

UNDERSTANDING THE PERPETRATORS OF VIOLENT CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN NAMIBIA

IMPLICATIONS FOR PREVENTION AND TREATMENT



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TRI-PARTITE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT



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Cry Not But Pour Forth Tears

It is with great pain that I write this column this week. My unreserved sympathy is all pouring out to the relatives of the late Juanita Mabula and many more other women who have suffered at the hands of merciless beings.

It has become very disheartening to hear of cruelty committed against anybody, let alone women and girls. Having witnessed first-hand what tragedy means, I could not help but shed tears myself when relatives stood there motionless and perplexed at their loved one's untimely death.

Juanita Mabula, Melanie Janse, Theopolina Musenga, Monika Florin, Rachel Hamatundu and many others – all these names have one thing in common. Life was robbed from them, not by will, but by cruelty and sick minds.

Yet in the face of humanity, men have learned to forgive. But how can a father forgive a man who has raped his daughter, crushed her head and then say I am sorry? Better still, how can a mother live happily knowing that her daughter was buried without her head? How can Juanita's little toddler of four comprehend mommy's death? The questions are endless. The answers are near, and yet so far. The value of life has foregone its meaning to many, and yet, at the core of these crimes are men who are supposed to be the protectors, guardians of the weak, providers to the needy, yet we destroy.

Namibians have cried but how much more of this will we do? How many more mothers will bid farewell to their loved ones and if forgiveness should be the key, who reconciles forgiveness and how do you walk up to a man and say I am sorry?

Protagonists of the death penalty will say, "Let's all die", whilst antagonists will say, "You cannot take another's life". Where do you place the one who wants no death penalty, and no violence in society?

I would not conform to the death penalty for all the reasons in the world, yet I would not support forgiveness easily.

This all brings us to morality, ethos, respect and value for life. In essence noble principles, but they have failed our society. To the men folk, our acts should not be of this nature. They can be far better than that.

Having said this well and good, Namibians cannot afford to cry anymore. Enough blood has been shed, tears have dried up and parents have lost.

On grounds of legality, I feel for the relatives of the countless victims of violence, spousal abuse, domestic violence, rape, and the list is unending. I hope and pray that those who have the conceptuality will hear the call. Stop the violence; stop the cruelty, the inhuman ending of innocent life. As William Blake once said, "We are put on Earth a little space that we may learn to bear the beams of love."

I hope whoever did the act will reflect on this and have a change of mind, for light to guide him and ease the pain of the relatives as well as his own conscience.

At this juncture, I sympathize with relatives of all the Namibian women who have lost their lives at the hands of merciless criminals. My condolences go to the relatives of Juanita Mabula.

The little space within the heart is as great as the vast universe.

The heavens and the earth are there, as well as the sun and the moon and the stars. Fire and lightning and the winds are there, and all that now is and all that is not, everything.

May her soul rest in peace.

Southern Times, 10 October 2005, Windhoek

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

EPQ	Eysenck Personality Questionnaire
EPQ-E	Eysenck Personality Questionnaire: introversion-extraversion
EPQ-N	Eysenck Personality Questionnaire: neuroticism
EPQ-P	Eysenck Personality Questionnaire: psychoticism
FGD	focus group discussion
MHSS	Ministry of Health and Social Services
MLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
MSS	Ministry of Safety and Security
SES	Socioeconomic status
UNAM	University of Namibia
WAD	Women's Action for Development

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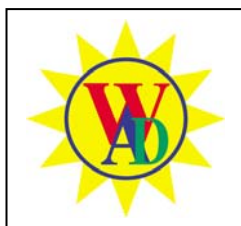
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FOREWORD

By the WAD Executive Director



Veronica De Klerk

As the Commissioning NGO of this unique research project, Women's Action for Development (WAD), takes pleasure in the completion of this research report, on behalf of the tri-partnership consisting of Women's Action for Development; the Ministry of Safety and Security; and the University of Namibia.

The study was commissioned against the background of the continuous and shocking escalation of violence against women and girls in the Namibian society.

Although the recent gruesome murder of a woman whose body was chopped into several parts and dumped in various locations of the country, was ostensibly the work of a serial killer responsible for the disappearance of several women, the killing, raping and brutalisation of women and girls have a long history in Namibia.

However, notwithstanding the high incidence of this social phenomenon, no research of this nature has been conducted before in Namibia to determine its root causes by such a large team of researches, clinical psychologists, social workers, etc from a university, targeting prisons across the country where violent offenders are kept.

WAD therefore, considered it as a starting point to develop strategies to combat violence against women and girls and to garner the support of key role-players, by exploring the causal factors which trigger such violence.

The relevance of this research lies in the fact that a sample of convicted perpetrators of violence, specifically against women and girls in various prisons from across the country, were interviewed to capture their reasons for having committed such deeds.

The results of this research will hopefully also serve a wider audience as it will be presented to a wide variety of community institutions, various levels of Government and the Private Sector.

It is the sincere hope of Women's Action for Development that the findings of this research will greatly influence future crime reduction/prevention strategies

that would further contribute towards making Namibia a safer place for women and girls.

In this regard, it is the intention of the tri-partnership to employ social science students of the University of Namibia, to conduct ongoing workshops and group discussions with various target groups to create a deeper understanding of the research findings and to inculcate the recommendations to become a way of life.

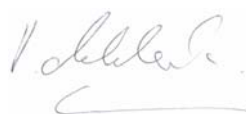
Since there is common ground within the SADC region as far as violence against women and girls is concerned, the report can form the basis for SADC countries to build upon in studies of their own.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Board of Directors of Women's Action for Development, I wish to express my sincere appreciation towards the members of the tri-partnership for their wonderful co-operation and dedication to finalise this project, including the Minister of Safety and Security, Honourable Peter Tsheehama, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Namibia, Professor Lazarus Hangula, and indeed the Commissioner of Prisons, Commissioner Evaristus Shikongo.

I further extend my sincere appreciation towards the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung for sponsoring this research project.

May this merely be the first of several research projects in which a synergy of our collective strengths will result in very useful outcomes.

I pray that this research report will raise stronger awareness among the Namibian society that basic human rights are indeed inclusive of the rights of women and girls.



Veronica De Klerk
WAD Executive Director

Executive Summary

The escalating violent crimes committed against women and girls in Namibia, poses a serious threat to the basic fabric of Namibian society, as this is just the tip of the iceberg , reflecting the country's social health in terms of : *the cultural aspects of our patriarchal society; and our violent colonial past that is perpetuated in post-independent Namibia.* The newly acquired freedom of basic Human Rights, seems not to be applicable to all Namibian citizens, especially women and girls, as male counterparts seemingly struggle to perceive that human rights issues are inclusive of women's rights as well.

The study was conducted during 2006, as a joint collaborative effort amongst Women's Actions for Development (WAD), The University of Namibia (UNAM), and the Namibia Prison Service (NPS). The rationale was to get insight into the perceptions of male perpetrators' and their reasons for committing violence against women and girls in their society.

Research Methodology

The study is consisted of a mixed method approach of both qualitative and quantitative data. However, given the nature of the study, the emphasis rested on qualitative data, to help us understand why these violent crimes continue to be committed. A sample of 200 men in prisons across the country was interviewed.

Main Findings

The study revealed that cultural factors, alcohol consumption, low levels of education, lack of employment, socio-economic marginalization, broken family systems, and poor socialisation, were all contributing factors that underlie the violent crimes committed against women and children. Most of the perpetrators were ignorant of what the new rape act constituted, and that having sex against their partner's, wives against her will is a criminal offence.

Some perpetrators perceived the criminal justice system as biased towards women, and that the current rehabilitation programmes for prisoners in Namibia are inadequate, in particular the psycho- therapeutic aspects for modifying deviant behaviour.

Potential personality traits also played a role of a violent disposition, which could be assessed in advance by clinical psychologists. Certain cultural groups were also more prone to committing violent crimes towards women and children, a factor that should be considered by various stakeholders, if we want to adequately address violence in our society