is muddled by terminology, making an accurate counting of the problem harder (Finkealor, 2011). For example, Finkelor notes three key terms used to define this field: exposure to violence, child abuse, and child maltreatment but none of these terms accurately and distinctively covers domains of concern to professionals. (Finkealor, 2011). Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) has been lauded over the years for putting in place a comprehensive legislative and policy framework safeguarding children's best interests. Multiple international laws, standards and goals address child protection including 1989 UNCRC have been acceded to. In most instances, when women's rights are violated, children's rights are consequently violated. The country's 2013 Constitution also embraces children's rights under section 19. The National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children which came as a follow up to the World Summit for Children in 1990 is the main policy dealing with child safeguarding. It dictates that the state is required to adopt policies and measures to ensure that in matters relating to a child, the best interests of that child are paramount; it also stipulates comprehensive care for and protection of the child (Manjengwa , et al., 2016).

3 Methodology

A secondary document review and content analysis of documented topical Zimbabwean GBV and children dynamics was conducted. Review and content analysis of commissioned action research findings, journal articles and newspaper reports on GBV and Child welfare documents was also undertaken to inform the analysis.

4 Dynamics of GBV and Child centred responses

The National Baseline Survey on Life Experiences of Adolescents covering 1 062 female and 1 348 male respondents aged 13-24 years and also undertaken in Swaziland, Tanzania and Kenya, was Zimbabwe's first nationally representative study on violence against children (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) , 2011). Survey's primary objective was information collection on the magnitudes of sexual, physical and emotional violence affecting children and data collection in the spatial and temporal contexts in which violence occurs, the perpetrators of violence, service seeking behaviours of survivors, and the relationship of sexual,

physical, and emotional violence with survivors' current health status (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) , 2011).

A Herald newspaper report (2013), quotes the then Vice President of Zimbabwe, Joice Mujuru, as stating that cases of domestic violence have "drastically increased," with 1,940 cases reported in 2008, 3,193 in 2009, 7,628 in 2010, 10,351 in 2011, and 10,871 cases in 2012. The Domestic Violence Act (DVA)[Act14/2006] of Zimbabwe was enacted in 2007, was crafted in response to an increase in cases of domestic violence in the country. In relation to the safeguarding of children, especially the girl child, The DVA includes protection from cultural or customary practices such as forced virginity testing, female genital mutilation, and forced marriages. Domestic violence is a crime that can be punishable by imprisonment for up to 10 years. Most rural citizens are generally unfamiliar with laws against domestic violence and sexual offences.

Though prevalence has subsidised the rising threat of HIV/AIDS pandemic impacts in the 1990s saw the initiation of frameworks as the National Orphan Care Plan (1999) and year 2004 establishment of a cabinet approved comprehensive National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NPA for OVC). In critiquing one of the Zimbabwean key child protection legislative pillars, the Children's Act; Kaliyati et.al (2002) notes how it sets unrealistically high child care standards given the prevailing economic and social context. If one proceeds strictly according to this Act, as Kaliyati et al observe, poverty and the escalating cost of living means the majority of children in Zimbabwe need protection.

Moreover, in 2009 the Domestic Violence Council was launched as provided for in the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) Chapter 5:16, Section 16. The mandate of the council is to promote the protection and relief of victims of domestic violence through research, information dissemination, coordination and monitoring of the DVA.

Furthermore, the Domestic Violence Council would keep under constant review the problem of domestic violence taking all steps to disseminate information and increase the awareness of the public on issues of domestic violence, research into GBV promotion, promoting the provision of services necessary to deal with all aspects of domestic violence, monitoring their effectiveness, DVA the application and enforcement (Mashiri & Mawire, 2013). Studies on domestic violence in Zimbabwe mainly focus on women and children. This is so because women and children are believed to be vulnerable and weak (Medzani, 2013).

Also, in the year 2013, University of Zimbabwe's Institute of Environmental Studies (IES) and Unicef Zimbabwe Country Office conducted collaborative qualitative and quantitative methods oriented Specialised Urban Poverty Study. The study was conducted in city of Harare's low-income, high density suburbs of Highfield and Epworth (University of Zimbabwe, 2013). This study casts light on peculiar characteristics embedded in Zimbabwean adolescents' lifeworlds stimulating them to hook onto drug and substance abuse. The study aimed capturing information on child deprivations to counter national statistics that urban children are better off when compared to their rural peers. 500 randomly selected Epworth and Highfields households and to street connected children were targeted. Study findings were grounded in poverty analysis using two definitions of income-based, consumption expenditure and deprivations approach, measuring indicators of multi-dimensional poverty including children's shelter, education, health, nutrition, access to water and sanitation. Findings indicate two out of three children being in poverty, with consumption below the recommended levels, while one out of 10 was living in extreme poverty (University of Zimbabwe, 2013).

5 Perspectives of GBV and impacts on Children

Medzani (2013) notes the Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey (ZDHS) (2012) though mainly focused on spousal violence against women, contends that either person can be an instigator of violent behaviour. In a ZDHS 2010-2011 carried out in Zimbabwe's ten provinces, 1 445 ever-married women confessed having instigated violence when their men were not already hitting them (Medzani, 2013).

According to a report by Laiton (2013),

A 30-year-old Mutoko villager, Nhamo Ngavapfume, who, in a fit of rage, beat up his daughter to death after she tried to stop him from assaulting his wife, appeared at the High Court last week facing a murder charge. Ngavapfume is alleged to have been assaulting his wife Letwin Chari, accusing her of coming home late from work when his daughter Nyasha intervened to protect her mother. The enraged Ngavapfume is alleged to have turned on Nyasha whom he attacked with a metre-long stick, booted feet and clenched fists until she collapsed and died on the spot. The court heard the incident occurred on March 9 this year at Gotekote village, Chief Nechombo's area in Mudzi. In his application, Ngavapfume said he was extremely angered by his daughter's intervention when he was having an altercation with his wife. He further told the court that his intention was not to kill his daughter, adding she died after hitting her head against the ground.

Also the 2010-2011, Zimbabwe Demographic Health Survey highlighted a strong positive association between low levels of education, early marriages and HIV and gender-based violence vulnerability. It noted women's vulnerability to spousal abuse was also due to marrying at a young age e.g. women in the Apostolic sects are more prone to spousal abuse, often due to generational gaps between spouses.

Also, Chikwiri and Lemmer (2014) conducted a qualitative study of gender-based violence in Zimbabwean primary schools. Participants were twenty girls who had been victims of gender-based violence enrolled in primary schools in the Harare and Marondera districts of Zimbabwe selected by purposeful sampling and a chain referral. Data was gathered by semi-structured interviews and visual tools. Chikwiri and Lemmer (2014) noted that an insidious form of gender-based violence which emerged from the girls' stories was the documented engagement of fourteen participants in illegal forms of child labour occurring within and outside of school. Participants described having to perform compulsory, daily chores at school without remuneration: cleaning school yards and buildings, caring for the school's vegetable, fruit and flower gardens and cleaning toilets. Most rural primary schools represented by the study did not employ cleaning services due to their location and hence girls were recruited to do heavy cleaning

Studies on gender-based violence indicate that most cases of domestic violence revolve around the maintenance of men's economic and social control over women. However, there has been little discussion of how societal transformation, alterations in family forms and changed life experiences exacerbate domestic violence and/or limit measures to put an end to it. Domestic violence features frequently amongst other crimes such as assault, incest, rape and murder in contemporary Zimbabwe and has devastating effects, not just on the victim, but on other family members as well

Mutepfa's spousal abuse study noted prevalence among different socioeconomic status and gender groups in Zimbabwe which refuted the notion that only women are victims of domestic violence (Medzani, 2013). Also likewise, Chuma and Chazovachii indicate that women in rural

locales often have no ownership over vital assets like land, cattle and shelter, rendering them "too economically dependent on their husbands" to report domestic violence to the authorities (Chuma & Chazovachii, 2012, p. 9).

Chuma and Chazovachii state that a "lack of knowledge of the law and its provisions" was cited by the majority of women surveyed for the purpose of their report as a "major impediment to the full realisation of the 'fruits' of the Act" (Chuma & Chazovachii, 2012, p. 7). Many women in the microenterprise sector discussed with me how they had to increase their overall contributions to family maintenance, especially the provision of food and payment of school fees due to their husbands' refusal or inability to increase their food allowances or because their husbands had left home. Some men left and sought job opportunities in other cities or across national borders (for example in South Africa or Botswana). They often began new relationships with other women in these "host" areas/countries. Many of these men effectively abandoned their first families and did not continue to support them financially, thus committing "economic" violence.

The establishment of common-law unions or "*mapoto*" marriages in host communities are intricately connected with the history of the region, since men were often forced to leave their homes to work in the mines and farms to meet their tax obligations to the colonial state. Wife and children support failure also illustrates that these men are not fulfilling their expected gender roles. Another indicator of this phenomenon is the increasing percentage of female-headed households in Zimbabwe, currently about 31%. Households tend to become female-headed in Zimbabwe when a male partner/spouse leaves a relationship, as opposed to situations in which a woman never marries. Many low-income entrepreneurs, especially market traders, stated that their situations had worsened as the national economic crisis intensified (Osirim, 2003).

6 Pathways

The following section of the article explores strategies by which desired outcomes of reduced GBV impacts against children can be realised through pro children state and non-state actors' initiatives. Gender-based violence prevention and reduction requires strong global, continental and national commitments and instruments alongside effective leadership and capacity building of local level community (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2010). Realisation of national commitment for violence against women and girls elimination is when government, community based organizations, family members and individuals take leadership and accept responsibility to work together to create a society not condoning violence and works publicly and directly to prevent and respond to violence (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2010).

For ensuring gender based violence vicious cycle breaking, one of the strategies used is gender based violence social and psychological perpetrators rehabilitation. These are achieved through counselling sessions offered mainly by NGOs. Medicine San Frontiers and Musasa Project are the major NGOs offering counselling services to perpetrators and survivors of gender based violence and this has raised sustainability issues especially given the current viability of Musasa Project which has scaled down its operations as a result of limited funding. The Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA) also renders some legal services to women and the girl child facing discrimination and violence. Also, studies of Tanzania women market traders in cities of Dar es Salaam and Mbeya by Vyas, Mbwambo and Heise as cited in True (2015), found that women's access to money positively affects their lives reducing need to negotiate with male partners for money, a major source of conflict and trigger for violence.

Also, one other gender based violence prevention strategy is through conducting workshops evident in organisations such as Childline Zimbabwe, GWAPA and Musasa Project (ZimStats and Macro International Inc. 2007). As workshops are conducted, participants do understand the issues discussed, but challenges are that what is discussed mostly ends up in workshops due to lack of follow up on agreed work plans implementation (ZimStats and Macro International Inc, 2007). Resultantly, ZimStats and Macro International Inc note information will be held only with those that would have been trained on certain aspects of gender based violence prevention.

While Zimbabwe continues to restore and strengthen systems for child protection, the range and reach of services remain inadequate due to insufficient funding, low staff capacity, weak referral pathways and tracking, concentration of efforts in urban areas, and limited knowledge of, and confidence in existing systems (UNICEF 2016). Firstly, the GoZ should enable the justice system to intervene effectively in child and family welfare. The children's courts and legal support system should be vested with power and independence and acts in the pursuit of social sustainability of children and their families. Integrating the principles sustainable justice in child social protection help increase the quality of life of children thereby upholding their best interest.

The child justice system in Zimbabwe has been criticised because it does not appropriately and effectively meet children's needs due to manifold factors like shortage of social workers and funding, which causes delays in justice delivery. A sustainable justice system can be used to catalyse the betterment of children. The GoZ can enhance and expedite sustainable justice through the establishment of innovative legal and social justice strategies like the Problem Solving Courts, Restorative Justice, Intercultural Justice, Procedural Justice and Therapeutic Jurisprudence. This will enhance social sustainability of the child justice system.

Plan International, a child centred development international NGO in close cooperation with the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF, OHCHR, UN Women, UNFPA and the International NGO Council on Violence against Children co-hosted an international expert June 2012, in Addis Ababa. The consultation considered significant developments where law reform and enforcement, supported by awareness-raising and a widely participatory social mobilization process, has helped addressing deeply rooted social conventions and promoted harmful practices against children abandonment. Inconsistencies in legal regulation, selective implementation and compliance, and insufficient resources, together with lack of awareness within communities, prejudices amongst personnel, and weak capacity to address children's rights among law enforcement officials, the judiciary, traditional leaders and judges in customary and religious courts, were identified as critical challenges. A multi-donor Child Protection Fund (CPF) II to support the implementation of the National Action Plan for Children (NAP III) was secured for US\$48 million from Department for International Development (DfID) UK, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). The fund, which started in August 2016, has a stronger focus on violence prevention, information management, sustainability of the Harmonized Social Cash Transfer programme (HSCT) and governance structure/capacity (UNICEF, 2016).

One case of sustainable justice is when child marriages were outlawed by the Constitutional Court of Zimbabwe in 2016. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in its State of the World's Children Report (2015), notes Mashonaland Central province in Zimbabwe leads in child marriages with 50 percent. Second is Mashonaland West province with 42 percent,

Masvingo province 39 percent, Mashonaland East province 36 percent, Midlands 31 percent, Manicaland province 30 percent, Matabeleland North province 27 percent, Harare province 19 percent, Matabeleland South 18 percent while Bulawayo has the least prevalence with about 10 percent.

In 2015 Johannes Tomana, Zimbabwe's former Attorney General, indicated that the socio and economic environment created hopelessness in young girls. This is largely through lack of formal education, demanding teenagers' sexual encounters with men deference is unfair. He was quoted as saying

We've nine-year-olds, 12-year-olds, 13-year-olds who're actually not in school, who're not doing anything for example. What are we saying to them? We say you can't even do this [have sex], when the environment is not giving them alternative engagements? What are we talking about? (Katongomarara, 2015).

These marriages often have deleterious consequences for the health of young girls who do not understand what marriage entails. Not much research has been done to have actual statistics on how many child marriages exist in various contexts (SOS, 2014). Child labour in Zimbabwe has been inextricably linked to poverty. Zimbabwe has experienced complex interplay of structural chronic poverty combined with transient poverty (SOS, 2014).

7 Dynamics of criminal proceedings (investigation and sentencing) against GBV perpetrators and child abuse and limitations

In Zimbabwe, a "Victim Friendly System" adoption improved vulnerable witnesses treatment in the criminal justice system and was necessitated by the fact that if the victims were badly treated, the abusers, upon being taken to court, were acquitted (Muronda, no date). This was attributed to the threatening and intimidatory nature of the legal and court system to sexual abuse victims, from the police station to the courts changed with the introduction of the "Victim Friendly System". The DVA stipulates that, where practically possible, every police station will have a section staffed by at least one police officer "with relevant expertise in domestic violence, victim friendly or other family-related matters". Under the Act, Victim Friendly Unit officers are required to advise to the complainant how to obtain shelter or medical treatment and advise the complainant of their legal rights. All stakeholders, from the police, the social services, the doctors, prosecutors and magistrates have all received training to be victim friendly (Muronda, no date). Victim Friendly Unit investigators are responsible for investigation, arrest of offenders, docket compilation and any necessary referrals.

7.1 The Investigations

Zimbabwean courts do not carry out investigations but use information gathered by the police. If a victim is badly treated at this level secondary trauma will have been caused and careful handling at other levels will not be able to empower the child/victim as a witness. During the investigation process the investigators ensure that the reporting environment is conducive, private and friendly and that confidentiality is maintained.

The changes that have been introduced at this level are:

4. Place of interview
5. Interviewing techniques

6. Accurate recording of the complainant to avoid repeated questioning
7. Confidential handling of information from the complainant
8. Sensitivity of the investigating officer

Previously, social services did not play a role at the early stages and did not play a role in cases which did not need a probation officer's report. In the victim friendly system, they now come in to provide support for the victims at the investigation stage, medical examination, and the trial stage (Muronda, no date). They give advice to the investigators on how to communicate with the victim, and how to avoid secondary trauma. As Muronda notes, if a juvenile offender is involved, then a social welfare officer, appointed by the Children's Act, will carry out a thorough investigation into the juvenile's social and personal background. He will then give an opinion as to the factors that may have influenced the juvenile offender in committing the offence. The probation officer also gives recommendations on whether there is room for reform and will also recommend the nature of the punishment most suitable in the circumstances and what the recommended punishment is meant to achieve (Muronda, no date).

In view of the pending complete the automation of fingerprints by Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), as reported by Muchetu (2014), a domestic violence disclosure scheme could be initiated by ZRP. This allows members of the public to make enquiries about individual they are in a relationship with or in a relationship with someone they know to make enquiries about someone they know who is violence towards partner and family.

“The system once in place will see habitual criminals being nabbed as their details will have been captured. With just scanning their fingerprints from a crime scene we can get the right person as no two people have identical fingerprints,” (Muchetu, 2014).

According to Muchetu, the availability of modern information technology gadgets and a centralised command control system was going to ease the process.

“There is no centralised command and control system and data capturing is compromised in the absence of modern information technology based gadgets like computers. Without a fingerprint database some criminals get away with previous convictions by simply changing their names,” (Muchetu, 2014).

Through the Protection Orders, victims of domestic violence in Zimbabwe are entitled to apply for a protection order which mandates the abuser to stop abusing the victim. Protection order in Zimbabwe may: prevent the perpetrator from committing further violent acts; prevent the abuser from entering a victim's residence, workplace, or other areas which they frequent; mandate the perpetrator to pay emergency relief to the complainant for household expenses, medical bills, school fees, or mortgage bonds and rent payments; award temporary custody of children "to any person or institution" and regulate rights of access to said children by the perpetrator; and provide compensation for any physical injury, trauma, or loss suffered by the complainant. A Ministry of Women And Gender and Community Development MWAGCD and Gender Links report indicates that, according to Harare Civil Court records, from 2011 to 2013, there were 3,014 applications for protection orders in Harare and 2,931 protection orders were issued (Zimbabwe and Gender Links 2013, 97). A protection order remains valid for 5 years and it will have attached to it a warrant of arrest such that if the perpetrator breaches the order, the warrant of arrest will be effected. Besides protection orders, there are other ways of preventions e.g. awareness campaigns.

8 Embedding social workers roles for robust GBV Mitigation

The Department of Social Services employs social workers designated by the Children's Act to operate as probation officers whenever there are reasons to suspect that a child is at serious risk of harm or is in need of care (Government of Zimbabwe, in Mushongera 2015). The Act places a duty on such probation officers to intervene and place such children in a place of safety, but on condition that the child is brought before the Children's Court within a period of seven days (Kaseke, 1991).

Kaseke in Mushongera (2015) further notes Children's Act requires that young people alleged to have committed criminal offences be referred to probation officers for undertaking of assessments into the socio-economic circumstances of the children and provide reports aiding court to make an appropriate judgment. As Mushongera further notes, the Probation Officer can make recommendations to court that charges be withdrawn and the child dealt with outside the criminal court as a child in need of care, rather than as a criminal, or he or she can recommend that children be committed to a training institute, for rehabilitation purposes Zimbabwe's Department of Social Services which is the child welfare custodian is plagued by huge case-load for social workers, and conservative estimates suggest its professional staffing is out of alignment with that of other countries in the Southern African region (Wyatt, et al., 2010). In modern societies where traditional norms and values have either broken, or fast breaking down, situations of what Durkheim refers to as "anomie" have become quite common (Rwomire, 2011). Rwomire notes many people still face difficult existential conditions like in war, famine, poverty, crime, disease, and associated personal and familial traumas and maladjustments and social workers are required to mitigate these problems effects.

There are also support services for victims of domestic violence in Zimbabwe. There are Non-Governmental Organisations that provide shelters or safe havens to victims of abuse. Shelter services are available for female victims of domestic violence in Zimbabwe Two shelters to accommodate female victims of violence in Zimbabwe. One is located in Harare and is run by Musasa, while the other is in Gweru and is managed by the MWAGCD. Msasa Project has a long history of providing places of safety to victims of domestic of violence. The shelter run by Musasa, also providing services as counselling, life skills training, legal assistance, and basic health assistance, handled 728 cases of women who experienced physical abuse and 902 cases of women who experienced psychological or emotional violence (MWAGCG and Gender Links report, 105-106). The MWAGCD and Gender Links report notes that this shelter faces a challenge because it only accommodates mothers and is "overwhelmed with women coming with their young children fleeing domestic violence" (ibid., 106). Regarding the shelter in city of Gweru, the report stated that it had a capacity to accommodate four to six people, but in 2012 it accommodated a total of two women and three children, demonstrating "very low access to the shelter" (ibid.). The MWAGCD and Gender Links report further states that "while there is widespread acknowledgement for the need for establishment of shelters, few are in place. Also compounding the situation is the inadequacy of resources and the lack of capacity of service providers to ensure quality care".

Legal Aid and Hotlines are also provided by Government and NGOs in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwean government provides legal aid to citizens who are unable to afford their legal fees. The Legal Aid Directorate (LAD) has the mandate to deliver free legal aid services to indigent persons across the country. The LAD has offices in Harare and Bulawayo and a team of 19 lawyers. Clients may call their offices and arrangements for legal assistance can be made in regions where the LAD is not active with "cooperating partners", NGOs also offer free legal aid services to Zimbabwean women and children. The Zimbabwean Women Lawyers

Association (ZWLA) "champions the rights of women and children by providing free legal aid and working towards creating frameworks for an environment where women and children's rights are enjoyed and protected" (ZWLA Website). The MWAGCD and Gender Links Report further states that "ZWLA targets indigent women and children from all parts of Zimbabwe who are in need of legal assistance and the organisation provides free legal services for the same".

9 Recommendations

Elaborate child-sensitive social protection policy framework inclusive of a mix of interventions tailored to the needs of the different categories of extremely poor households and aim at lifting them above the food poverty line. At the same time the policy has to include interventions that prevent moderately poor and non-poor households from falling into extreme poverty. The policy has to take into account that poverty reduction and access to basic social and welfare services are interdependent.

Also, breaking silence on incidents of gender based violence in schools and accurate record keeping of incidents is the first step in developing prevention strategies by enabling early identification of patterns of violence in schools and proactive action to prevent the problem becoming entrenched. Although Zimbabwe has achieved gender parity to access in education, the study showed that a learning environment for girls in which gender-based violence is tolerated creates many other gender inequalities (Chikwiri & Lemmer, 2014).

Institutionalisation of child participation, particularly vulnerable children, within government and civil society in the design and implementation of all legislation, policy and programs that affect children is critical (Unicef, 2010). Additionally, Unicef recommends traditional community and religious leaders knowledge and skills development for review and revision of negative cultural and traditional practices advocacy.

Also, credible, reliable, disaggregated (by gender, region, age and other vulnerability dimensions) data on priority child protection and social protection issues indicating trends, prevalence and/or incidence to inform programming at the individual child level as well as in child protection system strengthening is critical.

10 Conclusion

This article sought to document the policy responses to pro child safeguarding responses to child victims of gender-based violence. Article analysed different secondary literature which interrogates dynamics of gender-based violence in Zimbabwe embedded in socio-economic circumstances and enduring cultural and religious norms. Despite robust policy and legal responses, gender-based violence is a concern in broader society as it threatens basic human rights and the physical and psychological wellbeing of children in Zimbabwe.

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