

Women & Girls' Centre, Ministry of Women Affairs, Gombe

Gender based violence (GBV) world over has worsened due to the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic as a result of which movement is restricted, people are confined, and protection systems weakened. Consequently, Women and girls are at greater risk of experiencing gender-based violence and other harmful practices. With the increasing cases of GBV fueled by socio-economic and security challenges in the country, available statistics indicate that 35% of Gombe State women have experienced physical or sexual violence in the past 12 months from either a husband, partner or relative while about 59.3% of women have experienced physical violence since 15years of age. This has, therefore, necessitated the need for critical stakeholders to take proactive measures in addressing the vulnerability of girls and women through the creation of a "Safe Haven" where they can easily access care, psychosocial support and protection to recover from injury, trauma and infections caused by gender based violence.

These spaces support women and girls to recover from violence, form networks and access support, safety and opportunities. These are often integrated spaces offering a range of services including resources, information, social networks, to essential and discrete clinical care and sexual reproductive health services. They serve as safe spaces for women and girls in the community, culturally-appropriate and tailored to the context. It's a place where women and girls can go to at any time to feel safer and empowered and have access to information, education, recreational activities, support and services. These spaces support women and girls to recover from violence, form networks and access support, safety and opportunities.

The objectives of the Women & Girls' Centre is to provide shelter to survivors of gender-based violence and sexual gender- based violence in Gombe state and address limited prevention mechanism and response service to address gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual gender-based violence (SGBV) and reproductive health for women and girls, including psychosocial support.

In line with this, UNFPA in conjunction with Gombe State Ministry of Women Affairs & Social Development in collaboration with the Budget, Planning and Development Partners' Coordination Office supported the renovation (six rooms) of the safe space for women & girls (SSWG) in the premises of the Ministry of Women Affairs in accordance with international best practices. Following renovation, the center has the capacity to offer the range of services

that includes GBV case management, individual or group counselling, psychosocial support, safety planning and risk reduction, skills-building, recreational activities. Information on critical issues can be shared in these spaces such as where/how to access GBV services and information on sexual and reproductive health, legal rights, childcare, and GBV prevention and response. This was done in collaboration & in partnership with all relevant GBV actors in Gombe State. Social welfare staff and trained Psychosocial Counsellors of the ministry will provide support & services to survivors in the shelter. Relevant instructional materials, IECs, SOPs & guidelines will be made readily available in the shelter.

TALKING POINTS:

- i. Government's commitment to achieving the SDGs through zero GBV – In line with State's 10 Year Development Plan & Strategies
- ii. Leveraging on Effective Partnership & Collaboration (All Stakeholders- Local & International Development Partners) to strengthen GBV Coordination Platforms and response
- iii. Ownership & Sustainability- Current Administration has demonstrated significant support through Government Counterpart Funding and the need for more domestic resource mobilization drive to address GBV related issues in the state