

Domestic Violence Cases Spike During the Coronavirus Lockdown

By Hellieta Nyamunda

The Covid-19 pandemic is an unprecedented global disaster, and governments across the globe have taken quick and extreme measures including national lockdowns to constrain the movement of individuals outside of their homes, thus diminishing their physical contact with others. Lockdowns and isolations are fundamental to limit the spread of Covid-19. However, they trap the victims of domestic violence with their perpetrators together.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic violence cases have sprout drastically. Many nations have announced an increase in domestic violence cases. According to BBC, the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has called for a domestic violence ceasefire after noting the horrifying global surge of violence in homes. The Covid-19 worldwide pandemic which has caused some financial insecurity, stress and vulnerability in homes, has prompted increased aggression at home with abusers now ready to control a lot of their victim's day to day lives.

Many people in Zimbabwe live on hand to mouth, their lives are sustained by informal trading in the streets and the lockdown has technically locked down their sources of livelihoods. The coronavirus lockdowns have brought poverty in homes as many people can no longer do their day to day activities that brings food on the table. The most vulnerable groups are the women and youth and due to the high unemployment rate in the country, they have resorted to vending. However, poverty is causing domestic violence in homes and this is supported by Perpetual Kant who said, "A hungry man is an angry man". People are not affording some basic commodities in homes; they are failing to afford decent meals and due to that they end up lashing out on each other because of stress.

Also, people are suffering from psychological stress as a result of stressful and straining living conditions they are living under. Due to that, people easily get angry and they tend to resort to violence easily, especially men will use their anger to physically abuse their wives and children. Also due to the time that families spend in this lockdown period, they will discover bad habits of their spouses and this will frustrate them and in turn lead to domestic violence.

According to United Nations, in Zimbabwe, 1 in 3 women aged between 15 to 49 years have experienced physical violence, while about 1 in 5 women have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15, usually by their intimate partners. The national lockdown in Zimbabwe, as in many other countries, means some women and girls will be confined to their homes in the presence of their abusers.

Gender based violence increase continues to be recorded, as an indirect outcome of Covid-19 disease related lockdowns. The extended lockdown keeps on affecting on the women and girl's ability to access basic needs in the home thereby generating an increase of tensions inside the family, which prompts expanded dangers of exposure to intimate partner violence, sexual exploitation and abuse. According to Msasa Project, domestic violence cases have increased with a percentage of over 70% compared to the pre-lockdown trends and about 94 % of the victims are women.

CCMT works against all forms of violence and as such, encourages all would be perpetrators of Gender Based Violence to settle their differences amicably. CCMT also calls on the Government of Zimbabwe to impose deterrent penalties on the perpetrators of Gender Based Violence. CCMT also calls on the Government of Zimbabwe to amplify its campaigns against Gender Based Violence as well as to ensure that all its agencies and institutions mandated to tackle Gender Based Violence such as Gender Commission and the Victim Friendly Units are sufficiently resourced. Government also needs to strengthen its rapid response mechanisms to Gender Based Violence Cases.

