

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT HELP REDUCE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender Based Violence (GBV) is an act that violates human rights and affect peace and security. It acts as a barrier to fair and environmental access, use, control, and benefits from natural resources.

This year marks 30th anniversary of [16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence](#) an international campaign to challenge violence against women and girls. The campaign runs every year from 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to 10 December, Human Rights Day emphasizing on prevention and eradication of violence against women and girls. This year's global theme for the campaign is **"Orange the world: End violence against women now!"**

Tanzania Natural Resource Forum (TNRF) ensures natural resource governance for improved rural livelihood. Among other things, the organization is working with the government, private sector, and local communities to address challenges that face both men and women, has successfully provided social, and environmental support to benefit diverse groups of people.

Gender-based violence has been experienced mostly by women and girls in different parts of Tanzania. Even though men's rights are also violated; it has been a silent practice as men do not speak out about it. GBV is caused by social and cultural norms and unequal power relations, low levels of women's empowerment, lack of social support, socio-economic inequality, and material exploitation, conflicts, and climate change disasters.

To ensure mutual understandings in the communities, TNRF has been implementing projects with different focuses ranging from land rights, climate change adaptation to women empowerment. Some of the initiatives undertaken are described below showing how natural resources help reduce the risk of gender-based violence.

In Simanjiro District, taboos and cultural practices are gender-biased. Men are privileged more than women in several practices in different villages. For instance, men are the ones who own, control, and make decisions over land and livestock. The cultural norms do not allow women to control the resources, such discrimination acts sometimes lead to violence where women are beaten when they try to access such resources. Through awareness creation provided by TNRF to both women and men, communities have now a better understanding of natural resources management hence casting down such norms and allowing women to own and access resources. Moreover, widows can administer matrimonial land after the death of their spouses. The role of women is also observed in selected pastoral communities in Kiteto district through the Participatory Rangeland Management (PRM) project where women obtained their certificate of customary right of occupancy (CCROs) for the security of their land.

TNRF interventions have increased the participation of pastoral women in decision-making processes in the selected areas. Previously, pastoralists women had inadequate social inclusion as they were not allowed to take part in matters about administration and leadership in their villages. Participation of women in decision-making spaces such as village assembly was limited hence most decisions were made by men. The communities now understand that it is important to include both groups in such meetings and both men and women are free to provide their views.

In some village's women were not allowed to report domestic violence to the right institutions such as the village government and the police stations rather they were required to report to the traditional leaders. The decisions made by the leaders mostly favored men and did not put an end to the suffering that women were going through. TNRF provided land rights training, and capacity building to the

village leaders for them to understand their roles in the communities and provided legal aids to settle disputes and promote equality among the two groups.

TNRF also facilitated the formation of women groups in the Simanjoro district and provided training on social-economic activities especially entrepreneurship and marketing skills that help women to have their source of income to sustain families and not depend on men for everything. Women were deprived of basic needs including domestic needs such as food while the family has entrusted them as caregivers. Some traditions did not allow women to conduct any activity to support the family, yet they were expected to cater to the family whether the male spouse had provided the basic requirements or not. After the training women can engage in economic activities such as entrepreneurship, farming, and cattle keeping contributing income to their families. They are also getting financial support from Village Community Banks (VICOBA).

Although GBV existed before Covid19, the [pandemic](#) continued exposing women and girls to the stresses of violence due to the fact that most women were jobless as a result of lockdown that forced them to find alternative sources of income for the families.

Effects associated with GBV are not limited to; unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and family disputes which lead to children's displacements because of breakage of families. Decrease in the economy, and injuries.

A need for appropriate legal framework that promote both women and men on human rights, and that increase prevention mechanisms especially with the involvement of government security departments under specific levels. Also, women inclusion in decision making bodies is vital. Moreover, media should keep reporting the violence related cases and stories which in most places are not shared out due to fear, financial challenges, cultural beliefs, and inferiority complex.

In addition, international organizations, development partners, private sector and the government should provide financial support to organizations that work on empowering women and girls, amplify their voices, and support the survivors. A lot are happening on the ground but in a silently and unnoticed.

In conclusion, awareness creation to ensure GBV is addressed in all aspects and across all related gender is fundamental to ensure community prosperity and sustainable development for all.