

## BRIEFING NOTE

# INVOLVING BOYS AND MEN TO CHALLENGE VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS AND WOMEN IN NAMIBIA

A perspective from project leaders, project beneficiaries and young people



By Philippe Talavera

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[www.alignplatform.org](http://www.alignplatform.org)

# About Ombetja Yehinga Organisation

The Ombetja Yehinga Organisation (OYO) aims to use the arts – both visual and performing – to create awareness and mitigate the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other social problems, such as gender-based violence, rape, and the abuse of alcohol and other drugs amongst the youth of Namibia. OYO works in schools and out of schools, with both teenagers and young adults.

OYO is a Namibian Welfare Organisation (WO 199) established in December 2002, and officially launched in March 2003. It was registered as a Trust with the High Court of Namibia in 2009.

**Website:** [www.ombetja.org](http://www.ombetja.org)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/OYOtrust](http://www.facebook.com/OYOtrust)

## Acknowledgements

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## Key findings

- Current campaigns to tackle gender-based violence (GBV) in Namibia stereotype the woman as the victim and the man as the aggressor. The country needs to rethink GBV campaigns, de-normalise this trend and give room to other narratives.
- 'What I will see as violence, the other culture will see it as a belief'. Not all cultures understand violence the same way. Current models of training and workshops should not focus only on the legal definition of GBV, but start by identifying what participants consider as violence and what is accepted in their community. This will help the trainer understand where gaps are and how to help communities understand what needs to change.
- Campaigns are slow to adapt to change. In particular, there is not enough recognition of emerging dominant forms of GBV, such as emotional violence and online violence.
- Most campaigns and projects are donor dependent. They are limited in time and have specific targets to reach. As a result, most campaigns reach urban areas, to the detriment of rural areas. To change narratives, especially those narratives that do not start from the same background across all the ethnic groups in Namibia, long-term campaigns are needed that have the affected populations and youth at their centre.
- While many organisations involving boys and men have successful programmes, they are not well known. Organisations working in the field of GBV should improve their public relations and market their services. Even if not all services are available everywhere, it would be of benefit to all to know who is doing what.

# Introduction

Namibia, a country in sub-Saharan Africa, is experiencing huge levels of gender-based violence (GBV). According to the Namibia Violence Against Children and Youth Survey (Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare, 2020) 39.6% of females and 45.0% of males age 18-24 have experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence in childhood and 10.6% of girls are physically forced into their first sexual intercourse. While few data are currently available, the 2020 COVID-19 crisis, which resulted in lockdown and restrictions, led to cases of GBV going unreported and potentially increasing.

The violent crimes committed against women and girls in Namibia pose a serious threat to the basic fabric of Namibian society. This violence is just the tip of the iceberg, and is a grim reflection of the country's social health in terms of the cultural aspects of its patriarchal society and its violent colonial past (de Klerk, 2009).

Namibia was, until 1990, a province of South Africa. As such, it came under the rules of the apartheid regime. Its recent past was fuelled with violence, discrimination and the war for independence, inflicting deep trauma on many of its people, but particularly its adult men. In contrast to South Africa, no reconciliation process has taken place in Namibia, and most people have never had a chance to process their trauma.

Namibia is, therefore, a complex country. It is the second-least populated country in the world, yet home to 12 distinct cultural groups. Most groups such as the Silozi, Mbukushu, Oshiwambo or Ovahimba have a strong patriarchal system in place, where the man is still the head of the household. Some groups such as the Mbukushu, Khoe and Ovahimba still practice child marriage (Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare, 2018). Most groups still practice lobola – the payment the groom must make to the family of the bride to marry her. The lobola is a traditional practice that is neither approved nor condemned by any legislation in Namibia. It is not regulated as it is an agreement between two families.

Evidence suggests that working only with individual women may not be enough to drive fundamental changes in gender relationships in highly patriarchal contexts where the power of young women, in particular, is constrained (Jewkes et al., 2020). The most heavily funded programmes in Namibia, such as the PEPFAR DREAMS project and the Adolescent Girls and Young Women programme of the Global Fund focus on the girl child. Various programmes however, have targeted boys in schools (Ombetja Yehinga Organisation (OYO), Regain Trust, Lifeline/Childline and Project Hope) while others have worked with men (Women Action for Development and Regain Trust). There is little coordination across these programmes and few data are available on the effectiveness of the various approaches in place beyond large-scale international programmes, such as DREAMS.

# Conceptual framework

More studies have focused on domestic violence against women than on domestic violence against men. This emphasis has shaped most campaigns on GBV and/or domestic violence in Namibia.

In addition, the design of GBV programmes has often been driven by political agendas and donor-driven strategies. While most programmes claim to be participatory and have been designed with the intended beneficiaries, how often have youth been given a voice?

This study is based on existing theories of narrative enquiries, starting with a desk review of existing programmes in Namibia, their work and their reach. The research draws on existing theory, narrative accounts and critical reflection to describe, analyse and discuss the activities undertaken with both interview respondents and young people. According to Webster and Mertova (2007, quoted in Sarantou and Talavera, 2022:7), narrative enquiry reflects 'human stories of experience'. In this research, narrative recollection was used as a supplementary method alongside narrative enquiry to generate understanding through 'personal and collective narratives in diverse professional and cultural settings' (Bochner and Ellis, 2003:507). Reflexive research is also employed, which is based on tacit knowledge, contemplative self-examination and learning from experience (Leitch and Day, 2000).

This research presents reflections on how youth in Namibia perceive existing interventions that target boys and men in relation to GBV, exploring what they understand of the situation on the ground and how they would like to influence processes for future interventions. The findings of the research are used to propose a framework for institutions and organisations to target adolescent boys and men as a means to address GBV in Namibia in a meaningful way.

# Methodology

Through an action-oriented, youth involved and participatory research protocol, we aimed to generate new knowledge on how organisations and movements focused on the rights of women and girls engage with boys and young men to tackle norms that contribute to violence against women and girls (VAWG). We also aimed to reflect on the results achieved so far, identify best practices and, together with young people, reflect on new models that could help to make a difference.

Social innovation can be seen as a community-driven process of change emerging from the creative re-combination of existing assets and a bottom-up approach (Manzini, 2015). Participatory cultures of today embrace 'relational processes with peers and family, and the "makers" movement', which are all associated with connectivity (Montuori 2018:11; Luckman, 2015:4).

In youth led-based participation that is well-formulated, participation is steered by a moral commitment to the participating communities. The participants, their communities and audiences often experience personal transformation during these processes (Sarantou et al., 2018). Participants are encouraged to reflect on and share their growth as a result of the experience. The aim is that the knowledge gained by the participants will feed back into their communities to create sustainable social change.

Such surveys are always inherently subjective. Nye (1999:73) warns researchers about the risks of comparing surveys, explaining that 'international or cross-cultural comparisons are also problematic since survey instruments, like the things they attempt to measure, vary widely'. Part of the challenge for our research was, therefore, to find tools adapted to the local environment. This survey consists of a recollection of experiences and a brainstorming of what various institutions, beneficiaries and a group of young people think and feel about the current situation.

The first key research question was: 'how do women and girls' rights organisations/movements engage with boys and young men to tackle norms that contribute to VAWG?'. Two main tools were used to answer this question.

- Interviews with project leaders of women and girls' rights organisations/ movements. The project leaders were selected from key ministries and NGOs working in this area. Additional project leaders were identified during interviews, when a respondent suggested a key stakeholder who was either working alongside their project and/or well-known to it.
- Interviews with key recipients of activities undertaken by women and girl's rights organisations/ movements. Project leaders were asked to identify key recipients who had benefited from their actions.

The second research question was: 'how can young people reflect on the results obtained, identify best practices and reflect on new models to make a difference?'.

A workshop was organised with 30 young people to answer this question. They were selected from three of Namibia's main ethnic groups (Basters, Damara>Nama and Owambo). The workshop was inclusive of people living with disabilities and members of the LGBTQI+ community. The participants themselves were self selected. Participation was voluntary and participants were informed there would be no payment for participation in the workshop (other than reimbursement for the costs of their transport to the workshop venue).

OYO advertised the workshop in youth centres across the country and asked young people who were interested in being part of the project to apply either through the centre or through their youth group leaders. Centres and youth groups then selected participants to attend the workshop and forwarded the names and contacts to OYO. The main criteria for participation were linked to their availability at the time of the workshop, their interest in discussing GBV-related issues, their ability to discuss in English and their understanding of the fact that they would receive no financial payment. A breakdown of the participants, by gender and group is provided in the next section.

The findings are, therefore based on a mix of observations, interviews with project leaders and project beneficiaries (referred to as 'respondents') and creative exercises during a youth workshop. These exercises included the design of an ideal GBV poster, as shown on the cover of this report, and the preparation of a five-minute radio programme on GBV for young people. The purpose was to learn by listening to the various experiences of those three groups of people.

Secondary data were also collected to strengthen or confirm the findings through a review of publications, historical reference material and statistical information.

This research took place at the beginning of the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Namibia, from November 2021 to January 2022<sup>1</sup>. All of the NGOs and ministries interviewed reported that the pandemic had caused major disruptions to their work, with many workshops and training sessions cancelled or postponed. When workshops and training sessions could take place, they often targeted smaller groups than anticipated to ensure social distancing. In most cases, their reports on these interventions will be prepared in 2022, if and when the pandemic levels off. For many organisations, the priority has been to do whatever could be done whenever there was an opportunity to do it, rather than focus on the preparation and distribution of reports.

## About the study participants

Study respondents from four ministries and seven NGOs were identified, based on the existing knowledge of the lead researcher. The lead ministry for GBV-related activities in Namibia is the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare. In an attempt to coordinate activities, the Ministry has created a Permanent Task Force (PTF), which invites inputs from organisations working with children and in the field of GBV on a regular basis. The ministries and NGOs identified represent the best-known players in this field in Namibia.

Contact people were approached and the concept of the research was explained. Two of the ministries and six of the NGOs agreed to be part of the research sample. Four additional NGOs, suggested by some of the respondents, were subsequently added to the list, and two agreed to be interviewed. In addition, OYO's own work on GBV has been included.

The respondents were directors, project leaders or lead implementers of programmes on GBV. Annex 1 summarises the characteristics of the research participants and Annex 2 provides a summary of the work of each ministry or institution in terms of GBV, particularly in terms of how organisations and movements for the rights of women and girls engage with boys and young men to tackle norms that contribute to VAWG. The words used are those of the respondents. Annex 2 does not provide a comprehensive description of each organisation: most have other focus areas that are not included, as the emphasis is solely on their engagement with boys and young men to tackle the norms that contribute to GBV.

<sup>1</sup>The first wave took place from May to July 2020; the second from December 2020 to January 2021; the third - and to date the worst wave - from May to August 2021; and the fourth wave from November 2021 to January 2022.

# Key findings

## Work is underway, but far more needs to be done

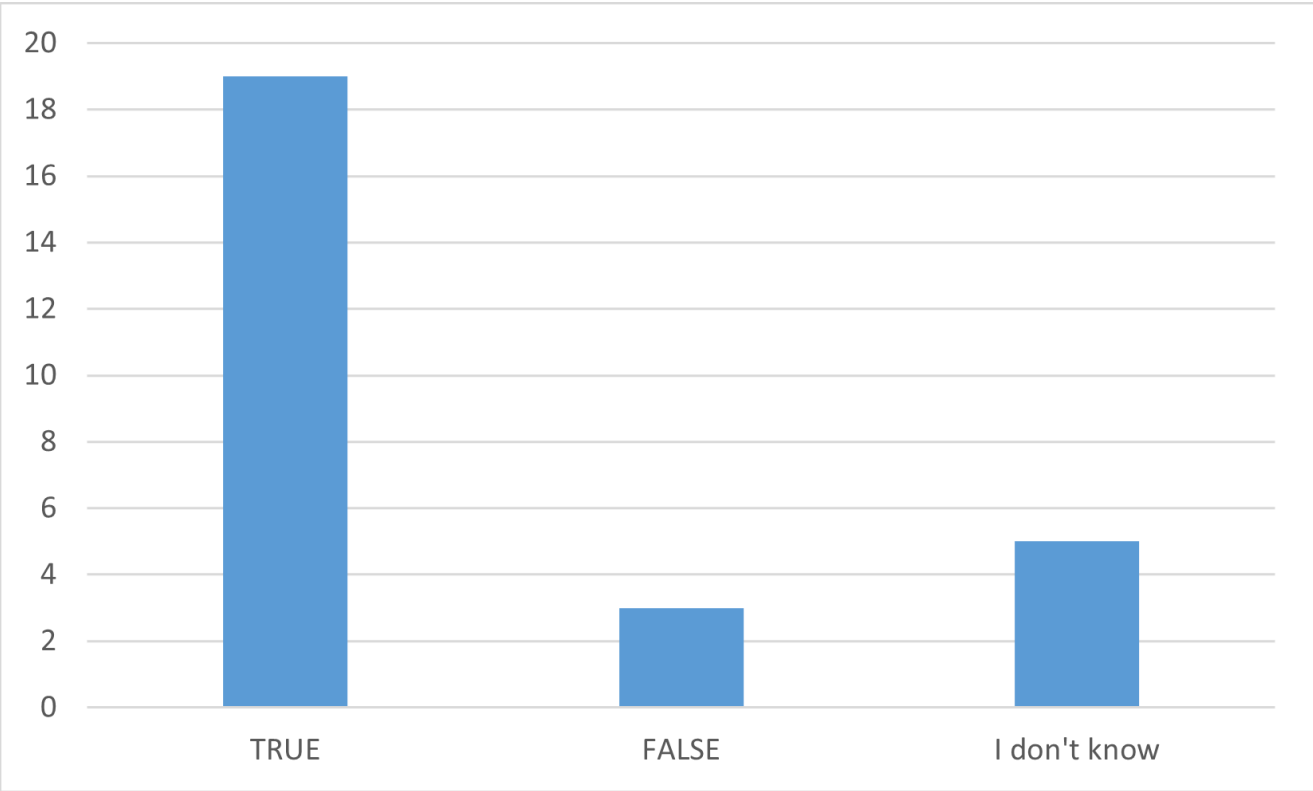
Most work by ministries and NGOs either responds to the problem or tries to educate young people, in particular. While it may seem at first glance that many programmes offer training and/or counselling, all respondents agreed that far more needs to be done. Namibia is a large country, yet it is the second-least populated in the world and its people speak many different languages. It is hard, if not impossible, to reach every corner.

## Violence is increasing and changing

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis (March 2020) eight of the institutions participating in this research have observed an increase in the number of GBV cases they deal with. Only one organisation (ORN Namibia) observed a decrease in the number of cases affected the community it serves, while two organisations didn't observe any difference.

Most participants in the youth workshop also agreed with the statement that there had been more cases of GBV since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Participants' reaction to the statement: there have been more GBV cases since the beginning of COVID-19





According to the youth participants, the increase in the number of cases of GBV is linked to job losses, job insecurity, alcohol abuse, depression and mental health issues. However, some participants felt that GBV had actually decreased during strict restrictions in response to the pandemic, when sales of alcohol were forbidden. There was also a view that it might not have made a big difference, as people's movements were so tightly restricted. As one workshop participant said: 'people spent more time at home, but what if your home is the violent place?'

The institutions participating in this research that had observed an increase in the number of cases have also tended to observe a change in the nature of the cases.

'There is more GBV and it is happening in different form (...)  
People are forced not to speak, because of loss of income (...)  
If one has to open their mouth to report, they know they are  
going to suffer because there is no one to support them, so  
the abusers are taking advantage (...) GBV is now both sides.  
You find that men are being chased out because the woman  
is the breadwinner. The man is no more working and he is  
chased out of the house (...) Even men are affected now and  
they don't know where to go.'  
Project leader, Monica Geingos, Gender-Based Violence Solution

## A violent environment breeds violence

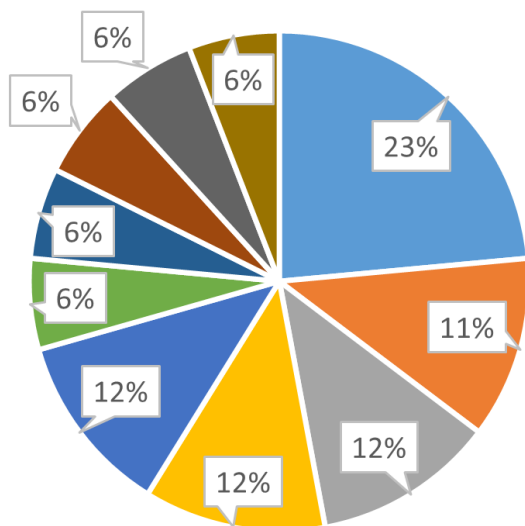
The participants in the youth workshop were asked to reflect on masculinity and the reasons why boys and men in Namibia are violent. The participants proposed 10 different reasons, with the most common being a violent home environment and alcohol and drugs, with lack of sexual pleasure and jealousy being the least common reasons (Figure 2).

The participants proposed that toxic masculinity and behaviour learnt from an early age are the main reasons why men don't know how to deal with their feelings, other than through violence. Mental health was a huge concern. As one participant said:

'I am Oshiwambo. In my tribe if a five-year old boy is beaten  
by another five-year old boy, coming home, crying to tell his  
mommy that some boy beat me up, the mum will be like 'beat  
you up, at your age? Go back and beat him back.'

Figure 2. Why are men violent?

- Violent home environment
- Peer pressure
- Traditional beliefs
- Absent fathers
- Men don't know how to express their feelings
- Anger management issues
- Religion
- Alcohol and drugs
- Lack of sexual pleasure
- Jealousy



The participants said that men are told to be strong, and they don't know how to deal with emotions such as fear, loss, jealousy and grief.

*'Most men give their all to a relationship. It is because of their past. They have lacked something, the love and care we all need, so they expect to get it from the girlfriend. And when the girlfriend doesn't fill this void, when you have invested all your energy, your heart, your love and your money in that relationship and you still feel empty, you turn to get violent.'*  
Workshop participant

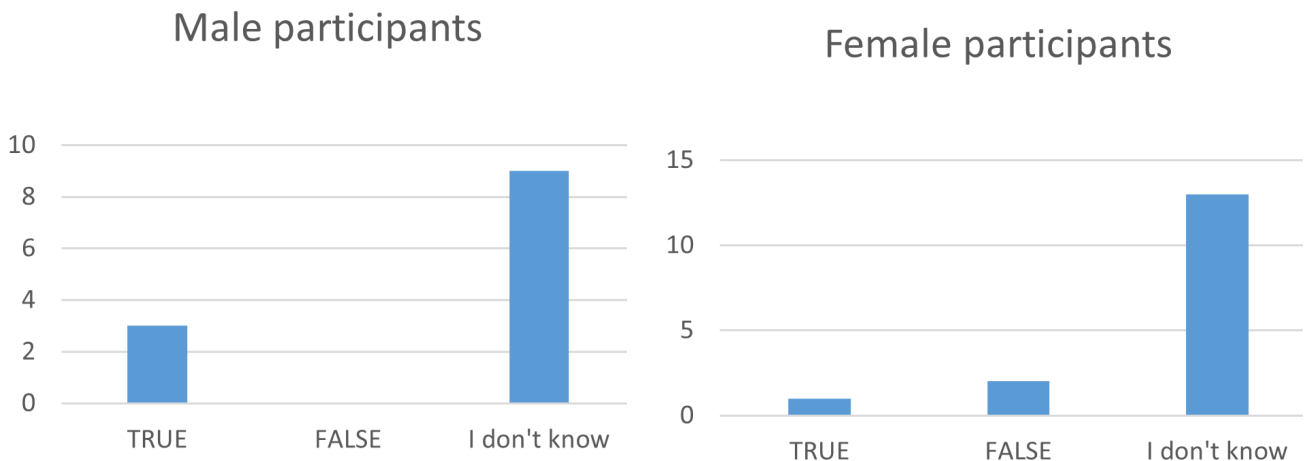
## There are variations in the understanding of gender-based violence

The youth who attended the workshop had a good understanding of what GBV is. They agreed to define it as:

**'violence that is directed to an individual based on his or her biological sex or gender identity' and 'it can include physical, verbal, emotional and psychological abuse and threat.'**

They were then encouraged to reflect on GBV from their own perspective, in order to assess how better solutions could be found, particularly those targeting men and boys. Because the participants came from several cultural groups, they were asked to reflect on whether there were more GBV cases in some cultural groups than others. The majority of participants said they did not know (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Are there more cases of gender-based violence in some cultural groups than others?



They did, however, identify some cultural differences. One participant noted: 'what I will see as violence, the other culture will see it as a belief. For example forced marriage: I see it as violence but some cultures (particularly in the Kavango region) see it as a belief'. Another added that for 'the Oshiwambo people, if they beat each other, then it means they love one another'.

## Boys and men should be included in GBV-related campaigns

Project leaders, programme participants and participants in the youth workshop all agreed that working with girls or women alone will not help to address the current problems in Namibia.

**'You end up educating the girl child to know how to protect herself and understand herself better, but most of the problems you are trying to address with the girl child are connected to the boy child and he doesn't even know about it.'**  
Project leader, Outright Namibia

'(after the training) we know that these young girls will still come back to these young men, so if you are just empowering them, one thing I noticed was that they come back saying 'look, I have these rights and I will be heard, so if you touch me or hurt me I will report you'. But then looking at the influence of GBV as a culture, the young man will be resistant and say 'I will show you that I am the man and you cannot tell me that and you can go and report there if you want to go and report. I can go to jail but I know I will come out.'

Respondent, male, AFRIYAN

Participants in the youth workshop agreed that most GBV-related projects work with girls and women (27 out of 28 participants who answered the question) and neglect men and boys. In all, 18 participants felt that men and boys should be involved if GBV is to be ended. However, some concerns were voiced:

'Men are the ones who are not interested in this type of project, so they are the ones actually neglecting those projects.'

Workshop participant

'Men are the ones who believe those programmes are for women (so how do you want to involve them?).

Workshop participant

'I think the government is the one that is neglecting men, because you only hear about women and child abuse. You never hear of men and child abuse.'

Workshop participant

They agreed with the statement made by two of the project leaders:

'Boys and men feel there is too much in helping girls and women. Especially the last session we did last week (November 2020) in Groot Aub. They were actually complaining that there is a lot in terms of helping women. They are afraid to go to court because (courts) are only supporting women.'

Regain Trust

**‘There is a lack of interest for men to attend those things (...) Also men regard themselves as the breadwinners, so sitting in a workshop for five days means you are losing bread.’**  
**Project leader, Woman Action for Development**

In addition, boys and young men are also survivors of GBV, as confirmed by findings of the Violence Against Children and Youth in Namibia Study (2020). The data cover those aged 18–24 reflecting on their childhoods, or those aged 13–17 reflecting on the previous 12 months.

- 1 in 10 females (11.4%) and 1 in 13 males (7.8%) aged 18–24 reported experiencing emotional violence by a parent, caregiver, or adult relative in childhood.
- 1 in 8 females (12.6%) and 1 in 10 males (9.0%) aged 13–17 had experienced emotional violence by a parent, caregiver, or adult relative in the past year.
- Of those interviewed aged 18–24, 1 in 4 females who had ever had an intimate partner (24.2%) and 1 in 3 males (32.1%) had experienced emotional violence by an intimate partner.
- Among those who ever had an intimate partner, more than 1 in 10 females (12.6%) and males (12.7%) aged 13–17 had experienced emotional violence by an intimate partner in the past 12 months.

While all project leaders, respondents and workshop participants agreed that girls and women account for the majority of GBV survivors, they all mentioned that there are boys and men who are also survivors. Yet cases involving boys and men may well be under-reported or reports may not be given the same weight as cases involving female survivors.

All survivors of violence face physical and emotional trauma. For men, however, this trauma is compounded by the feelings of deep shame at being unable to defend themselves – as culturally expected of a man. This is confirmed by a report from the OYO counsellor:

**‘during the week 31 January to 4 February 2022, I visited twelve schools in the Omusati region. I attended to an average of nine cases per day. Out of those cases, I had four cases of boy victims of GBV. In three cases the aggressor was a woman, in one it was a man. Two cases were of physical abuse while two were of emotional abuse. It is still hard for boys to report cases. Yet our boys are also survivors of GBV.’**

## **There is a lack of awareness about existing efforts to involve boys and men**

Programme participants commented on a lack of awareness about GBV programmes and services in general, and programmes that involve boys and men in particular.

'Most people don't know that they can access facilities and that is actually the point that touched me, because the facilities are available. Namibia is having a lot of things that are available to use but the youth does not know how to access these facilities.'

Respondent, female, AFRIYAN

'I think there are programmes, but the problem is consistency (...). How often are they doing these programmes, that is the challenge. (... Also) they are not reaching the right people especially the young people in rural areas. They are not getting this kind of information because these kind of programmes mostly happen in urban areas.'

Respondent, male, AFRIYAN

Participants in the youth workshop also reflected on the GBV services on offer in Namibia. They all agreed that 'most of the organisations and ministries offer counselling, which is the most important activity to address GBV'. Yet there is a clear lack of knowledge among the youth about organisations involved in GBV activities.

Six of the female participants believed that survivors of violence don't report cases because they don't know where to go. Nine female and ten male felt that people know where to go but still don't report the abuse. They all agreed, however, that they were not aware of most of the services offered.

'There seem to be a lot of organisations, but the people on the ground or in the community, they don't have access to this information. Personally I didn't know most of those organisations.'

Workshop respondent

'Most of us didn't know some of these organisations existed.'

Workshop respondent

Most participants were of the opinion that 'most organisations are not exposing themselves, so how will the people know about them?'. It was felt that most organisations have niches, either in terms of geographical coverage (reaching only specific regions) or target audiences (reaching only specific populations). However, even essential services may not be known to people. The youth participants recommended that organisations put more effort into advertising their services and getting themselves known to the wider public. Advertising should use both traditional media, such as TV and radio, and new media, such as social media.

Research participants also noted a general lack of data. It is not easy to find data that are disaggregated and up-to-date in Namibia, and even more difficult to find evaluations of the different projects and interventions.

## Radical action is needed to promote the greater involvement of men in campaigns

Project leaders had made two recommendations on how to involve men more closely in GBV-related campaigns.

**'You will most probably have more boys and young men participating in sessions online than in person, simply because you have some kind of secrecy and your identity is protected somehow if you do it online instead of when you sit face to face with the person.'**

Lifeline/childline

**'We need to engage men inside their comfort zone and not take them out of their settings because (we tried) and it doesn't seem to be working.'**

Project leader, AFRIYAN

The youth attending the workshop felt those actions would not be enough and that more radical action was needed. Online sessions, for example, can only reach people who have internet access, and that does not apply for most people in Namibia. It is also necessary to find safe places where men feel comfortable participating. While bars may be places where men feel comfortable, it may not be feasible to design all interventions to take place in bars – as training sessions are likely to be disrupted both by the constant flow of customers coming in and out and by drunk people who may, in some cases, be violent themselves. So other types of places must be found.

## Campaigns on gender-based violence need to change

The main recommendation emerging from the research was to change the face of GBV on campaigns, posters and billboards. Participants in the youth workshop recommended that:

**'The narrative of GBV campaigns must be changed. Usually when you see a GBV poster it is the woman getting beaten or sexually abused. We must change the narrative.'**

Participants felt that campaigns to date have contributed to normalising GBV. GBV campaigns in Namibia still present girls and women solely as the survivors and boys and men solely as the

perpetrators. This normalises women as victims and even victimises them still further. It also normalises men as being the abusers and might even motivate them: 'if other men do it, then I can do it too.'

A new narrative need not undermine the fact that most victims and survivors are indeed women, but it needs to present a narrative that offers room for discussion, for inclusivity, that de-normalises GBV and that engages communities in a different way. Men need to feel part of the campaign, not from the perspective of an abuser but from the perspective of an ally, and maybe at times a victim or survivor. Such campaigns need to address the behaviour linked to toxic masculinity and create room for change.

Workshop participants did not have enough time to reflect on the precise content of such a campaign. But they suggested looking at masculinity in a different manner, because reinforcing the stereotype of the man as the aggressor does not help.

## Specific changes could make a difference

Participants were asked identify gaps and issues that are not currently covered by the organisations that address GBV, particularly in relation to the involvement of men and boys. The following issues were identified.

- 'There should be safe spaces created for men who are perpetrators. As it stands, the system only punishes those men, usually when it is too late and a crime has been committed. There should be safe spaces to help those men before they perpetrate the crime or, if they have perpetrated it, to learn from it. Simply going to jail does not seem to help, and may not be the efficient way to deal with the issue as a nation.'
- While it is important to have sessions/ training/workshops with girls on the one hand and with boys on the other, it is also important to promote activities and events with both genders. Keeping genders separate allows for 'comfortability, confidence, less judgement' but 'when both genders are present, different points of view will be shared and we can learn from each other.' It is also important to bridge the gap between generations. 'The older generation often feels superior and entitled, demanding respect from the younger generation but not understanding the younger generation. Inter-generational community dialogues are not used enough and should be promoted.'
- Activities on GBV often target secondary schools. However they should also target primary schools, 'to lay the ground for future work.'
- 'Entrepreneurship workshops should be organised. GBV is linked to poverty and one cannot tackle the one issue without addressing the other.'

## There are stories of success

The female respondent from Regain Trust is a Community Ambassador who recruits and trains groups of 50 students (called learners in Namibia) on preventing and responding to GBV, using the training approaches she has learnt from Regain Trust. During her interactions with students she had found it difficult to identify the survivors. However, she feels that her work is successful as children come back to her after the training to ask, for example, 'how do I help a friend who is this and this?', etc. People also recognise her in the street and come to tell her what they have learnt from her.



'the victims are always the ones trying to make other people's days better, but then you don't realise that under that smile is always a mask. It is a mask to what they are feeling inside and we don't realise that this person has been going through GBV (...) You never know a person until you walk in their shoes. Being in Regain trust, the whole look on GBV motivated me.'

Respondent, female, Regain Trust

The three males from Regain Trust had been programme participants. They had learnt about what GBV is, where to go and how to overcome challenges.

'I was someone who liked showing off (...) but when I joined the group I learned that we were all the same. Treat others the way you treat yourself, so no need to be above others. I started to respect people, sharing my feelings or what I feel, what I am going through, and I even started to encourage my brothers who are staying in the same house to also join the group.'

Respondent, male, Regain Trust

'The challenges are growing up in a society like us (...). At the end of the day, ladies felt less valued than men. What I am trying to say is that at the end of the day they had their household duties to do, so they couldn't leave the house (to attend training and workshops). That was one of the problems holding them back.'

Respondent, male, Regain Trust

The two respondents from Namibian Men for Gender Justice have gone through the personal training journey. They both stated that the most interesting aspect of the methodology was the personal growth it had afforded them. Even though the process is long (it took two years for one of them and three for the other), they felt it was worth it.

'The most interesting part to me was the personal growth. This programme gave me an opportunity to do a lot of introspection about myself. I had a lot of issues that I dealt with. I had problems with my life. To get a platform to reflect and also to work through this issue and to overcome them made me a more positive person.'

Respondent, male, Namibia Men for Gender Justice

Respondents from AFRIYAN benefited from trainings (one respondent) and workshops (two respondents). The respondent from Women Action for Development also attended a workshop. They all acknowledged the main benefit was the knowledge they gained and a better understanding of what GBV is.

**'When asked why they have done these acts of GBV, many of them, if you listen very well, were somehow linked to past trauma or insecurities. So I think that was really something that caught my eye and I felt like many of these things could have been avoided if certain interventions could have been put in place before the violence happened.'**

**Respondent, male, AFRIYAN**

For them, taking part in the trainings and workshops was an eye-opener. The main result was that they were more conscious of the issue and had a better understanding about why it happens.

Six of the respondents felt activities on GBV should include both men and women (boys and girls) while four respondents thought they should be separated, with activities only for girls and activities only for boys). One respondent was unsure.

**'We tend to look at men and adolescents boys as the main perpetrators of GBV, but in most cases they are also victims. It's just that men do not really speak about it.'**

**Respondent, male, Namibia Men for Gender Justice**

**'We must have some time together because what the lady knows about men is not enough, and what a man knows about ladies is not enough. (...) Also we misunderstood gender equality. Now the ladies are misusing it. I need the government to bring some words down, so that our ladies can go halfway too to understand the man.'**

**Respondent, male, Women Action for Development**

For most respondents the main benefit of attending the programme sessions was a gain in knowledge. Most had a clearer understanding of what GBV is (including the fact it is not only physical or sexual violence but could also be psychological abuse). However, it is hard to assess if this resulted in a change of attitude or behaviour. In the case of both the respondents from Regain Trust and Namibia Men for Gender Justice, it is clear the project had an impact on the attitude and behaviour of the participants. In the other cases, it is much more difficult to assess what that change might have been.

## Cross-cutting findings

### The critical importance of context and culture

Project leaders, programme participants and workshop participants agreed that girls and boys learn what is expected from them from a very young age, and they learn this from their parents. This is, in turn, influenced by the community their parents are from, by their own knowledge of masculinity and femininity, and by what they have been told is acceptable according to local traditions and customs.

**'When a girl comes crying, the parents defend that girl's honour and that girl's dignity but not the boy. The boy must fight his own battles.'**

**Project leader, Namibia, Men for Gender Justice**

To tackle GBV in Namibia therefore, it is of paramount importance to understand what are toxic behaviours, where they come from and how current campaigns reinforce some of the toxic traits.

**'We are actually taught (as men) to be toxic. Remember that what you learn as a child leaves a mark on your brain and you grow up believing in it. When you are grown up (... sometimes) you know (you are) not in the mood for sex but my wife or my girlfriend starts making advances for sex, so I won't say no. My mind will tell me: if you don't do it, you are a coward, if you don't do it, you are less than a man, if you don't do it, she will complain about it to people. So I do it, but my heart is saying no. I think this is a form of rape too but that is an aspect we don't talk about.'**

**Project leader, Women action for development**

One other example could be the following tradition among the Ovahimba group. In this culture, shortly after a girl had menstruated for the first time, an uncle or a cousin is asked to have sex with her as a rite of passage. During a survey organised by the Ombetja Yehinga Organisation in October 2019 (Talavera, 2020) with 55 teenage girls of Ovahimba descent, 12% had experienced sex with their uncle, 18% had experienced sex with their cousin and 33% knew of a girl in their community to whom this had happened. In this case, the uncle or cousin doesn't consider himself as the perpetrator of a rape or violence, but as a tool to carry on a tradition.

Similarly, as mentioned by workshop participants, some cultures find child marriage acceptable, or beating one's wife as a normal way to show love. Each of Namibia's 12 cultural groups and many sub-groups has its own set of beliefs and traditions. While there is comprehensive legislation in place in Namibia (including the Combating of Rape Act of 2000, the Combating of Domestic Violence Act of 2003, and the Child Care and Protection Act of 2015), customary practices are also protected under the Traditional Authorities Act of 2000, which stipulates that 'customary laws in place at the time of independence in 1990 are considered legitimate'.

As a result, adopting a blanket definition of GBV without acknowledging the differences between groups might result in failed campaigns. What one person (often a law-maker) sees as violence, another person can see as belief. The real challenge is, therefore, to drive changes from within the community, to ensure the evolution of what is currently perceived as acceptable. While many of the programmes do work with communities, it seems that most start with the legal approach – defining violence as the legal Acts define it – instead of starting from the local understanding of violence.

A more successful strategy may be to start with how a community defines violence and move alongside the community towards what the legislation says. In this way, community members can come to understand why, in some cases, their beliefs are in conflict with the law, even if what they do is culturally acceptable.

Without a deeper knowledge of a community's understanding of what constitutes violence so that people are able to identify when they are victims of violence, it is likely that many cases are not reported. It is even possible that some people who would be considered to be in an abusive situation from a legal point of view do not perceive themselves to be in that situation at all if they have grown up believing that such abuse is the norm, and is accepted by the community. In those cases, they may not have the necessary information or support to question it. This may be particularly important when it comes to violence against children. A culture of silence has developed, in line with the belief in many cultures that 'children should be seen, not heard'. This culture traps the person who is in an abusive situation and may force them to stay quiet.

'When visiting schools in the Omusati region in February 2022, we noticed again how quiet learners were and how difficult it was to trigger a discussion with them. When addressing it with a representative of the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, she pointed out a girl in the school – probably 15 years old. Her grandmother sent her to sleep with a man who was working in her field. Everybody knew it. The community knew it. The school knew it. She knew about it. Yet nobody had done anything to help the girl because "it happened some time ago".'

Project leader, Ombetja Yehinga Organisation

'In the northern parts, most of us are raised not to talk back to parents (...) so most of the time you keep quiet because you have to respect them (...). We are basically mute'

Workshop participant

It is essential, therefore, for organisations to understand this reality and start with these perceptions as the basis from which to then work to affect change in a more effective way. This is echoed in Jewkes et al. (2007:7): 'In my culture children have no status and if you are a girl child you have even less status. I must always remember that and wait until an adult addresses me before I dare to speak. If it is a man, I must ask to address him, keep my eyes cast down and bow if he gives me something'.

This illustrates one of the leading problems in addressing GBV. It has been so normalised in some communities that it is not even perceived as GBV. Similarly, as noted in Wise (2007:330): 'I never thought about what it means to be a man because I am a man... we're used to doing, not thinking about doing'.

## **An emphasis on response, rather than prevention**

All research participants suggested that the problem may lie with the fact that most organisations respond to the problem, rather than prevent it. Most interventions happen after the crime has been committed.

**'Many organisations deal only when gender-based violence takes place. Then you have some sort of intervention. You only react to the events. You don't necessarily come on the preventive side.'**

**Project leader, Men for Gender Justice**

Interventions after the violence has happened contribute to the reinforcement of stereotypes. Newspapers report on yet another girl or woman who has been abused by yet another boy or man. The lack of any alternative discourse traps the country in a state of status quo, and reading or hearing about such cases becomes the norm.

The interviews conducted for this research confirm that all of the organisations surveyed focus on responding to the problem (supporting the survivors of GBV) or educating people on what the law says. While organisations are conscious that different ethnic groups have different beliefs and practices, including different harmful practices, it doesn't seem that any look differently at the roots of the problem. For example, by labelling a practice as 'harmful' the trainer introduces a bias. It could be more useful to start by understanding how any given practice fits within the culture, maybe even why it started or where it come from and then, step-by-step, help communities understand that it is harmful and in conflict with Namibia's legislation.

Most people, including Namibia's youth, have accepted that violence is common in their country. Most people have accepted that girls and women are victims. Most people have accepted that the country's correctional facilities are filled mostly with men. While the number of inmates changes daily, there were 4,014 on 7 February 2022, of whom 3,986 were male and just 120 were female (Data shared by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security). The resulting ratio of 99% male for 1% female is more or less constant.

## **The problem with targets**

While project leaders all agree that addressing GBV-related issues in Namibia demands a long-term commitment, NGO leaders outlined that this might be hampered by the reliance of most local NGOs on donor support, with donors dictating the agenda. Current agendas are target-oriented and those targets might work against the change that is needed. In particular, rural communities that are more traditional and more likely to accept some forms of violence as being culturally acceptable tend to be excluded from interventions.

‘(The problem with most campaigns is that they) take place in the capital of the region. The people who suffer the most (in rural areas) don’t have access to information. We just go and reinforce information with those people who already have it.’  
Project leader, AFRIYAN

‘Targets are the problem. Most of our programmes are centred around numbered targets. Those targets are put in numbers (...). You want to meet targets so you only (work) in urban areas (where you have more people and therefore can reach your targets more easily)(...). The whole issue of targets creates problems.’  
Project leader, Outright Namibia

## A failure to keep up with new forms of violence

The failure of current campaigns to change their narrative at the pace needed in a rapidly changing world was reported by one project leader from OYO and by workshop participants. Most current campaigns are stuck in the past, frozen in time, and do not react to modern forms of violence. While young people are still the survivors of rape and physical violence, they are also exposed to online violence and other forms of violence that current projects do not address.

‘The old approach, which is the documented approach, will not work anymore because people are bringing new ways to commit violence. I am thinking in particular of online violence. If you break up with the boy or the girl you threaten him or her to put naked videos online. You victimise the other person. Online abuse is becoming more and more.’

Project leader, Monica Geingos, Gender-Based Violence Solution

Online abuse, in particular, does not victimise only women and girls. It is important, therefore, to change the face of campaigns. Data from the Violence against Children and Youth in Namibia study (2020) suggests that the prevalence of online violence is still low, but that it is present. In all, 5.9% of girls aged 13-17 have experienced unwanted online sexual experiences, rising to 7.3% of boys in that age group.

Given the ease of access to technology, it is likely that this type of violence will increase as more and more children gain access to online platforms. It is even possible that the 2020 data based on the 2019 survey are already outdated, and that today’s prevalence is higher. This is one of the reasons why, according to the youth, campaigns need to be more proactive and respond more quickly to the changing realities on the ground.

# Discussion, conclusions and recommendations

## Discussion: questions to consider when designing interventions to address gender-based violence

Do the basic concepts resonate with people's lived experience?

As the research has shown, some aggressors may not be aware of the harm they cause, and some survivors may not be aware they are experiencing GBV. The first question is, therefore, does the legal definition of GBV and the human rights perspective have any resonance when it comes to cultural beliefs and behaviour that shape what is accepted – and at times even encouraged – by communities? Second, given that negative gender norms perpetuate the acceptance of some forms of violence against children and women that needs to be changed, how can these beliefs be reshaped so that both men and women understand the harm caused by the violence and the benefits of change?

Even basic concepts may not resonate with communities. When looking at sexuality, for example: 'Most debates about method in the history of sexuality are about the extent to which language and linguistic categories are capable of shaping sexual behaviour and identity (...) Can the experience of the identity of homosexuality exist, for instance, if the concept "homosexuality" has not yet appeared or the word is not yet coined' (Nye, 1999: 255).

Prior to 1868 there were neither heterosexual nor homosexuals, as the words had not been coined. Sexual behaviours were identified and catalogued and often times forbidden, but the emphasis was on the act, not the agent (Ambrosino, 2017)

Similarly if an act is considered normal or even desirable in a community (for example child marriage), how can the community interpret it as GBV? If 'you prove your love by beating your woman', when is the beating an act of love and when does it become an abuse? This reinforces the need to change norms and attitudes from a start point of understanding of and respect for different perspectives. Therefore, another key question is how interventions with both men and women lead to an understanding that violence is not an expression of love as it inflicts harm, and how could those interventions help both parties to develop new ways to express love?

**How can embedded beliefs be deconstructed?**

Violence is a societal construct. GBV in Namibia, as elsewhere, is intertwined with cultural beliefs, and these beliefs must often be deconstructed before society can be reshaped. The challenge is to impose one blanket definition of GBV to enable the implementation of legislation, while addressing the varied understanding of GBV across many different cultural groups. The legislation on GBV in Namibia is (as all legislation tends to be) very rigid and its function depends on a clear definition of GBV. This is defined as any act of violence against someone of the opposite gender (in Namibia the Combating of Domestic Violence Act 4 of 2003 as amended by Child Care and Protection Act 3 of 2015 clearly specifies that it only applies to heterosexual couples). However, while the legislation and its definition of GBV apply to everyone, the start-point for campaigns must be the existing understanding of the community.



Each of us is, ultimately, responsible for our own actions. As one workshop participant noted:

**‘yes, the parents do play a role but they are not totally to blame for how the child turns out. The environment influences the child (...) but at the end of the day, you are your own person’.**

There is no doubt that the environment we grow up in will shape our attitudes and beliefs.

While the term ‘gender-based violence’ is well known to many, it is possible that it is not, in fact, understood by all. For example, a boy who has always been told it is acceptable to marry a child and that he should beat his wife to show her his love will not understand why, under the law, he is suddenly seen as an abuser. If a given culture does not perceive a certain act as being violence, it will be difficult for the individual to understand that they are committing violence when they perpetrate it, or, equally, that they are victims or survivors when they experience it. It is entirely likely, therefore, that some perpetrators do not understand their actions as being violent and their reaction will be one of disbelief when caught and punished under the law.

### What does an effective campaign look like?

GBV is complex, and campaigns must acknowledge that complexity if they are to make a difference. As reinforced by the findings of this research, they need to find a balance between accuracy and tackling stereotypes.

Portraying the survivor and/or the aggressor without being stereotypical is a challenge, as campaigns need a human face. Individuals relate to other individuals, not abstract concepts, and faceless campaigns would not resonate with the public.

Current campaign posters in Namibia, for example, show the faces of survivors who are always female. While some male champions have been included in posters, no men are shown as survivors. Redefining the face of Namibian’s campaigns, particularly to encourage the involvement of boys and men in the fight against GBV, should be a priority.

### How can the impact of interventions be sustained in the long-term?

If current agendas are target-oriented and most projects short-term, how is it possible to build a commitment to effective and sustainable change? Shifting the status quo to create a new narrative cannot be a short-term commitment.

**‘You cannot see success the moment you are engaging with community members. Success will come at a later stage’**  
**Project leader, Regain Trust**

One way to address this challenge is to engage youth in campaigns in a meaningful way. This research has shown that young people are the best positioned to understand what they are going through. At the same time, their work to address GBV in the community would see them increase their perceived value as individuals. Instead of being the next ‘aggressors in waiting’, they would become the current agents of change.



'We have to work with those that have completed school and are not working, because these are the problematic people who are causing violence. Number one, it's because they are not doing anything at home, they are not studying, they are not working, they are jobless and their minds drives them to go and start drinking and whatsoever. At the end of the day, we have high rate crimes in the region and country'.

Respondent, male, AFRIYAN and Namibian Men for Gender Justice

'Get NGOs to work with the young people. They can involve the youth for the day. It will help the youth (if they pay them a stipend) and young people will have a positive mindset, seeing that they can actually do something productive'

Workshop participants

This would help to address the problem of the evolution and changing narrative of GBV in Namibia. This is no longer just sexual or physical violence: emotional and online violence are on the increase. Girls and women are no longer the only victims: boys and men are starting to speak out about their own experiences of violence.

Most campaigns take too long to address new trends and are, therefore, perceived by young people as outdated and irrelevant. As a result, they don't have the impact they should have. Young people don't feel the representation given by campaigns is accurate. They fear campaigns reinforce stereotypes without addressing the real question of 'what is violence'. They also don't feel campaigns address emotional and online violence clearly enough.

#### How do we ramp up the research to inform policy and practice?

In their article on male violence in teenage sexual relationships in South Africa, Katharine Wood and Rachel Jewkes argue that there should be a stronger focus on changing the attitudes of men, and that gender violence is not only 'women's issues' (quoted in Sweetman, 1997). There has been a recent and significant increase in attention to programming with boys and men, yet 'violence prevention is still an area in which there are many questions and there is a need for consolidating evidence for advocacy and practice purposes' (Ricardo et al., 2011:11).

# Conclusions

Namibia, in common with many other countries, finds itself at a critical crossroads. It is dealing with harmful cultural practices – practices that are ancient yet still implemented, such as child marriage. The man is still portrayed as the head of the household and children are reduced to silent beings. The rise of modern technologies and an outdated understanding of what GBV is – stereotyping girls and women as victims and boys and men as aggressors – is opening doors to new forms of abuse that most people do not yet know how to identify, let alone address.

Campaigns must, therefore, be multi-faceted. They must tackle the immediate problem, providing urgent access to services for survivors. They must intervene with perpetrators to prevent the violence happening again. They must understand the roots of the problem (particularly when dealing with traditional communities) and look ahead to be ready for changes, particularly the growth of online violence. And they must understand that young people are influenced by both traditions and modernity and de-normalise violence. This task may seem daunting, and is not a task that NGOs or ministries can tackle on their own. It is a task that must involve all levels of society, with young people at its centre.

**‘Young people are the answer to a problem we may not see anymore. We have worked with GBV for so long. Do we still have the right perspective to design campaigns? Maybe it is time we accept that approaches such as training, workshops, posters and billboards are outdated. Let us commission the youth to come up with innovative designs. What if the next campaign is actually a Tik Tok one? We need to give young people a chance to break the cycle.’**

**Project leader, Ombetja Yehinga Organisation**

# Recommendations

## Rethink the 'face' of GBV campaigns

The main recommendation to all stakeholders is to rethink the imagery around GBV campaigns. A proper assessment is needed to create campaigns that reach a wider audience, using imagery that reflects GBV but does not victimise girls or normalise men as abusers. A committee, involving young people, should be established to design new campaign models. Those campaigns should also adapt to evolving forms of abuse, including online violence, which needs to be better understood in the Namibian context.

## Think carefully about definitions

The definition of GBV needs to be put in perspective when undertaking activities with traditional communities. As mentioned during this research: 'what I will see as violence, the other culture will see it as a belief.' Campaigns that merely condemn violence without understanding where the construct of violence comes from are bound to fail. Before condemning violence, it is important to reflect on cultural factors. This reflection would help to de-normalise violent acts that are currently accepted by communities. It would also, in turn, help to ensure that, in the long run, any act of violence perpetrated against another person is seen as wrong.

## Adopt a new starting point for training and workshops

Training and workshops should not assume everybody understands violence in the same way. While Namibian law has a clear definition of violence, the term itself does not mean the same thing to everybody. The ultimate aim of any training or workshop should be to align the legal definition with the local understanding, so it should first understand what participants view as violence, what they see as traditionally acceptable, and only then compare that with the legal definition.

Changing the starting point in this way would help the trainer to assess how to transform the understanding of violence at individual level to have more of an impact. After all, there is no need to train participants on what they already know. Ultimately, training would not focus on the difference between cultural practices ('what we do') and the law ('what society says we should do') but rather on understanding why certain cultural practices may cause harm and infringe rights and, therefore, why the law is different (and hopefully better).

## Work with youth

As noted, Namibia's youth should be at the heart of efforts to address GBV. Their engagement could be fostered by:

- creating safe spaces where they can reflect on toxic behaviour
- giving them a platform to identify new norms, and
- training them to reach people in communities where NGOs have no access.

In the short-term, young people could:

- identify people in need and refer them to the proper services
- identify behaviours in that specific community that contribute to GBV
- help to assess how to change the narrative in that specific area.

An ideal scenario would be to train young people on methodologies such as the one developed by Namibia Men for Gender Justice (personal growth) and the Alternative to Violence Project. The young people trained would then be assigned a mentor and start to work with youth groups in their communities. They would create safe spaces for the groups to meet and discuss. They could collaborate with organisations such as OYO to develop activities with young people that are fun, and link with services that offer counseling (both face-to-face if available in their communities or online, in particular linking with Lifeline/childline).

This investment in young people may carry some costs in the beginning, to ensure they have the proper tools to become agents of change in their communities. Ultimately, however, it would have a snowball effect and help to reach many more people, and in many more remote areas.

## Take a long-term view

A successful campaign to address GBV in Namibia would have to be thought of as a long-term project. GBV will not be addressed by one-off campaigns, conflicting messages, messages that may not be clear to communities or messages that may conflict with their personal beliefs. One previous example of success in Namibia can be seen in a long-term campaign on HIV called 'Take Control', from 2005 to 2009. This campaign was intensive, multi-faceted, and used various tools ranging from door-to-door interventions to large-scale media displays. The well-coordinated campaign could serve as a model for forthcoming GBV interventions.

Campaigns, training and workshops should look beyond urban areas, where it is easier to reach targets, and prioritise rural communities that are more likely to hold traditional views and, therefore, more likely to see some forms of violence as acceptable, such as child marriage.

## Position boys and men as allies in this cause

Interventions to address GBV need to involve boys and men more systematically. They need to be approached not as perpetrators, but as allies in this cause. Just as heterosexual people can be allies for the LGBTQI+ movement, men could become allies in the fight against GBV and help to change the narrative.

## Improve public relations and the marketing of initiatives

This study proved that counselling remains an important tool in the response to GBV. Many organisations offer counselling and this should continue. However, while many organisations involving boys and men have successful programmes, they are not well-known. Organisations currently working in the field of GBV should improve their public relations and market their services more effectively. Even if not all services are available everywhere, it would be useful for everyone to know who is doing what.

While marketing is traditionally perceived as a tool used by the private sector, NGOs should start to approach this in a more strategic way. Marketing gives visibility and this, in turn, make the intervention more efficient. It can also encourage some organisations to replicate best practices, once those are identified.

## **Build a shared platform**

It is important for all the projects working with men and boys to have one platform where they can share their data, their experience and, when possible, plan together. The Men Engage Network could provide a great platform to address these issues.

## **In summary**

This research suggests that a new framework is needed for institutions and organisations, aiming to target adolescent boys and men to address GBV in a meaningful way in Namibia. This new framework should include the following.

- A transformation of current models of training and workshops to look beyond the legal definition of GBV, starting by identifying what participants see as violence and what is accepted in their community. Trainings and workshops should not be just educational, but rather transformative to support participants to adopt the legal definition as their acceptable standard.
- A rethinking of GBV campaigns to break down the stereotype of the woman as the victim and the man as the aggressor, to de-normalise this reality and give room to other narratives.
- Sufficient recognition in campaigns of emerging and dominant forms of GBV, such as emotional violence and online violence.
- Long-term campaigns with the affected populations and youth at their centre, aiming to change narratives, especially as those narratives vary across Namibia's ethnic groups.
- A shared platform for data, evidence and joint planning.
- Upbeat and timely campaigns to address the ever-changing face of GBV and react quickly to new narratives and new forms of aggression.
- Representation matters: both the potential victim and the potential perpetrator need to recognise themselves in these campaigns – preferably before violence occurs – if we are to have any chance of preventing violence in the future.

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# Annexes

## Annex 1: Research participants

### Programme participants

OYO offered all eight NGOs taking part in the survey an opportunity to select programme participants to give feedback on activities. No programme participants from OYO were selected, to avoid bias. Both ministries deal mostly with survivors of violence and were not asked to provide respondents, because their cases are confidential. A total of 11 programme participants were interviewed: 4 from Regain Trust (3 male and 1 female); 3 from AFRIYAN (2 male and 1 female); one from Namibia Men for Gender Justice (male) and one from Women Action for Development (male). One additional respondent (male) had participated in activities with both Namibia Men for Gender Justice and AFRIYAN.

### Youth workshop participants

In all, 30 young people attended the workshop, representing three ethnic groups. They consisted of 14 male, 15 female and one gender non-binary person. They included three young people living with disabilities (a visually-impaired person, an albino person and a person living with dwarfism). They also included three people from the LGBTQI+ community (one identifying as lesbian, one as bisexual and one as gay). Finally one person represented people with mental health issues.

## Annex 2. Summary of the work of participating organisations on the engagement of boys and men in addressing gender-based violence

<p><b>AFRIYAN</b></p>	<p>A youth and adolescent network that has a branch in Namibia. It organises door-to-door campaigns in the Omusati, Ohangwena, Oshana, Oshikoto, Kavango East, Kavango West, Zambezi, Erongo and Khomas regions. It facilitates peer-to-peer engagement sessions (sessions of 3-4 hours), community dialogues between youth, both male and females and their parents (sessions of 3-4 hours each) and community engagements with community leaders. The community dialogues aim to help young people find ways to communicate on issues on sexual and reproduction health with their parents, and help parents to support their children. They include discussions on condoms, contraceptives and GBV. The aim is to strengthen the family structure, so that if something happens to the young person, the young person will know how to talk about it with his/her parents.</p>
<p><b>Alternative to Violence Project</b></p>	<p>This local organisation is managed by volunteers and is part of an international network. In Namibia, it works mainly in two correctional facilities (Rundu and Windhoek) with both inmates and officers. It organises training of trainers in the facilities, encouraging inmates to become role models. The model developed is a step-by-step approach. Inmates first take part in basic training. Those interested and who qualify graduate to more advanced training, until ultimately they can themselves teach the methodology to others. The model is centred around understanding, and finding alternative to, violence. The project works on modes of communication and learning to help participants to become better listeners. It also works in schools where there is a problem with violence, using its methodology to encourage the parties involved to resolve conflicts without resorting to violence. It creates safe spaces where those involved can express their feelings and their interpretation of the problem and where they can look for solutions together.</p>

<b>Gender-Based Violence Unit of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare</b>	<p>This Unit deals with physical and sexual abuse cases (including rape, attempted rape, assault, abduction, kidnapping and child trafficking). The Unit staff deal mostly with survivors of GBV, providing counselling, support and preparing the case for the court. They also deal with children in conflict with the law if those children are under the age of 16. The Unit operates at regional level (each region has a GBV unit). As part of their annual workplan, the regional units should conduct awareness campaigns in schools and community outreach, but this is not done because of a lack of human resources.</p>
<b>Lifeline/Childline</b>	<p>This is a local NGO offering online counselling (with nationwide reach, in particular through the toll-free number 116). It mobilises communities and promotes male champions. Its DREAMS programme focuses in particular on sessions with men and boys – in Khomas, Oshana and Oshikoto regions (10 hours of sessions spread over 3 days). These sessions use the National Gender Training Manual and engage boys and men to reflect on how they perceive girls and women, discuss topics on sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), GBV and harmful cultural practices. The main aim of the training is to empower men and boys and equip them with enough information so that when they are faced with a given situation they do not commit GBV crimes or any crime of violence. There is also a parenting programme in the Khomas and Hardap regions (five sessions of two to three hours each). Lifeline/Childline manages the Uitani radio alongside young people – a youth programme by youth for youth. A topic is first identified, and Lifeline/Childline then trains the presenters who will interview key participants on that topic and produce their own radio show. Children who are part of the Uitani radio programme have covered a wide range of topics over the years, including SRHR and GBV. Finally, Lifeline/Childline is the secretariat for the Men Engage Network.</p>
<b>Men Engage Network</b>	<p>This is a local network of organisations interested in working with boys and men, with Lifeline/Childline providing the secretariat. Current members include Women Action for Development, Regain Trust, Namibia Men for Gender Justice, AFRIYAN and ORN Namibia.</p>
<b>Namibia Men for Gender Justice</b>	<p>This local NGO is involved in research. The focus is on counselling and personal growth. It follows a cascade approach that starts by facilitating male engagement trainings (a five-day programme). The training is based on a personal growth approach, where participants are invited to reflect on, and question, what they know and what they do. Participants who do well in the training and want to go further can then be trained as community facilitators (an additional four days of training). This is a step further than the personal growth approach, as Namibia Men for Gender Justice believes one cannot send someone back into the community if he has not been able to deal with his own issues. Back in his community, he has to complete some tasks agreed upon with a mentor during the training to show that he has grown as a result of the process. Those tasks aim to help him to tackle issues that he has identified on the basis of his own life and issues. After succeeding, he can take part in a three-day conference and graduate. The organisation also organises a men's conference (this was supposed to be an annual event but plans have been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic).</p>
<b>Ministry of Health and Social Services</b>	<p>The Ministry has a Directorate dedicated to Social Services. This offers counselling for cases of emotional and financial abuse – mostly counselling for both men and women for relationship problems, marital problems, abuse of elderly people, based on couple counselling. It is often the woman who reports the problem to the Directorate, which then contacts the man.</p>



<p><b>Monica Geingos Gender-based Violence Solution</b></p>	<p>This local NGO was launched with the support of Namibia’s First Lady, H.E Monica Geingos. The organisation operates night patrols in Windhoek (Komas region) and the Omusati region to try and prevent cases of GBV and responds immediately to situations before they escalate. It provides counselling (face-to-face, especially during night patrols) and offers online workshops and discussions, during which it targets specific issues, such as online abuse, gender norms and GBV. It provides participants with phone credit and invite guests speakers to discussions with participants. Because of the format used, it is mostly the guest speakers talking, but the organisation also tries to organise question and answer sessions to make this more participatory.</p>
<p><b>Ombetja Yehinga Organisation (OYO)</b></p>	<p>OYO is a local NGO (and the lead researcher for this project), using the arts to address social issues. It works in schools, communities and correctional facilities. Its tools include the OYO dance troupe, OYO magazine and OYO DVDs. OYO believes that solutions can only be found with young people for young people within a given context. Each project works closely with young people in and out of school and, when applicable, the surrounding communities. It uses non-threatening means of communication, including role-plays, dances, songs and its youth-friendly magazine and creates safe spaces. It believes that young people need to be reached through the use of exciting media (to stimulate their attention) with simple, yet strong messages (to impact on their attitudes and behaviours). It presents a dance performance and follows it up with a discussion (‘if you were in the shoes of XXX, what would you have done differently’, etc.). It comes back a few weeks later with a second activity (such as a DVD show) and again a few weeks after that with another tool (such as a magazine). Each visit is an opportunity for young people to learn and reflect. It also organises weekend camps for girls and weekend camps for boys, where groups of students, called learners in Namibia, can work together. The regions covered with the GBV programme depend on funding: in 2022 OYO will work in schools in the Omusati and Ohangwena regions. OYO also offers counselling and has a counselling line which aims primarily to follow-up on cases identified during its interventions in schools.</p>
<p><b>Out-Right Namibia (ORN Namibia</b></p>	<p>This local NGO aims to advocate for the LGBTQI+ community and operates nationwide. In terms of GBV it organises the training of senior police officials and senior health officials (to tackle access to services for the LGBTQI+ community); manages inter-personal communication sessions – sessions of 1.5 hours with up to 10 people (on a weekly basis, with different groups every week); facilitates community training on their rights, in particular their rights to access health services and education (one-day training sessions with groups of up to 25 participants); and promotes community LGBTQI+ role models.</p>
<p><b>Regain Trust</b></p>	<p>This local NGO operates nationwide and offers counselling services: online, face-to-face and in school. It also facilitates public dialogues (community discussions), trains trainers (called co-facilitators) and organises training sessions with boys and men (four sessions per group of two to three hours per session). The training focuses on gender equality, gender norms and GBV. It uses a training manual that has been developed by Regain Trust.</p>

<p><b>Women Action for Development</b></p>	<p>This local NGO organises an annual GBV and substance abuse workshop (three-day workshops). It also facilitates workshops on human rights (five days), and workshops on GBV for men (four full days) focusing on institutions such as the National Defence Force and various communities. It also offers short workplace workshops (one day). It trains traditional leaders, produces short docu-clips where participants from workshops share examples to illustrate specific topics (such as toxic masculinity), and a radio programme for the Namibian Broadcasting Channel, looking in particular at the law (in collaboration with Namibia Women Lawyer’s Association).</p>
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**About ALIGN**

ALIGN is a digital platform and programme of work that is creating a global community of researchers and thought leaders, all committed to gender justice and equality. It provides new research, insights from practice, and grants for initiatives that increase our understanding of – and work to change – discriminatory gender norms. Through its vibrant and growing digital platform, and its events and activities, ALIGN aims to ensure that the best of available knowledge and resources have a growing impact on harmful gender norms.

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**ALIGN Programme Office**

ODI  
203 Blackfriars Road  
London SE1 8NJ  
United Kingdom

Email: [align@odi.org.uk](mailto:align@odi.org.uk)

Web: [www.alignplatform.org](http://www.alignplatform.org)

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