



## COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

**PRESS STATEMENT**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Friday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

The Policy Monitoring and Research Centre (PMRC) joins Government and all its partners in the 2022 commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women under the theme: "**UNiTE! Activism to End Violence against Women and Girls!**" The theme speaks to the safety of women and girls in all spaces. This commemoration calls to mind the various manifestations of Gender Based Violence (GBV) – sexual, physical, economic, emotional and harmful cultural practices. GBV has been recognized as a public health issue, a violation of human rights and one of the key drivers of poverty in Zambia and around the world. It impacts negatively on the realization of good health and general well being, education, and access to decent work consequently locking women and girls in the cycle of poverty. GBV is a multi-faceted vice that cuts across social mores, but particularly health. Survivors continue to experience increased morbidity and mortality rates, as evidenced by the numerous media reports of sometimes-gruesome deaths at the hands of intimate partners. Transmission of HIV is, more often than not, present. The moral fibre of society is under threat of disintegration. This is in spite of the many notable strides made by the country as a State party to various international treaties that seek to protect,

promote and respect the human rights of women and girls. The enactment of the Anti-Gender Based Violence Act No. 1 of 2011, the Gender Equity and Equality Act No. 22 of 2015, establishment of GBV Fast Track Courts and the Gender Equity and Equality Commission, as well as the National Gender Policy are all geared towards the attainment of Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goal No.5 on Achieving Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls. The goal is to end all forms of discrimination and eliminate violence against women and girls in all spheres of human development. It is important, therefore, to keep the conversation going in an effort towards the reduction of the GBV statistical incidence, which is imperative in the face of the ever increasing number of cases.

In its report for the period 2017 to 2022, the Parliamentary Committee on National Guidance and Gender Matters expressed concern at the statistics – 22, 073(2018), 25, 121(2019) and 26, 370 (2020). Of the total number of cases in 2020, only 3,327 were taken before court. This brings into focus the challenges faced by the system and the need to shine a spotlight on these challenges in the quest for interventions to stem the human rights violations faced by Zambian women and girls. It has been said that increased reporting results from heightened sensitization, but perhaps this is not enough. For instance, the low number of prosecutions in the court system is a major indicator that more needs to be done.

To this end, PMRC commends the intention by the Government to add to the framework a five-year National Action Plan on GBV Prevention and Response. Government's intention to launch a campaign, "Are you safe...? At work, at home, at school?" is also an important statement on the direction that the sensitization and awareness raising strategy is taking. This is in recognition that threats of GBV exist even in the safest places.

The Eight National Development Plan (8NDP) attaches great importance to girls' education and women's empowerment as social protection measures. This aligns with a vision for the economic independence of women and girls. Under the strategic development areas of Good Governance Environment and Human and Social Development, it is anticipated that a more robust framework for the elimination of poverty affecting women and girls as a result of economic GBV will be entrenched.

In the continued effort to ensure policy and system building for the elimination of GBV, PMRC urges Government through the various line ministries to:

- **Cultural resetting** on negative traditional and social norms and practices that perpetuate GBV should form part of the sensitization and awareness raising response. The use of ICT should be part of the strategy to increase the reach of the messaging. This should be done in conjunction with the traditional leaders who are custodians of customs and traditions.

- **Decentralise** the Gender Crimes Unit of the National Prosecutions Authority to provincial level to maintain a wider presence.
- Ensure **continuous capacity building** for law enforcement in the management of cases, investigation and prosecution of cases of GBV as well use of forensic equipment in investigations; this can be incorporated into the curriculum at Lilayi Police Training College.
- Government is encouraged to take **ownership of One Stop Centres (OSC)** for GBV established by cooperating partners. This will promote continuity of the services provided to the communities in which they have been set up.
- Ensure empowerment programmes for women are premised on actual needs with the relevant in-built monitoring mechanisms.
- Operationalise the Gender Equity and Equality Commission to give effect to the coordination of the welfare of women and girls in a more comprehensive manner.

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