

REPUBLIC OF KENYA



**THE PRESIDENCY
MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE, YOUTH AND GENDER
AFFAIRS**

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY SICILY K. KARIUKI (MRS), CBS,
CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE, YOUTH
AND GENDER AFFAIRS DURING THE LAUNCH OF GENDER
BASED VIOLENCE RECOVERY CENTER AT KILIFI HOSPITAL ON
1st JULY, 2016**

Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Health – Dr. Cleopas Mailu

Governor Kilifi County – H.E. Amos Kingi

UNFPA Country Representative – Dr. Siddharth Chatterjee

Principal Secretary, State Department of Gender Affairs – Mrs. Zeinab
Hussein

Kilifi MP – Mr. Gideon Mun'garo

Diplomats present

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am greatly honored to be with you this morning to preside over the launch of Gender-based Violence and Recovery Center here at Kilifi Hospital.

The presence today of leaders from both the National and County Governments, diplomatic missions and development partners is a strong statement about the commitment we have towards effectively dealing with GBV.

The opening of this Centre today epitomizes the great strides the Country has taken to significantly address issues of SGBV and its determination to address inequalities as envisioned by one of the key principles of Agenda 2030, by ensuring that no one is left behind.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Government's Medium-Term Plan II has prioritized GBV as a key Gender issue. The country has a progressive set of laws that have been passed to deal with GBV cases including the Constitution 2010, the Penal Code (cap.63), Criminal Procedure Code (Cap. 75), The Sexual Offences Act amended in 2011 and regulations, Evidence Act (Cap.80), Children Act (No. 8) 2001 among many others. Kenya is also a signatory to a number of international and regional conventions and treaties that impact on GBV.

In 2014 the government launched the National Policy for Prevention of and response to GBV, whose goal is to "***Accelerate efforts towards the Elimination of GBV in Kenya***" in 4 ways namely; facilitate a coordinated approach to GBV; improve enforcement of laws; increase access to quality support services; improve sustainability of GBV prevention and response interventions.

The government has embarked on the process of providing integrated GBV services across the country to improve service delivery to the GBV survivors by establishing Gender Based Violence Recovery Centers in the largest public hospitals in Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, Kisumu and Eldoret and Gender desks at almost all police stations.

Today, we are pleased to launch this Centre in Kilifi County, one of the hot spot counties in terms of GBV prevalence. And will continue to do the same in other counties.

As you are all aware, Gender Based Violence (GBV) is one of the most pervasive human rights violations of our time. In our country, it is endemic with violence against women and girls worryingly high.

The Kenya Demographic Health Survey of 2014 found that **40%** of women **aged 15-49** and who had once been married, had experienced either physical or sexual violence at the hands of their partner or spouse.

The **56th Session** of the **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)** also identified GBV as a serious issue in Kenyan schools that contributes to the school dropout rate especially for girls.

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Gender Based Violence undermines health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims, yet it remains shrouded in a culture of silence. Victims of violence often suffer sexual and reproductive health consequences including forced and unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, traumatic fistula and sexually transmitted infections.

Ms. Miya Yomanouchi, a writer, humanitarian, social health activist and sexual health and wellness advocate, said **“Self respect by definition is a confidence and pride in knowing that your behavior is both**

honorable and dignified. When you harass or vilify someone, you not only disrespect them but yourself also. Street harassment, sexual violence, sexual harassment, gender-based violence and racism, are all acts committed by a person who in fact has no self respect."

In Kenya, Gender Based Violence is multifaceted. It is particularly worrying when considered against the backdrop of HIV and AIDS pandemic. Studies show that women, who have experienced GBV, have a **48%** more likelihood of being infected with HIV than those who have not. It is caused by unequal power relations between men and women, socio-cultural norms that normalize GBV, discriminatory practices and changing gender roles.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The negative consequences of GBV require a supportive environment that provides coping mechanisms for survivors and their families as well as rehabilitation and reintegration of perpetrators into the community.

The high prevalence of GBV in Kenya calls for mechanisms to ensure provision of quality, timely and comprehensive services for GBV survivors across the social, health and criminal justice systems. I want to challenge women and men in leadership positions to step up to the plate. Your words are important, but ultimately, only your actions count.

Dealing effectively with GBV will require a multi-sectoral approach and inter-agency collaborative and coordinated approach. It will need the input of men, women, communities, organizations, institutions,

companies as well as government. We have a big task ahead of us but I believe together we can make a difference.

In conclusion, let me say that we are unequivocal about the need to focus more on the root causes of gender-based violence, which are found in gender-based power inequalities and gender-based discrimination. Responsive measures such as providing adequate medical service to survivors of gender-based violence, is crucial – and lifesaving – but it does not necessarily stop the violence from happening in the first place or prevent it from happening again.

I believe that through collaboration, we are going to create a platform to increase the efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in humanitarian settings.

Finally, I wish to once again thank UNFPA Country Representative Dr. Siddharth Chatterjee, Governor Kilifi County, H.E. Amos Kingi and all the diplomats for showing commitment to partner with us to improve the lives of women and girls in emergencies.

I now officially declare this centre opened.

Thank you.