



DESK REVIEW: ADDRESSING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND THE CLOSURE OF STATE- OWNED SHELTERS IN NAMIBIA



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ABOUT US

Reproductive Justice Namibia (RJN) is a feminist-led organization committed to advancing sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) and addressing systemic gender inequalities in Namibia. Founded in 2022, RJN focuses on empowering women, girls, and marginalized communities through advocacy, education, and service delivery. Our mission is to create inclusive, stigma-free spaces where individuals can access essential healthcare and support. With a strong emphasis on addressing SRHR and gender-based violence (GBV), RJN works to ensure survivors have access to safe spaces, trauma-informed care, and legal advocacy, driving systemic change for a more equitable Namibia.

Advancing Feminist Advocacy in SRHR and GBV

RJN challenges restrictive laws, promotes gender equity, and empowers marginalized communities. The organization is at the forefront of securing sanctuary for GBV survivors, advocating for the reopening of state-owned shelters, and ensuring sustainable, survivor-centered interventions.





ABOUT OUR PROJECT

- SECURING SANCTUARY

The term "Securing Sanctuary" encapsulates the core objective of providing safe, supportive, and empowering spaces for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV). In the context of Reproductive Justice Namibia's work, it reflects the urgent need to address the closure of state-owned GBV shelters and the lack of secure environments for survivors. This concept highlights the importance of creating not just physical shelters but holistic sanctuaries where individuals can access trauma-informed care, legal support, and pathways to reclaim their autonomy.

By focusing on securing sanctuary, RJN emphasizes the right of every survivor to safety, dignity, and support in their journey to healing and justice. It also underscores the critical role of advocacy and systemic reforms in restoring and reimagining these safe spaces as hubs for empowerment and long-term recovery.



INTRODUCTION

Namibia has made significant strides in promoting gender equality; however, gender-based violence (GBV) remains a critical issue undermining these efforts. The closure of state-owned GBV shelters has intensified challenges faced by survivors, leaving them vulnerable without access to safe spaces and essential support services. This desk review consolidates existing research, stakeholder inputs, and community insights to highlight the socio-economic impact of GBV and the importance of reinstating safe spaces. It also explores alternative models for survivor support within the Namibian context.

Key Findings from the Literature Review

1. GBV Prevalence in Namibia

- Namibia has one of the highest GBV rates in Southern Africa, with reported cases exceeding 8,000 annually. Unreported cases likely double this number due to stigma and inadequate support systems.

- Intimate partner violence is the most common form, affecting over 30% of women in Namibia during their lifetimes.

2. Impact of Shelter Closures

- The closure of all state-owned GBV shelters has created significant gaps in survivor protection and support. Survivors now rely on community or NGO-run initiatives, which lack resources to meet demand.

- Affected individuals report increased exposure to secondary victimization due to a lack of safe spaces and access to justice mechanisms.

KEY FINDINGS CONT...

3. Reproductive Health and GBV

- Survivors often face compounded challenges, including unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions. Access to reproductive healthcare is a critical yet overlooked component of survivor support.

4. Barriers to Accessing Support

- Social stigma and cultural norms discourage survivors from seeking help.
- Rural communities are disproportionately affected due to limited infrastructure and awareness.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

1. Government Agencies

- The Ministry of Gender oversees GBV-related policies but has demonstrated limited engagement in reopening shelters.
- The Office of the Ombudsman plays a crucial advocacy role, mediating between civil society and government.

2. Civil Society Organizations

- NGOs such as Lifeline/Childline Namibia provide essential services, including trauma counseling and legal aid.
- Reproductive Justice Namibia (RJN) focuses on survivor-centered approaches, integrating GBV and reproductive health services.

3. Community Leadership

- Traditional and community leaders influence societal norms and can play a pivotal role in reducing stigma and encouraging survivors to seek support.
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GAP ANALYSIS

1. Inadequate Shelter Infrastructure

- The absence of state-owned shelters leaves survivors reliant on informal networks.
- Existing NGO facilities operate under severe resource constraints.

2. Policy Implementation Gaps

- While Namibia has robust GBV policies, implementation is hindered by a lack of funding and political will.

3. Data and Research Gaps

- Limited data on the socio-economic costs of GBV impedes targeted interventions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Reopening and Strengthening Shelters

- Advocate for state investment in reopening shelters and supporting NGO-run facilities.
- Adopt a multi-sectoral approach, integrating healthcare, legal aid, and psychosocial support.

2. Community-Based Models

- Develop community-run safe spaces as interim solutions, leveraging local leadership and existing structures.

3. Policy Advocacy

- Collaborate with the Ombudsman's Office to ensure government accountability in fulfilling GBV-related commitments.

4. Research and Monitoring

- Conduct ongoing research to monitor the impact of shelter closures and evaluate alternative models.

SURVEY REPORT: UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF GBV AND SHELTER CLOSURES

Methodology

- Target Population: Women, youth, and community leaders from underserved areas.
- Tools: Structured questionnaires and focus group discussions.
- Sample Size: 200 respondents.

KEY FINDINGS

Executive Summary

This survey aimed to assess community perceptions of GBV and the impact of shelter closures. Conducted in Katutura Youth Community and Havana Informal Settlement, the survey engaged over 200 respondents through structured questionnaires. Key findings reveal widespread acknowledgment of GBV's prevalence, a critical need for safe spaces, and community-driven solutions to address gaps in survivor support.

1. Awareness of GBV



of respondents identified GBV as a pressing issue in their communities.



were aware of the recent closure of state-owned shelters.

2. Impact of Shelter Closures



of respondents reported an increase in survivor vulnerability since the closures.



expressed frustration over the lack of accessible alternatives.

KEY FINDINGS CONT...



3. Survivor Needs

- Respondents prioritized safe spaces, trauma counseling, and legal support as critical needs.
- Reproductive healthcare was highlighted as an overlooked yet essential service.

4. Community Solutions



supported community-run safe spaces as an interim solution.



- Respondents emphasized the importance of involving traditional leaders in advocacy efforts.



CHALLENGES

1. Engagement with Authorities

- Limited responsiveness from the Ministry of Gender was a recurring challenge.
- Stakeholders cited inadequate follow-up after initial consultations.

2. Resource Constraints

- NGOs and community leaders struggle to meet the growing demand for services.



RECOMMENDATIONS



1. Community-Led Interventions

- Establish interim safe spaces leveraging existing community structures.

2. Enhanced Stakeholder Collaboration

- Strengthen partnerships between NGOs, traditional leaders, and government agencies.

3. Targeted Advocacy

- Amplify survivor voices through media campaigns and stakeholder dialogues.

4. Capacity Building

- Train local mobilizers to deliver trauma-informed support services.



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