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ECOSOC 2: Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ)

Research Report

Topic 2: Working to prevent sexual violence in Lesotho



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Introduction

In Lesotho over 40% of the women have experienced sexual assaults according to the survey ‘Sexual Violence Against Women in Lesotho’⁴. Lesotho has one of the highest incidences of rape and intimate partner crime in the world⁵. This not only effects many women, but also has an economical impact on Lesotho. And since money cannot be spent twice, these resources could have been used in other more sustainable ways.

Definition of Key Terms

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA): The United Nations’ sexual and reproductive health agency. Their mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled¹.

UNAIDS: The leading the global effort to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals²

Gross Domestic Product (GDP): Measure of monetary worth of all final goods produced and sold in a country within a specific time period³.

Background Information

The survey ‘Sexual Violence Against Women in Lesotho’ estimated that 40.5% of women in Lesotho had experienced sexual coercion⁴. One reason why gender-based violence is prevalent in Lesotho might be because the law is not heeded in the rural areas. Mainly because it is difficult to implement the law in remote areas.⁵ The survey ‘Sexual Violence

¹ UN, UNFPA. “UNFPA: United Nations Development Programme.” UNDP, 2022, https://www.undp.org/jposc/unfpa?utm_source=EN&utm_medium=GSR&utm_content=US_UNDP_PaidSearch_Brand_English&utm_campaign=CENTRAL&utm_src=CENTRAL&utm_src2=GSR&utm_gclid=CjwKCAiAh9qdBhAOEiwAvxIok2-DcTu_cvu1ySImbq_CWLzrBrcbXWCKHMGY_a2Om0Cmpc7jArk2hoCNIEQAvD_BwE.

² UN, UNAIDS. “ABOUT UNAIDS.” UNAIDS, 2023, <https://www.unaids.org/en/whoweare/about>.

³ Fernando, Jason. “Gross Domestic Product (GDP): Formula and How to Use It.” Investopedia, Investopedia, 3 Nov. 2022, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/gdp.asp>.

⁴ MEASURE Evaluation Project & Tulane University Sechaba Consultants, Lesotho & CARE, Lesotho. “Sexual Violence Against Women in Lesotho.” USAIDS, 19 Nov. 2004, https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnadc519.pdf.

⁵ UN, UNAIDS. “Navigating Lesotho's Legal System to Address Gender-Based Violence.” UNAIDS, 8 Mar. 2021, https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2021/march/20210308_lesotho-legal-system-curb-gender-based-violence.

Against Women in Lesotho’ estimates that only 17.8 % of the women reported it to the police after experiencing forced sex. 10% were not reporting it, as they perceived the experience as normal/not serious⁴.

It is estimated that violence towards women and girls costs Lesotho more than \$113 million annually. The cost estimated includes loss of income and expenses associated with medical, legal and police support. In total it equates 5.5% of Lesotho’s GDP⁶. While violence against women is not limited to only of a sexual character, sexual violence also adds up to the great loss of money.

Major Countries and Organisations Involved

Lesotho

Has criminalized child marriage. Also works towards Sexuality Education programmes in schools.⁷ Lesotho’s government hopes for a solution that fights sexual violence within Lesotho, without compromising other areas.

UNFPA

Works on information sessions, which introduce to ideas about human rights, including women’s and girls’ right to live free of abuse and violence. UNFPA hopes for a solution that fights sexual violence within Lesotho and possibly other similar countries.

UNAIDS

Works together with UNFPA, the United Nations Children’s Fund and the WHO on 2gether4SRHR, a joint programme, to address HIV and sexual and reproductive health in Lesotho⁵. UNAIDS also works on making surveys and other research about sexual violence in Lesotho.³ They hope for a solution that fights sexual violence within Lesotho and possibly other similar countries, and with that, fights AIDS

Relevant UN Resolutions

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 5

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.⁸

A/RES/48/104

Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women⁹

⁶ Commonwealth. “Report: Violence against Women Costs Lesotho Economy \$113 Million Annually.” Commonwealth, 25 Sept. 2020, <https://thecommonwealth.org/news/report-violence-against-women-costs-lesotho-economy-113-million-annually>.

⁷ Lesotho, Government. “Lesotho Commits to Criminalize Child Marriage .” Government Of Lesotho, 13 Nov. 2019, <https://www.gov.ls/lesotho-commits-to-criminalize-child-marriage/>.

⁵ UN, UNAIDS. “Navigating Lesotho’s Legal System to Address Gender-Based Violence.” UNAIDS, 8 Mar. 2021, https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2021/march/20210308_lesotho-legal-system-curb-gender-based-violence.

⁸ UN, General Assembly. “Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” United Nations, United Nations, 10 Dec. 1948, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

⁹UN, General Assembly. “Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women.” A/RES/48/104, 20 Dec. 1993, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-elimination-violence-against-women>.

[A/RES/76/304](#)

International cooperation for access to justice, remedies and assistance for survivors of sexual violence.¹⁰

[A/RES/69/147](#)

Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls¹¹

[A/RES/71/170](#)

Intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: domestic violence¹²

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

UNFPA program to prevent sexual violence against women in Lesotho.

A program that targets men and boys, providing education about interpersonal skills, goal setting, anger management, and how to communicate and negotiate respectfully with others. It also provides comprehensive sexuality education. It especially targets herd boys as well as other at-risk groups, and consists of an intensive five-day training, and then monthly meetings for six to eight months¹³.

Possible Solutions

One viewpoint could be that sexual violence won't end until the abusers are educated about their wrongdoing. And that the best solution is through educating especially men and boys about sexual consent. This way you might stop the sexual violence before it even happens. The education could involve the already established school system, or it could be a separate effort. An example of this already in use would be the projects run by UNFPA, and funding this initiative further might prove helpful.

Another viewpoint might be that it is most important to help the victims, and that focus should be laid there. Funding help programs for victims of sexual violence can be an approach. This would both help the victims personally, and it might also normalise talking about the problems that sexual violence causes. If sexual violence becomes less of a taboo, it might with time lead to the abusers realizing how wrong what their doing is.

As it is now, most incidents of sexual violence will not get reported. One of the problems can lay in the report system being too complicated. On top of that, with how the legal system treats women, in most cases the abuser can walk away unscathed⁵. This can greatly discourage the victim for seeking justice. If people know that there are consequences

¹⁰ General Assembly, UN. "International Cooperation for Access to Justice, Remedies and Assistance for Survivors of Sexual Violence :” A/RES/76/304, United Nations, 7 Sept. 2022, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3987243?ln=en>.

¹¹ General Assembly, UN. "Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls” A/RES/69/147, 5 February 2015, <https://undocs.org/A/RES/69/147>.

¹² General Assembly, UN. "Intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: domestic violence.” A/RES/77/171, 7 February 2017, <https://undocs.org/A/RES/71/170>.

¹³ UNFPA. "To Tackle Sexual Violence in Lesotho, Programme Targets Men and Boys.” United Nations Population Fund, 11 Jan. 2018, <https://www.unfpa.org/news/tackle-sexual-violence-lesotho-programme-targets-men-and-boys>.

⁵ UN, UNAIDS. "Navigating Lesotho's Legal System to Address Gender-Based Violence.” UNAIDS, 8 Mar. 2021, https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2021/march/20210308_lesotho-legal-system-curb-gender-based-violence.

for their actions, fewer would hopefully act sexually violent. This could be done through a drastic change of the legal system. As a less drastic way, that might also solve some of the problem could be to make legal help for the victims. An example of legal help already existing, is Nairasha Legal Support⁵.

Making sexual consent less of a taboo could also be a solution. There are many approaches that could help with that. Different sort of role model programs might be a way around. It could be through television, or mobile phones as texts messages.

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