

GBV in post-election Kenya

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An assessment by three agencies has found that the risk of rape and sexual abuse remains high for thousands of young girls and women displaced by Kenya's post-election crisis.

Detailing the findings of the rapid assessment of gender-based violence (GBV) suffered in camps,¹ the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Christian Children's Fund (CCF) said the women had repeatedly expressed fears of sexual violence because of makeshift sleeping arrangements, where men and women were forced to sleep under one tent or out in the open. They also voiced concerns about lack of regulations

community- and camp-based programmes to prevent and respond to cases of sexual violence.

The agencies said the exact number of cases of sexual assault in IDP camps was difficult to ascertain, not only because the camps lacked standardised reporting mechanisms, but also because of challenges associated with acknowledging victimisation. These include the availability of services, the level of awareness about the value of medical assistance, the degree of trust in police and other security-related issues, as well as the cultural acceptability of disclosing rape.

The preliminary findings of this assessment confirm initial reports from Nairobi-based hospitals that sexual violence has increased during the post-election crisis that began on 30 December 2007. Evidence suggests that perpetrators are exploiting the conflict by committing sexual violence with impunity, and efforts to protect or respond to the needs of

women and girls are remarkably insufficient. The report notes that sexual violence not only occurred as a by-product of the collapse in social order during the post-election period but was also being used as a tool to terrorise individuals and families and precipitate their expulsion from the communities in which they live.

The agencies made several recommendations aimed at protecting young girls and women from GBV. Camp-based and community-based measures would help deliver minimum interventions to prevent and respond to sexual violence during emergency response. They

would also shift humanitarian interventions to national government and non-government structures to facilitate the move from humanitarian to development actions as IDPs return home in some areas and to transitional settlements in others. The report's recommendations include:

- providing support to the relevant government ministries and institutions to integrate prevention of GBV and gender equality concerns into their emergency plans of action and improve their capacity to address the problem of sexual violence
- introducing coordination mechanisms for prevention and response programming at the provincial and district levels
- training camp-based staff in GBV prevention and response standards
- ensuring sufficient police presence in the camps, including female police, and allocation of technical and financial resources to security personnel to address violence against women and girls
- improving multi-sectoral prevention and response to GBV at the community level, through sustained support to sectors such as health, legal/justice, security and psychosocial, with a special focus on gaps such as availability of forensic examiners, legal aid services and judicial response
- conducting widespread community education aimed at prevention and ensuring survivors know how and where to access services.

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1. The full report is online at www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/OHCHRKenya-report.pdf



IRIN/Julius Mwelu

People displaced by post-election violence, Nairobi, Kenya.

in the camps, allowing men from the outside to enter unchecked by camp officials. In Nairobi in particular, women reported fears about sexual victimisation linked to camp design and services, including lighting, water/sanitation facilities, and availability of firewood.

The assessment was conducted in North Rift Valley, South Rift Valley, the Coastal Region, Nairobi and Central Province. It examined the nature and scope of sexual violence during flight, as well as within the IDP camps and alternative settlements. The assessment also evaluated the capacity of both