

MALAWI HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



STATEMENT ON THE COMMEMORATION OF 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

The Malawi Human Rights Commission (the Commission) joins the global community in commemorating the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence that runs from 25th November to 10th December every year. The period is set to raise awareness about gender-based violence, challenge discriminatory attitudes and call for improved laws and services to end violence against women. Activists launched the campaign at the inauguration of the Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991. It is used as an organizing strategy by individuals and organizations around the world to call for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls. This year's theme is "**UNITE! Invest to prevent gender-based violence in Malawi**"

The Commission wishes to congratulate the Malawi government through the Ministry of Gender, Community Development & Social Welfare for successfully submitting and presenting the Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) report to the Committee where issues of GBV were also highlighted. The Commission hopes that the ministry will also be in the forefront in implementing the recommendations for the country.

In line with the theme, the Commission is concerned that Malawi, just like other countries, continues to register gender-based violence cases at an alarming rate. About one in three women have been subjected to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both, at least once in their lives globally. About 78% of the cases received by the Commission's Gender and Women's Rights Directorate are on GBV including sexual harassment. In addition, about 50% of the cases received between January to October 2023 in the same Directorate are also on GBV including sexual harassment. These figures inform us of the extent of the problem of gender-based violence in and beyond Malawi.

While we acknowledge that both men and women experience GBV, studies have shown that most of the victims are women and girls. Men on the other hand also face multifaceted GBV in the community but do not report the incidences. This has also resulted in a high number of suicide cases by men. According to recent police reports, for the past five years suicide cases in Malawi have jumped from 128 in 2018 to 292 in 2022 with the current suicide rate standing at 11.6 per 100,000 people, higher than the global average of 10.5 per 100,000.

The Commission therefore, calls upon:

1. Government through the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare to develop a road map and implement the recommendations from CEDAW
2. Government through the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare to develop affirmative measures towards equal participation in political and public life at all levels as a necessary condition for achieving voice, representation, sustainable development and in turn preventing gender-based violence in political spaces.
3. Government through the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare and the Malawi Police Service to strengthen the early identification and referral of survivors of gender-based violence.
4. Government through the Ministry of Justice to speed up the review of the gender related laws to include the issues of marital rape.
5. Government, the Commission and Civil Society organisations to enhance targeted community outreach and engagement dialogues on solution towards a gender equal Malawi. The Commission, Police, Court and other stakeholders to investigate, prosecute and adequately punish perpetrators of violence. Similarly, offer survivors of violence victims' access to effective remedies, adequate protection and psychosocial support.
6. Mobilization of resources by stakeholders towards provision of systematic capacity building for law enforcement agencies and front-line workers to professionally manage gender-based violence cases.
7. Government through Ministry of Education to eliminate and redress gender-based violence in educational contexts, including the revision of the Education Act of 1962 to expressly prohibit corporal punishment in all learning institutions.
8. Government through Ministry of Finance, development partners, Civil Society Organizations and other stakeholders to strengthen the facilitation of gender responsive budgeting, women's increased access to financial

services, including removal of collateral requirements for loans and credit, support of low-interest loans, financial literacy skills and training.

9. Government to ensure that a gender perspective is integrated into the development and implementation of policies and programs including on disaster preparedness and response and other emergencies.
10. Communities to be agents of change by rejecting and reporting GBV in their homes, communities and workplace. Men, women, boys and girls should be open and report gender-based violence that they have encountered.
11. Parents, guardians and communities to teach children values of gender equality, protect children from exposure to violence and harmful content on the internet and social media, including pornography and sexual solicitation.

Together over the coming 16 Days and beyond, Lets Unite and Invest to prevent gender based violence in Malawi". Together we can!



Chikondi Chijozi

Chairperson

25th November 2023