

## **AGBV CFSC 2023 Narrative Report**

In the year 2023, four activities were done:

1. Workshops against GBV
2. Evaluation
3. One public event during the 16 days campaign of activism against GBV
4. Preparation to start building the women's economic empowerment center

Three workshops were done for 51 mediators, including 30 women and 21 men from September 11 to 16, 2023. And the third one was done on September 27-29, 2023. The venue was one of Nyabiraba commune training rooms.

### **The objectives of the workshops were:**

1. To raise awareness against GBV
2. To equip mediators to understand what is GBV and the content of the Law against GBV here in Burundi
3. To bring together the mediators so that they can learn from each other and to promote networking

As an introduction, two questions were asked

1. Are there GBV in your community?
2. Give examples of GBV

Notice, in the small booklet which shows the role of a mediator (CFPJ, Agatabu k'abahuza bo ku mitumba, Bujumbura, Rusama 2022) p18-p21, the issue of gender-based violence (GBV) is included. However, it is not detailed for mediators to understand what is GBV, its different forms, its causes and its consequences)

### **What is Gender-Based Violence (GBV)**

GBV is any kind of violence done to someone because of his/her gender which causes the person to suffer. And the author takes advantage of the power he/she has over the victim.

### **FORMS OF GBV**

Participants were sent in small groups to discuss about the meaning of GBV, the different forms of GBV, its causes and its consequences



## 1. Sexual Violence

- Having sex without consent
- A teacher who does sex with his student because of grades
- An employer who does sex with his employee because of his power or money
- Rape which is an example of sexual gender-based violence (SGBV). Another example is domestic sexual violence; unwanted pregnancies for young girls who prefer to do abortion. Another example is gutera intobo when the father-in-law asked his daughter-in-law to have sex with her. He had to throw at her a kind of fruit called “intobo” which had a form of a small stone. If he throws at her one intobo and that the daughter doesn’t send back the intobo at her father-in-law, he had to send a second and a third one at her. If she keeps quiet and doesn’t send back or throw back them at her father-in-law, this was a sign that she had accepted to have sex with him. If she sends back the intobo at her father-in-law, this was a sign that she had refused to have sex with him. In that case, she was not given cows from her father-in-law. The daughter-in-law who was often having sex with her father-in-law was given more cows or the most fertile fields. This was economic violence against the mother-in-law because those cows were given to the daughter-in-law without consent. Another term is Gukazanura which is about having the first sexual act with your daughter-in-law because your son failed to do sex with her on the day of marriage. In that way, the bride could be pregnant by his father-in-law. Then, the first born child was the brother of his father. That’s why it was said “imfura na se barangana” meaning that the first born and his father are equal.

## 2. Physical violence

- To be beaten : a woman who is beaten by her husband just very few days after her marriage. This is called “Gushinga amashiga”. It has two main objectives including measuring who is stronger than the other between the husband and the wife; threatening your wife so that she will be always afraid of you. This shows that there was a culture of beating wives

- You are not given food so that you die because of hunger
- To be killed

### 3. Economic Violence

- one example which was given was a husband who sells a family cow without Consent with his wife or selling the family haversst or livestock by force or without consent with his wife
- Then more examples were given, such as hiding your salary; hiding what you have earned for the family; husbands who hide themselves when counting their money

### 4. Psychological violence

- An example is a young girl who is sent away from home because she is pregnant. Some symptoms of a young girl who is pregnant are isolation (She doesn't go where other people are; she hides herself) and weight loss
- Being threaten by your spouse, the local administration even by the police
- Being insulted
- Insults
- Some Burundian Proverbs "Umukobwa nta mwana" meaning that a girl is not a child. This is psychological violencem

## CAUSES OF GBV

- Culture and traditions
- Religious beliefs
- Inequalities
- Prejudices
- War
- Internal displacement because of war
- Less power (People with disabilities, HIV positive people, joblessness)
- Power over (Power that an employer has over his /her employee. One example is a chief who has power over his office secretary)
- Joblessness

*"I have a case of a young girl who has been sent away by one of their neighbors (not her parents) because she was pregnant. What can we do as mediators? **Answer:** you need to do deep investigations to understand why the neighbour is taking decision to send away the pregnant girl. Or if the case is beyond your capacities, refer the case to the local authorities or just network with other mediators in your area. Don't work alone.*

*"We have a case of one woman who was pregnant in the absence of her husband. The neighbors called her husband who was outside the country and told him that his wife was pregnant. The*

*wife was afraid and aborted. As mediators, we were called to send away the wife. And we said that we cannot deal with the case in the absence of her husband. Now we are waiting for the arrival of her husband to deal with the case”*

## **CONSEQUENCES OF GBV**

- Sexual transmitted Diseases
- Unwanted pregnancies: recently, we had reported five unwanted pregnancies in Nyabiraba
- Divorce or separation among married couples
- Street children because parents divorced
- Trauma
- Early marriage particularly for young girls: This happens when there is sexual violence or unwanted pregnancies. Even parents keep quiet; they lie that they have the legal age to be married or even because of dowry (parents who want the dowry as if they will become rich because of the dowry)
- Exposed to more violence if for instance a young girl is sent away from her family because she is pregnant; babies who are rejected or even killed because the young girls doesn't see how to survive together with her baby
- Suicide
- Killings including abortion
- Poverty
- Hatred
- Youth who withdraw themselves from schools
- Revenge

Every time on day two, participants were explained about the law against GBV signed by the President of the Republic of Burundi on September 22, 2016

### **A. What is Gender-Based Violence (GBV)**

GBV is any kind of violence done to someone because of his/her gender which causes the person to suffer. And the author takes advantage of the power he/she has over the victim.

### **B. The second part of the law contains examples of GBV in Burundi**

1. Sexual violence

2. Sexual slavery: Here in Nyabiraba, there has been a woman who was obliging her daughters to be prostitutes in order to survive
3. Any kind of violence done to a woman because she is a woman. *One example here in Nyabiraba is men who are selling family land by force. And if the woman says no, the answer from the husband is "You didn't bring anything from your family. The land is mine and not yours". One example is a woman who came to me because the husband had sold all the family land. When the woman said No, the husband gave her BIF200,000 to keep quiet. I'm now working to find solution for this case.*
4. Genital mutilation. This is not common here in Burundi
5. Domestic Violence: a husband who does sex with his wife without consent. Here in Nyabiraba, most of the time, when a woman cries at night, if you go for help and that the husband says, "ask that crazy woman who calls you", most of the time you will find out that the woman cried because she was being abused sexually
6. Forced marriage: marriage which is done when one of the spouses doesn't agree
7. Kugoka ku kizira: Incest: Doing sexual relationships with your daughter, your niece, your grand-daughter. *"Here in Nyabiraba, there is a young boy who pregnanted the wife of his grand-father. Actually, his grand-father was a widow and married a very young girl. Then his son-in-law started to have sex with the new wife of his grand-father until she became pregnant. Then, they left the grand-pa house and got married as wife and husband. Three children were born from their marriage. Unfortunately, they are no longer together; they are now separated"*
8. Human trafficking: young women who are taken to Arabia to find jobs and who are abused sexually
9. Polygamy: This is confirmed by some Burundian proverbs such as Impfizi ntiyimirwa. This means that a male cow has no limits.
10. Some Burundian customs "Gucurwa" which means obliging a widow to be married to his brother-in-law or father-in law
11. Gukanda umuvyeyi: a culture of having sex with your spouse by force just after she gave birth
12. Guteka ibuye rigasha: A custom when a husband obliges his wife to have sex with a sorcerer so that his witchcraft can be successful. *Even here in Nyabiraba, there was recently a father who obliged his daughter to have sex with a sorcerer. And then the daughter got pregnant. She is now at home with a baby, and the father doesn't care for both the daughter and her baby. Actually, the wife of the man, the daughter and the neighbours, all of them are afraid of the father of the daughter because of his witchcraft; he is suspected to be a Satanist. The daughter came to complain at the local authorities. They called upon her father, but he has refused to come. The main problem is early warning. Actually, the daughter revealed this to the local authorities when her baby was already two years old. She was studying in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Now she is asking if the local authorities can support her to go back to school. So, mediators are*

- asked to raise awareness of all these bad customs which favour GBV for GBV prevention.*
13. Gukazanura: On the day of wedding, if the son fails to have sex with his bride, his father is the one to have sex with his daughter-in-law to open the door for his son. And this daughter-in-law can be pregnant by his father-in-law.
  14. Gutera intobo: Today this has changed; they no longer use intobo, they use cell phones to invite each other for adultery. People (Those who have concubines, sugar daddy or sugar mummy) can even travel separately from Nyabiraba to meet in a hotel in Bujumbura for adultery. That's why we need to raise awareness against all these new strategies which reinforce GBV in our communities.
  15. Adultery
  16. Gukurako urupfasoni: Putting away your clothes in a public place. This means you show your nakedness in the public
  17. Early marriage: This often happens when parents accept the dowry when the child is still very young; it also happens when the young girl gets pregnant and the parents force her to be married to the author of the pregnancy; it also happens for children Heads of households or leaders of homes.
  18. Kwigemura. When the young girl goes to get married with a boy at night without informing her parents or friends
  19. Kugumbahisha/kwaka uwo mwubakanye ubushobozi bwo kurondoka. To force your spouse to do family planning or to stop giving birth to children
  20. Illegal Marriage

### **Testimonies**

Those bad customs are still alive in our community. *One recent example is one father who observed a lot his daughter and started touching her daughter's butt and told her, "I have taken care of you for others"*

*Young children have today expensive cell phones that they use as tools to promote GBV. They even look at pornography which promote sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. That's why we need to raise awareness against all of these so that both the parents and children understand all of these.*

*Our children discipline has become worse because both children and parents go back home very late. Children know that the mother or the father is coming back late at home. Then they also come back home late. This exposes them to sexual abuse. Another main problem is that parents are not raising or educating boys and girls in the same way. Actually, most parents forbid only girls to come back home after 6:00 PM Burundi time. If this is a family rule, it should be applied for both boys and girls. Otherwise, girls will rebel themselves against the family rule.*

## **THE LAW AGAINST GBV**

The law against GBV includes the following:

- It is forbidden to threaten anyone
- Spouses have the same rights on the family wealth, including lands, money, properties
- Parents should make sure they educate both boys and girls in the same way
- Public schools would avail places for sexual violence survivors. If she was raped in Nyabiraba school, she can be sent to a different public school for discrimination prevention
- Public institutions should avail private places where mothers can breastfeed their babies and useful buildings for even people with disabilities
- The Directors of schools should make sure young girls who have babies are not discriminated at school

## **WHAT WE CAN DO TO FACE THE ISSUE OF GBV AS MEDIATORS?**

- Mediators should follow closely all the marriages to prevent illegal marriages because when a husband marries a second wife, and if the second marriage is already celebrated, the case will be brought to court
- Share the knowledge with other mediators who didn't get a chance to attend this workshop
- Early warning early response in case of sexual violence or unwanted pregnancies
- Mediators should work with the local authorities to prevent GBV (to reduce GBV cases). Actually, they receive more unwanted pregnancies cases. The most suspected young boys refuse to be the authors of the pregnancies
- Mediators need more training because every Wednesday they have a list of 10 conflicts to listen to as mediators
- To raise awareness against GBV when meeting with both parents and youth
- Mediators should receive well those who come to them. Actually, if someone is sick, he/she will recover quickly depending on how the medical doctor receives him/her.
- Mediators and the local authorities should do early warning early response in case of GBV. This means that if you don't do anything, you will be judged by the law
- If you do mediation between the author of sexual violence and the victim, the mediator will be punished as the author of sexual violence. If the punishment is 10 years, you will also be condemned for 10 years

## **Stories**

During the training, there was time to share stories to receive advice or inspiration from each other.

*One of our mediators got married. He brought a second wife after the death of his first wife. Then, his nine children, the extended family and the neighbours refused his marriage. They are accusing him because he married a very young and witch woman. They prefer he marries an old woman. They are also very sad because his first marriage (with their mother) was illegal. Now, the husband is afraid and is having sex with his wife outside his home. To prevent hot conflicts or violence, the man should bring his wife in a separate house. The second wife has the right to a house where to live and have sex in a bedroom. The husband can rent a house for her. And the children born from this new marriage will inherit from their father's wealth like those born from the first marriage. Therefore, the mediators at the same hill should deal with this case to protect the structure of the mediators. They should sit together to give him advice that he should first deal with his own family conflict. And advise him to make sure he is a good role model in the community.*

*I have a case of one married couple where a husband said that he will never again do sex with his wife. What can we advise to the woman?*

*The answer from the participants: "This is a proof that the husband has another sexual partner. If the woman wants to marry another husband, she is free to do that"*

*I have a case of one married couple who is in conflict. A husband sold trees from the family land without talking to his wife. When the wife learned that the husband sold the trees, she then sold them for the second time. As for the husband, when he learned that the wife sold them with another client, he called the first client to take the trees from the land very quickly. Now the second client who bought the trees has come to complain to me. So, would you please advise me how I can deal with this case?*

**Answer:** *As mediators, we need to educate married couples to prevent gender-based violence. Indeed, this case is about economic gender-based violence. Most men tell to their wives that they have the right to sell the family land because it is their own because the wife didn't bring any small part of land when she got married. This married couple needs to respect each other; they need to improve communication. From this, it was clear that mediators need networking and collaboration to inspire each other as they receive different and difficult scenarios to deal with*

## **Commitments**

- Raising awareness against GBV particularly forms, causes and consequences of GBV during our meeting with the community on Wednesdays so that people disclose or reveal GBV cases they are facing
- To evaluate if the training against GBV has brought positive change
- To explain the law against GBV because people are not aware of the existence of that law
- Networking as mediators



## Recommendations

- To organize a meeting between mediators and the local authorities (The chiefs of the hills) so that they network
- FWA should give to the mediators a copy of the law against GBV signed on September 22, 2016
- FWA should organize more training for mediators need more skills to do well our big work
- FWA should support mediators to have umbrellas and boots

## Testimony

*We are thankful for this training. Actually, when we were elected, we had a two-day training only. And this was not enough for the big work we are doing in our community. These three days have been very important for our work and we expect positive change as we will play our role with more confidence*







## **Evaluation**

The FWA organized a field visit to evaluate the impact of the training organized for mediators in Nyabiraba. Both the mediators and beneficiaries shared strong testimonies.

### **a. Testimonies from Mediators**



*My Name is Nadine Havyarimana. I'm from Kigina Hill. Before, in my surroundings people thought that when we talk about gender-based violence (GBV) it was only for women and girls, but thanks to the teachings I received I explained to them that when we say GBV that it is for all genders (both male and female). This means that men are also included.*

*For example in our hill there was a man who was abused by his wife; the man had no right to the family's property. Helped by the knowledge received in the training I accompanied the family by explaining this to them what the law says about the family property. The woman ended up understanding that family property must be managed by both the husband and the wife. And then the woman asked for forgiveness from her husband and for the moment their home is good*

*My name is MATESO Husseni. I'm from Musenyi Hill. After the training we have decided to fight against gender-based violence. As for myself, we noticed that there was something to be corrected by starting with ourselves and then raise awareness about the law on GBV in our communities. Among us there were also some men when they need to do sex with their partners do so without consent with their wives and this too is classified as gender-based violence. But for now we testify that we stopped it categorically.*

*My name is NKESHIMANA Ada. I'm from Gasarara Hill. The teachings we have followed have brought us much benefit and knowledge. For example in our custom there is a kind of rape that I had not noticed before as rape and which is committed a lot in our community. It is what we call in Kirundi "gukanda umuvyeyi" (a form of culturally tolerated marital rape which consists of a man forcing his wife to have sex with him after childbirth before she has recovered). After knowing this, I raised awareness among those around me and the majority understood that this is really violence and committed to change.*

*My name is NZOHABONIMANA Alexis. I'm from Gasarara Hill. After receiving the teachings on GBV, I had three meetings with the leaders of our Hill. These meetings aim to explain this violence based on article number 25 to 63 of the decree on gender-based violence in Burundi. In general the teachings that we have followed have a very great advantage in our country*

*My name is Nd. Na. I have 60 years. I'm from Gasarara Hill. My son married a woman who comes from a different province which is very far from ours. After a few years the husband began to traumatize his wife and as her mother-in-law, instead of advising them I insisted a lot by saying that the main cause of all this is that the woman comes from another province, and that she is not worthy of being my daughter-in-law.*

*After studying about GBV I clearly understood that I mistreated my daughter-in-law. After that I approached the family first to ask for forgiveness from the woman and to reconcile the two. Now the family live in peace.*



**b. Testimonies from people who have been helped by trained mediators:**

*My name is NTIRAMPEBA Eugénie. My age is 54 years. I was saved by the mediator from Kizunga hill called NIYIBIZI Godefride. I gave birth to 7 children but among these siblings only 3 children are still alive. Before I had a lot of problems because my mother-in-law blamed me for the death of my children by saying that I am a witch and she convinced my husband, that's why my husband started hitting me, refusing to giving us food, wasted our family wealth and finally he left us to live with his mother.*

*In the month of October 2023 I met the mediator NIYIBIZI Godefride and I told her everything that happened to me. She then decided to look for my husband to reconcile us.*

*First of all ; she explained to my husband what the law says and she showed him the consequences of domestic violence. After two weeks, my husband asked for forgiveness. For the moment he has already returned to the family and understood that I am not a witch. We thank FWA and the mediators for all.*

*My name is NAHIMANA Raphaël aged 68. I have 13 children.. I was saved by the mediator called MBONIMPAYE Nepomsen from colline KARAMA.*

*Before meeting the FWA mediator, I was unhappy because my wife associated with my last 3 children traumatized me in such a way that I had made the decision to leave the house.*

*I lived for 5 years without any rights to family property; my wife forbade me to eat and to do sex with her until I developed signs of depression. In the month of November 2023, I was so depressed that I decided to commit suicide. Fortunately it was in that same month that I met the mediator Nepmsen who heard about our story and made the decision to visit us.*

*He first spoke to my wife and showed her that she is raping her husband. Little by little the woman understood and asked me for forgiveness. Now we testify that our home is at peace thanks to to mediators trained by FWA.*



After the evaluation, some recommendations were:

- Certificates for the 51 trained mediators
- More training for the mediators
- Train more mediators as they are 15 mediators per colline

On December 15, 2023, the FWA organized a public event in Nyabiraba Commune, Bujumbura province to raise awareness against GBV. A peaceful work, orange T-shirts on which were written our national theme against GBV (Edition 2023), drums, traditional dances, a short sketch, testimonies and speeches were used to raise awareness against GBV.

The theme was “All together invest in preventing violence against women and girls”.







### Sketch

In the sketch there was a family who has the head of the family (father) who is irresponsible, who was wasting the family property; he traumatized his children and was also polygamous. After the FWA educators' peers visit (GBV survivors' accompanists), the family and advised the father and found out that he has been abusing the whole family. He finally asked for forgiveness from the whole family.







On the same day Ultrasound test in Nyabiraba Commune for 25 vulnerable women including eight from the Batwa community



## CONCLUSION

The FWA would like to thank the CFSC for the support to decrease the GBV issue in our different communities of Burundi. The success of our work rely on the commitment of the FWA staff to contribute for GBV prevention, the collaboration with the local authorities and the GBV survivors' accompanists based in the different communities. They are the ones who suggested to train the mediators so that they can deal effectively with GBV which is very common in our Burundian culture. That's why we need to equip more mediators and our 25 GBV survivors 'accompanists for the sustainability of this project in Nyabiraba commune.