

POLICY BRIEF

Strengthening Accountability to End Gender-Based Violence including Femicide

KAKAMEGA COUNTY



- GBV, including femicide, poses serious risks to basic human rights, including the rights to life, health, bodily integrity, and autonomy which cuts across culture, class, race, gender and geographical boundaries.
- Kakamega County is currently grappling with a surge in Gender-Based Violence, including specific crises such as "sex for grades" in educational institutions and the targeted killing of widows over land disputes. Despite reporting nearly 500 cases of sexual and physical violence in early 2025 alone, the county's response remains crippled by minimal budget allocations, a 60% reduction in available shelters, and significant forensic capacity shortages. To restore public trust and ensure survivor safety, the County Assembly must prioritize establishing ring-fenced GBV budget lines in the CIDP and institutionalizing a multi-sectoral coordination framework that links health, police, and legal services.

County specific gaps

- **Hotspot Identification:** Urban informal settlements and specific markets are high-risk areas where women face "sex for employment" and "sex for grades" exploitation. Shinyalu and Mumias East are explicitly identified as major hotspots for gender-based violence (GBV).
- **Specific Violence Trends:** Cases of women being "undressed" in market centers and widows being killed over land disputes (less than an acre) have been highlighted as localized crises.
- Between January and April 2025 alone, **380** cases of sexual violence and **92** cases of physical violence were reported in the county.
- **High-Risk Periods:** Increased cases of defilement are reported during school openings and closures. Children are more vulnerable during these transitional periods when they are unsupervised or idle
- **Underreporting:** Kakamega is noted for significant underreporting, with at least 6 murder cases between 2020 and 2024 never reported publicly, only surfacing via court records.
- **Lack of awareness on Technological Facilitated GBV:** *"I reported to the police and the university. They said it was simple cyberbullying. They didn't understand that it was some form of gender-based violence. Not even my parents understood this as a form of GBV."*

GBV in Kenya: Key Facts



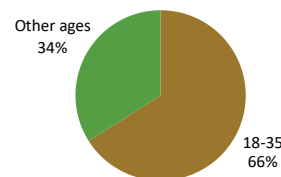
34%

of Women have experienced physical violence

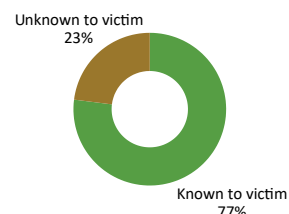
21%

of women who have experienced sexual violence

Perpetrator age distribution in Femicide cases(Kenya 2022-2024)



Relationship of perpetrators to victims



"These repeated incidents of GBV without justice have contributed to distrust within the community here. This mistrust extends to law enforcement and judicial systems. We take matters into our own hands instead.-Survivor"

"There is a concern over the capacity of the legal justice system and the police to handle gender-based violence (GBV) cases fairly and effectively-Survivor"

Key Challenges and Systemic barriers

Weak Enforcement and implementation

- **Laws exist but are not enforced:** Despite progressive legislation (Sexual Offences Act, PADV Act), enforcement is inconsistent, unprofessional, and lacks proper monitoring and evaluation systems.
- **Low Conviction Rates:** Poor investigations, inadequate witness protection, and judicial inefficiencies result in low conviction rates, reinforcing impunity.
- **Corruption and evidence tampering:** Bribery, evidence tampering, and witness intimidation within the police and judicial systems undermine justice.

Fragmented and underfunded support systems

- **Chronic Underfunding:** Less than 1% of global humanitarian aid goes to GBV interventions, and Kenya mirrors this. County budgets for GBV are minimal.
- **Donor Dependency:** Most GBV programs rely on short-term donor funding, leading to instability. The withdrawal of USAID funding led to the closure of approximately 60% of shelters nationally.
- **Fragmented service delivery:** Survivors must navigate multiple agencies (police, hospital, legal aid) separately, with no clear referral pathway, leading to delays and re-traumatization.

Family and community obstruction of justice

- **Informal Settlements (ADR):** Traditional systems prioritize reconciliation and compensation over justice. Survivors are pressured to accept livestock or cash instead of pursuing legal action.
- **Families protect perpetrators:** Families often shield kin who are perpetrators to preserve family reputation, pressuring survivors to withdraw cases or remain silent.
- **Victim Blaming and Stigma:** Survivors are frequently blamed for provoking violence, deterring reporting. Comments like "hiyo ni mambo ya nyumbani" from police discourage survivors.

Inadequate capacity by frontline responders

- **Inadequate trained police & gender desks officers:** Gender desks are often described as "tokenistic," with officers lacking trauma-informed training. High staff transfer rates undermine training investments.
- **Forensic capacity shortage:** Kakamega has very few forensic experts causing delays in evidence processing. Police lack basic forensic tools
- **Limited training for community responders:** Chiefs, elders, and religious leaders often serve as first points of contact but lack formal training on GBV protocols, legal frameworks, or survivor-centered approaches.

Policy Recommendations for Accountability



Establish dedicated and ring-fenced GBV Budget Lines

County Government should Include specific GBV budget lines in CIDPs and Annual Development Plans, with at least 10% of county health and gender budgets ring-fenced to support survivor services and coordination structures.



Collaborate with the Ministry of Lands and the County Land Management Board

to fast-track the protection of land rights for widows and orphans as a direct GBV prevention measure



Petition the Governor to upgrade Kakamega County Referral Hospital by equipping it to serve as a **Forensic Center of Excellence**, ensuring medical evidence is collected and preserved according to international standards, thereby improving the conviction rate.



Institutionalization of County Market Management Committees

Department of Trade, the police and National Government Administration Officers (NGAO) should implement "Safe Market" protocols, including improved lighting and security patrols.



Entrench multi-sectoral engagement and collaboration

between gender and health departments to strengthen Reporting, GBV Data synchronization & Public Accountability Systems for effective monitoring of GBV response efforts.



Adoption of a County GBV guidelines for learning institutions

that mandates anonymous reporting lines within all schools, TVETs and universities in the county for effective mitigation, response and action.



Prohibiting Out-of-Court Settlements for Criminal GBV Cases

The Judiciary to issue a directive that explicitly prohibits the resolution of incest, defilement, and sexual violence cases through traditional dispute resolution mechanisms



Institutionalize Survivor-Centered GBV Response Services

The County Departments of Health and should strengthen survivor support systems by reinforcing the County GBV Technical Working Group (TWG) that includes CSOs to meet monthly and review the "referral pathway" efficiency. This will improve coordination among health, police, legal, and social protection services..