ZAMBIA NATIONAL WOMEN’S LOBBY

MEN’S NETWORK PROJECT ADVOCACY REPORT

THE MEN’S PETITION AGAINST DEFILEMENT

Produced by ZNWL Secretariat
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The Men's Network Project is a project of the Zambia National Women’s Lobby (ZNWL). Its many aim is to include male voices on gender equality, gender based violence, women’s rights, safe motherhood, property grabbing and other issues that affect women and girls.

On 27th June, 2008, the Men’s Network Project launched an advocacy campaign to collect signatures from the public. The signatures will be handed over to Members of Parliament so that defilement crime is legislated as non bailable offence. The Men’s Network Project is concerned that girls are have no personal security in communities. Homes which are expected to be safe are becoming very unsafe. The majority of these cases are not reported to enforcement authorities. Thankfully the media has been very proactive to expose these violations.

Media reports in the first three months showed a total of 184 defilement cases were recorded at the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) Drop in Centre alone and another 70 cases were recorded in Kasama in Northern Province. The University Teaching Hospital records an average of 33 cases of defilement per month. This is unacceptable.

This situation prompted the Men’s Network Project to develop an intervention by way of petition the Government as well as to mobilise support from members of the public who are concerned about the future of children. The aim of the campaign was to collect over 5000 signatures to be presented to the Members of Parliament. The Men’s Network Project argument is that motor vehicle theft is a non bailable offence and therefore Parliament has got an obligation to enact a law that will deal with perpetrators of sexual atrocities.

The petition was implemented with financial support from Non Governmental Coordinating Council (NGOCC).

1. Launch of the Petition
The launch of the petition took place at the American Information Centre on 27th June, 2008 at 14:00 hours. It was attended by 62 participants from different organisations and the media, local and international. The meeting was chaired by Ms. Engwase Mwale, the NGOCC Executive Director. In her opening remarks, she thanked the Guest of Honour, Bishop Paul Mususu, for accepting the invitation at short notice. Ms Mwale told the participants that the Men’s Network needs strong leaders like Bishop Mususu who can inspire men in the fight against violence and HIV/AIDS.

She told the Guest of Honour that in 2000, the Women’s Lobby decided to embrace men as partners in an effort to promote gender equality and fighting violence against women. Male involvement in promoting gender equality is very critical to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

The Lobby decided to launch the Men’s Network project as a male dominance project to influence men in the community on gender issues. The Men’s Network Project works side
by side with the general membership comprising of men and women of the organisation. The Men’s Network Project has carried out many advocacy programmes in support of women at different levels such as campaigning for women from all parties’ candidates during elections. The men have been supportive during special events that are dedicated to the cause of women such as the International Women’s Day, the 16 Days of Activism and Human Rights Day and many other advocacy campaigns.

Ms Mwale told the gathering that the Lobby and their Women’s Movement was privileged to have the Bishop Mususu to launch the campaign and sign the first signature. Men are usually regarded as major culprits of violence against women and children and the fact that men are now coming out to be part of the solution is encouraging.

The Men’s Network Project has plans of sensitising other men on issues of HIV/AIDS, safe motherhood and reproductive health and therefore, need to be inspired by the strong leadership that in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

2. Remarks By the Founder Coordinator
The Founding Coordinator, Mr Horrance Chilando also addressed the Participants. He said what is obtaining in our society now is indeed a source of worry and therefore the initiative taken by the Men’s Network Project is a revolutionary spirit which should be commended. Revolutionary because the fight against gender based violence has traditionally been spearheaded by women.

Since 2000, the Men’s Network Project has added to that lone voice, a supporting chorus that has since raised the profile of this very important fight to unprecedented levels in the country.

Mr. Chilando gave a background that Men’s Network Project was initiated in 2000 by a group of men who believed in change. The impetus behind this initiative was the need to initiate change through the combined action of men, speaking in the language of men and working with men. Men have for a long time been seen as perpetrators of the vice of gender based violence.

3. Remarks by the Guest of Honour
In his speech the Guest of Honour, Bishop Paul Mususu, thanked Zambia National Women’s Lobby for inviting him to be Guest of Honour. He urged men to reflect on the need for them to talk about their role in ending violence against women and children.

Bishop Mususu said violence against children is a serious cancer that needs lasting cure before the lives of children are completely ruined by careless men.

He said it was sad that every day, many children are becoming victims of sexual violence, the majority of these happening within families. The Bishop added that there are more chances of new born girl being a victim than chances of surviving in the home. Defilement is a serious cancer that points at men as worst perpetrators.
Child defilement, if left unchecked, will ruin the future of this country because children are the rocks on which the foundation of the country will be built. Bishop Mususu further added that he was delighted to be associated with the Men’s Network Project initiative to lobby Government to pay more attention to the escalating crime of defilement.

He saluted the Men’s Network Project for the taking up the challenge to petition Government so that defilement is enacted as a non bailable offence as well as its initiative to engage men in communities to be part of the solution. Girls who are victims of sexual crime suffer long term physical and psychological damage that impairs their ability to learn and become useful citizens.

He added that girls should not be denied an opportunity to live and develop into useful citizens. Child defilement has a link to HIV/AIDS infection and those found guilty of committing atrocities against children should be made to dance to the music.

2. Collection of Signatures
The Men’s Network took advantage of the Agricultural and Commercial Show to collect signatures. Men’s Network Project members approached show goers at the main entrance. This unique campaign attracted attention from the public. The support by the public was very encouraging. A total of 427 signatures were collected in one day alone. Our members continued the exercise in the compounds around Lusaka. Signatures were also collected from Chongwe during sensitisation workshops for councillors that were organised by ZNWL. The total number of signatures collected is 5010. The signatures will presented to Members of Parliament during the 16 Days of Activism period

3. Drama Performance
One drama sensitisation was conducted at Chaisa Market to educate the public on the danger of defilement. This exercise was an important point to collect signatures from the audience. The activity did not escape the attention of the police in the area who felt that this should have been done along a time ago. Stickers were distributed to police officers. The drama performance focused on the following,

- The health implication of defilement on girls.
- Why men engage in defilement
- The need to report defilement to law enforcement officers
- The role of the community in ending violence.
- The role of men in reaching other men to end violence
- Ending violence should not be seen as a women’s issues alone

The community appreciated the efforts of the Men’s Network Project to sensitisise men in the community. At the end of the performance, signatures were collected and fliers distributed to the community

4. Radio Programme
One Radio programme was aired on Yatsani Radio. The discussants were Nelson Banda, Coordinator of the ZNWL Men’s Network Project and Mubita Simonda from the Young Women Christian Association Men’s Network.
Issues discussed
Issues discussed included the following.
- The Petition as the men's initiative of responding to gender violence.
- Men as perpetrators of sexual violence.
- The consequences of defilement on girl’s health during adult life especially in the advent of HIV/AIDS.
- The aim of the petition
- Why the three organisations working together i.e. ZNWL YWCA, NGOCC. It was mentioned that ZNWL is the implementing agency while YWCA was a partner by invitation and NGOCC financed the project

5. T-shirt Printing and Message Development
During this process 93 T-shirts were printed with the following messages
- Make DEFILEMENT A NON BAILABLE OFFENCE. This message was targeted at Members of Parliament
- ACT TO GATHER NOW, save lives of our girls and give them their RIGHTS.
- Sleeping with a minor is not a cure for HIV/AIDS
- Sleeping with a minor won’t make you a rich man
- Men, lets Act together to fight defilement.
- Men, be part of the solution to fight defilement
- Real men do not abuse girls
- Defilement is a GROSS VIOLATION OF GIRL’S RIGHTS.
- The T-shirts were distributed to members of the Men’s Network during the collection of signatures and networking organisations so as to spread the messages and the campaign.

6. Successes
- The Petition was recognised as unique because it was spearheaded by men themselves.
- Community sensitization on defilement
- Most of the petitioners thought it was only women who could fight Gender Based Violence defilement and but men are now the lead
- The petitioners shared the view that defilement should be a non bailable offence
- The petitioners appreciated that defilement is demeaning to girls and a violation of their rights
- The petitioners called for increased male involved of men
- The petitioners felt that there is need to build coalition between men and women to fight the scourge
- Community sensitised were to report abuse of girls
- The fact that the first petitioner was from the church added value and inspired confidence in the campaign.
- The Petition attracted international media coverage; it was covered by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), Vatican Radio and Trans World Radio International. Articles on the campaign were also sent to FEMNET newsletter in Kenya. In addition the Men’s Resources Centre International (MRI) in Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the United States of America have requested for more information on the campaign
- On the local front it was covered on Radio Phoenix, Yatsani Radio Muvi TV, Zambia Daily Mail, and the Post Newspaper
- Some senior political figures appreciated the campaign and appended their signatures on the petition.

7. Limitations
- The campaign was limited with funding to carry out extensive activities
- At community levels there are no role models to champion the campaign i.e. the community have to wait for NGOs to initiate campaigns; the church and local leaders are not actively involved in initiating campaigns against violence
- A culture of silence in the community still exist especially if perpetrators are family members.
- The petition was in English, and therefore there is need in future to have it in the local languages.
- Due to limited funds the petition was only conducted in Lusaka

8. Recommendations
- There is need to take the campaign to rural areas to maximise opportunities as well as to add the voices of rural community on the campaign
- The involvement of influential leaders such as the clergy men and traditional leaders could add value to the campaign
- There is need for more funding to intensify the campaign through other media including more radio programmes, printing fliers and posters

9. Conclusion
Zambia National Women's Lobby would like to thank NGOCC for the financial support without which it would have been impossible to carry out this campaign. Though it was minimal, it added great value to the advocacy work of the Men’s Network Project. The Men’s Petition has generated international recognition within the SADC and beyond. Attached to this report are some of the photos showing petitioners appending signatures and newspaper coverage.
Men urged to overcome negative attitudes against women

By ZANGOSA MWALE

EVANGELICAL Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ) executive director, Bishop Paul Mwambu says it is time for men to overcome their socialisation and negative attitudes against women.

Bishop Mwambu said the negative perceptions men have about women prevent the latter from fully utilising their potential.

Speaking in Livingstone after the Men’s Network petitioned against defilement, Bishop Mwambu said the campaign should send a strong message to other men that violence against women was a violation of human rights.

He said girls had become an endangered species in their homes and communities.

“It is sad that young girls are no longer safe in their homes and one may ask where they are going to be safe,” Bishop Mwambu said.

He said defilement had become a major public concern of girls in Zambia and hardly a day passes without a case being reported in the media.

Men had the power to influence communities and involving them in the initiative would provoke them to stop their sexual assault against girls.

“I am happy that the Men’s Network members have identified the need to petition the government to enact strong legislation against defilement so that defilement becomes a non-bailable offence,” he said.

Bishop Mwambu said the process of engaging men in programmes was important to achieve the MDGs on gender equality.

He said violence had rendered women and girls powerless and the long term effect of violence was traumatising for the victims.
petition MPs over defilement legislation

By Mwila Chansa

THE Men’s Network Project of the Zambia National Women’s Lobby has started collecting signatures to petition members of parliament to put in place legislation making defilement an unbailable offence.

In an interview, Men’s Network project information management and networking officer and coordinator, Nelson Banda, said his network wanted to send a strong message to perpetrators of defilement that they were being watched.

“We are doing this because we have seen an increase in the number of defilement cases and men happen to be the main perpetrators of this violence against children. Hardly a day passes without hearing of defilement,” Banda said.

He said abused girls suffered physical and emotional torture at the hands of the defilers and that there was need to reverse the trend.

Banda said the network was hoping to collect about 5,000 signatures.

He said defilement should be a non-bailable offence because chances were that if suspected defilers were let loose, they could commit similar offences to other children.
Mr Njekwa Anamela, Vice President of the opposition UNIP signing the petition at Manda Hill BP Filling Station
A woman police officer signing the petition at Manda Hill BP Filling Station
A male police officer appending his signature on the petition
A concerned street vendor signing the petition
A mother safeguarding the future of her girl children
Drama performance at Chaisa township in Lusaka
A petitioner appending his signature on the petition
Gilbert Kaira, a member of the Men's Network witnessing the signing