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Khosi Shabangu and Nceda Dube at the launch of the 16 days of activism against gender based violence in Swaziland.

Photo: Thandokuhle Dlamini

ECONOMIC JUSTICE: AN EMPOWERMENT PATHWAY TO ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN!

The prevalence of Gender Based Violence continues to undermine the personal and public lives of women in abusive relationships. Economic dependence on abusive partners is the primary reason that women stay in such relationships. There is a need to explore the hypothesis that economic independence can reduce GBV.

Introduction

Situating the 16 Days Campaign from November 25 (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to December 10 (Human Rights Day) appropriately spotlights that violence against women is an international human rights violation. It is well documented that poverty (and economic dependence) places women and girls at greater risk of gender based violence (GBV) and that economic empowerment can reduce gender based violence by increasing women's options and decision-making capacity within households.¹

This policy brief will describe the impediments to women's economic empowerment in the SADC region and outline strategy and policy issues that need to be urgently addressed in order to effectively empower women and thereby make progress towards ending violence against women. Political will manifest in strong leadership is critical in order to seriously tackle violence against women and deliver economic justice to women and girls.

There are many ways in which women are vulnerable to GBV in their everyday lives. These experiences are often directly related to the financial and social realities of their lives. Women are often denied resources and assets. This limits their ability to explore significant opportunities for economic independence which in turn exacerbates their vulnerability to dependence based relationships. This also limits their ability to pursue sustainable businesses and tends to restrict many women to micro entrepreneurship such as street trading. Street trading can expose women to harassment and sexual violence. These are two obvious ways in which economics and GBV are connected.

QUICK FACTS

- According to the Economic Commission for Africa, the incidence of violence against women in some African countries may be up to five times that of some developed economies. It is estimated that reported acts of violence cost between 1 percent and 12 per cent of GDP.
- The monthly cost of violence against women is 20 times that of average medical expenditure for a household.
- Speaking at the African Beijing Plus Twenty Review in Addis Ababa on 19 November, UNECA Executive Secretary Carlos Lopes noted that despite growth of over 5% over the last decade, "Africa has not been capable of propelling strong transformation of its economic realities. Without jobs, inclusion, and social distribution the good news is limited. We cannot build dynamic African countries, if women and girls, who form the majority of the population, remain marginalized or excluded."

¹ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2013). Issue Paper: Transforming social institutions to prevent violence against women and girls and improve development outcomes. www.oecd.org/social/.../OECD_DEV_Policy%20Brief_March%202013

Key terms and definitions

Gender based violence	The Council of Europe defines violence against women as 'all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.' ²
Economic independence	Having enough money to meet the basic needs of food, shelter and other necessities to support oneself and our family.
Entrepreneurship	Identifying and need and filling it.
Micro finance	Money lent in very small amounts, usually to groups of people who stand security for one another.
Micro enterprise	A small business operating with very few resources and limited capital, usually in retail or services.
Economic justice	Economic justice is a term that encompasses both a set of values and the policies utilised to further those values. From a human rights perspective, economic justice refers to equal participation, access and benefits of women and men in economic development.

Economic rights and justice

Economic justice starts with ensuring that resources and strategies adequately serve women's needs. Women have for many years trailed behind in accessing resources that would lead to their economic emancipation. The SADC Gender Protocol economic development targets are very advanced in spite of the many challenges in attaining them.

Economic justice for women: A global concern

- Globally, women are disproportionately affected by poverty, discrimination and exploitation. Therefore women generally end up taking insecure, low-income jobs. Women are also a small minority occupying senior positions in the work place. Discrimination limits access to economic assets such as land and loans as well as participation in crafting economic and social policies. Women perform the bulk of unpaid work- and this leaves them little time to pursue economic opportunities.³
- Women are better positioned to improve their lives when they own land and other assets. However only 1 percent of the world's women own land. Although laws to protect women's property rights exist in most countries, many women still cannot realize their rights.
- Economic dependence is recognised as a key factor in the perpetuation of GBV as women who perceive themselves unable to support themselves are most likely to stay in abusive **relationships**.

The combination of economic vulnerability and abuse often provides few choices for these women and many stay in these relationships because of the perceived financial security, adequate or not, in the relationship with abusive partners. Economic dependence traps many women in abusive relationships. Many battered women who do not hold a paying job perceive themselves as incapable of

living independently. Often in violent marriages, the husband controls all the finances and secures the family property in his name only."⁴

There are many international policies on women's economic empowerment, including the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and several International Labour Organization conventions on gender equality.⁵ However there needs to be greater commitment to implement the steps outlined in these policies by governments worldwide. SADC Heads of State and Government signed and adopted these commitments as well as the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development in August 2008 with the exception of Botswana and Mauritius. Out of the 13 Member States that have signed, 11 have already ratified the Protocol. One of the objectives of the Protocol is 'to ensure the empowerment of women, eliminate discrimination and to achieve gender equality and equity through the development and implementation of gender responsive legislation, policies, programmes and projects.'⁶ Women's economic empowerment and gender equality form part of human development indicators. Only one SADC country, Seychelles, is ranked as "very high" or "high" in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Ranking for 2013. South Africa, Botswana, Namibia and Swaziland are rated as "medium", while the rest are considered to have low levels of human development.⁷

Economic empowerment of women and girls in the SADC region

Education of girls requires more commitment: Across the SADC region, girls' lack of access to education remains a major hurdle to women's economic empowerment and gender equality. A lack of education prejudices women in

² Council of Europe, Ad Hoc Committee on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CAHVIO), 2011.

³ United Nations Women (UN Women) (2013), online publication <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment#sthash.KGdi0AHV.dpuf>

⁴ <http://knowledge.cwbusinesswomen.org/access-to-finance-for-women-in-business-paper-by-the-commonwealth-business-womens-network/>

⁵ United Nations Women (UN Women) (2013), online publication <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment#sthash.KGdi0AHV.dpuf>

⁶ SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2008) online publication <http://www.sadc.int/issues/gender/>

⁷ SADC Gender Protocol 2013 Barometer South Africa p.66 <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/article/sa-barometer-2013-chapter-4-productive-resources-and-employment-2013-11-22>

their pursuit of financial advancement. Women as a result are most likely to access the least skilled and lowest paid jobs and be active at the lowest levels of business activity.



Photograph: Africa Renewal / Ernest Harsch

“It is absolutely fundamental to deal with the economic empowerment of women, because we know that when women have that economic independence they are more likely to be able to make decisions about their dignity, their security and their welfare”- *Nomcebo Manzini, former head of UN Women for Southern Africa*

Gender based violence in the form of teenage pregnancy and HIV infections, child abuse, sexual harassment in schools and tertiary institutions perpetrated by both teachers and peers also continue to affect girls' education in SADC (SADC Gender Protocol Barometer, 2013).⁸

Content of education often reinforces gender stereotypes and discrimination is perpetuated.

Girls are frequently steered into nonprofessional courses, and are often overlooked by teachers in classroom discussions.

Where Gender stereotypes are reinforced; girls are less likely to achieve parity in learning outcomes.⁹

These disadvantages in the educational environment make girls and women less likely to have the resources needed to create financial sustainability; in turn creating an environment of vulnerability to GBV and less power in relationships.

Women are underrepresented in economic decision-making positions: Throughout the world, the power relations that shape social, political, economic and cultural life prevent women from participating fully in all areas of their lives, whether it's in the home, or in the public arena. Whilst women's dedicated efforts to challenge the status quo have allowed more women to reach positions of power in recent years:

- women continue to be under-represented in all areas of decision-making, such as religion, the media, culture and the law
- women still face significant barriers to their full and equal participation in the structures and institutions which govern their lives.¹⁰

Lack of property and land rights: Women in Southern Africa face the same problems that the majority of women in Africa face. Dual legal systems where customary laws on inheritance and property ownership place women at a disadvantage over men due to patriarchal traditions which consider men as the heads of the family.¹¹ A lack of assets such as land limit women's access to finance and resources that would support their economic independence. Women provide 70% of the agricultural labour force and they produce 90% of all food. However they continue to be side-lined in gaining access to opportunities for economic empowerment.¹² Very importantly this includes access to finance and financial services as collateral requirements underpin the entrée to significant financial transactions such as business funding.

Lack of financial opportunities for entrepreneurship: One of the key ways in which women can seek economic independence is through sustainable entrepreneurship. Yet access to appropriate financial services evades most women. Regional and national economic planning and performance does not take into account the contribution of women in the economy nor the needs of women for suitable financial services which meet their needs at all levels of business activity. Little attention also is made to the gender related realities of women's lives which preclude them from owning or acquiring assets. The majority of women therefore are restricted to microfinance as their only source of capital and primarily operate as micro entrepreneurs.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, 84% of women are informally employed, as compared to 63% of men. The informal economy is composed of a large proportion of the economically active population in Africa. Women account for a large proportion of informal and cross-border traders but there are no efforts to quantify their contributions or provide access to suitable finance to enhance their business opportunities. There are no policies to support women in these trades financially, which limits their participation in commerce. Despite the fact that the informal economy enables many people - particularly women - to provide better quality lives for their families, the importance of this sector remains unrecognised by SADC. Lack of research into this sector as well as lack of representation in decision-making processes continue to keep informal businesses marginalised with little prospect to grow or achieve long term sustainability. There is little evidence of accounting for women's contribution to economic growth, or any other gender considerations in assessments of economic

⁸ SADC Gender Protocol Barometer (2013) “Executive summary” (online publication) <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/article/sadc-gender-protocol-2013-barometer-2013-08-07>

⁹ Noorani S “Barriers to girls education: Strategies and interventions” at UNICEF (online publication), http://www.unicef.org/teachers/girls_ed/BarrierstoGE.pdf
¹⁰ <http://www.womankind.org.uk/policy-and-resources/womens-civil-and-political-participation/>

¹¹ Economic Empowerment” in Gender issues (online publication) <http://www.makeeverywomancount.org/>

¹² C L Morna, S Dube, L Makamure and K V Robinson (eds) (2014) SADC Gender Protocol Barometer (2014) “Productive resources employment and economic empowerment” p.127 (online publication) in Economic Justice <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/page/sadc-research>

performance in SADC countries. However, there is evidence to suggest that women do make a positive contribution to economic growth, spending over 90% of their earned income on the health and educational needs of their families.¹³

This inequality in access to assets to leverage opportunities and growth, traps women in relationships underpinned by financial dependence and vulnerability to GBV and by implication HIV.

Access to trade and labour markets:

Most SADC trade policies remain gender-blind. There is no disaggregation of the differential impact of trade policies on women and men. Few women are involved in trade missions and decisions on bilateral agreements seldom involve women. Foreign direct investments into the region should benefit women much as they benefit men. Involvement in these programmes is extremely low compared to men. Discriminatory laws that exist in most member states, restrict women's legal capacity and have a direct bearing on women's income earning capacities. For these reasons women are over represented in the informal or 'survival' sector where returns are extremely low and unreliable and where they are often vulnerable to harassment and sexual abuse.¹⁴

Women are underrepresented in the formal employment sector:

In Southern Africa, labour-force participation for women continues to lag behind that of men. Tanzania recorded the highest proportion of women's participation at 90% while South Africa recorded the lowest at 47% despite the country being a great economic force. Female labour participation is above 50% in 13 of the 15 countries. The widest gaps are recorded in Mauritius and South Africa, where women's participation levels are at 48% and 47% respectively.

Despite affirmative action policies in South Africa in previous years, women's labour participation still remains low.¹⁵

Workplace conditions affect women's participation in formal employment. All SADC countries provide a type of maternity leave. The most common is for a period of 12 weeks, four weeks before and six weeks after birth. Some countries, such as Mauritius, make accommodations for a stillborn child, or, as in Zambia, to encourage breastfeeding. The DRC, Madagascar and Tanzania have varying forms of maternity and paternity leave, equal retirement age, and a sexual harassment clause. Only six of the 15 countries



provide for paternity leave. Ten of the 15 countries have equal retirement age benefits, with the others usually different by an average of five years between women and men, mostly with women at 60 and men at 65 years of age. Nine of the 15 countries have measures in place to address sexual harassment in the workplace.¹⁶

Economic vulnerability and GBV

There is an increasing recognition that economics and GBV are interconnected. The abuses of power and gender inequality are the underlying causes of GBV. Violence, exploitation and abuse occur when the disparity of power is misused to the detriment of those people who cannot negotiate or make decisions on an equal basis... Economic inequalities are one of the major causes of GBV, at all levels (individual, household, community and society); they are evident in levels of utilization of household resources; and in access to and control over productive resources, personal property, employment, wages and credits.¹⁷

Economic empowerment: What needs to be done?

Governments must commit financially to women's empowerment policies:

Governments in Southern Africa and the whole SADC region must allocate adequate financial resources to ensure that national action plans and policies to empower women can be implemented, monitored and evaluated. Mechanisms need to be put in place for accountability for the funds allocated for gender mainstreaming and empowerment programs across all government ministries. This is the biggest impediment to the empowerment of women and girls.

Girls' education must be a priority:

Education of girls and ensuring that Government policies and programmes prioritise educating girls is critical. This entails integrating investment in girls' education into education sector plans and poverty reduction strategies.

Access for girls to quality primary education is important, but programs must be put in place to promote effective transitions to post-primary education. Safe teaching methods and gender-sensitive learning should also be part of safe healthy school environments.

Research to provide information for evidence-based policy making is necessary:

Research into the complex factors impacting economic justice and how they intersect with violence against women is necessary. Investigating communities' perceptions, attitudes and beliefs about evidence-based policies to tackle the behavioural and cultural issues that impede the economic progress of women and girls.

¹³ C L Morna, S Dube, L Makamure and K V Robinson (eds) (2014) SADC Gender Protocol Barometer (2014) "Productive resources employment and economic empowerment" p.154 (online publication) in Economic Justice <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/page/sadc-research>
¹⁴ C L Morna, S Dube, L Makamure and K V Robinson (eds) (2014) SADC Gender Protocol Barometer (2014) "Productive resources employment and economic empowerment" p.146 (online publication) in Economic Justice <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/page/sadc-research>
¹⁵ C L Morna, S Dube, L Makamure and K V Robinson (eds) (2014) SADC Gender Protocol Barometer (2014) "Productive resources employment and economic empowerment" p.166 (online publication) in Economic Justice <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/page/sadc-research>
¹⁶ C L Morna, S Dube, L Makamure and K V Robinson (eds) (2014) SADC Gender Protocol Barometer (2014) "Productive resources employment and economic empowerment" p.167 (online publication) in Economic Justice <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/page/sadc-research>
¹⁷ http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/dimitra/pdf/guidance_note_gbv_livelihoods.pdf

Financial and structural support for women: Strategies and policies need to take into account the economic needs of women to participate in all aspects of the economy; decent jobs, equal pay for equal work, entrepreneurship and leadership.

Harmonisation of customary and common laws to end discrimination against women: Women's direct rights to the land need to be facilitated through harmonization of customary and common laws as well as ensuring that rural women have access to justice in inheritance and land rights disputes.

Financial and structural support for women entrepreneurs: Escalated efforts in capacity building for women in business and access to finance for entrepreneurship is critical at all levels of business development. Financial and structural support for victims of domestic violence: Policies that make provisions for safe houses, job skills training, counselling and mental health services are necessary to support victims of domestic violence so that they become independent of their abusers and can better take care of their children.

National next steps

- Conduct time use studies as baselines including unpaid care work by women.
- Move the discussion on women's inclusion in the economy beyond the micro-level.
- Legislation put in place to increase women's ownership of land and housing including protecting widows from harmful inheritance practices.
- Seek political leadership to be political champions for women's inclusion in economic decision-making at national levels.

- Mentorship by women in leadership in various sectors of women aspiring to be in similar sectors.
- Involve local government in economic empowerment of women through local economic development programmes.
- Encourage states to adopt gender-responsive budgeting techniques as part of their costing, budgeting and resource allocation systems.
- Conduct and document results of analyses of growth in the informal sector. Most countries demonstrate growth of this sector accompanied by substantial earnings. These trends must be observed to garner support for this sector in which many women operate.
- Conduct and document women's contribution to national growth.
- Ensure that all SADC countries ratify and sign the convention on socio-economic rights, and make more visible the African Charter which has strong clauses on women's economic equality.
- Demand that social protection be given priority in policies and budget allocation to benefit women. This could be done by targeting social issues such as water, HIV and AIDS, disability. Women should be involved in national budget hearings.¹⁸

Regional next steps

- Foster enabling trade agreements across the region taking into account women in cross border trade.
- Involve women in regional trade missions.
- Develop tools for measuring women's contribution to economic performance (growth or retardation).
- Use the SADC Secretariat to assist member states to collect economic gender-disaggregated data for compilation into a regional data base.



Economic empowerment gives women choices: Market place in Gweru, Zimbabwe.

Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna

¹⁸ C L Morna, S Dube, L Makamure and K V Robinson (eds) (2014) SADC Gender Protocol Barometer (2014) "Productive resources employment and economic empowerment" (online publication) in Economic Justice p.166 <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/page/sadc-research>

- Use the SADC Secretariat to gather examples of best practice where women have been engaged in tackling the problems that face them in their communities, thereby helping themselves and taking responsibility for their economic empowerment. These are to be compiled in each country for lesson-sharing among member states.
- Develop monitoring and evaluation tools to measure the success of policies and programmes aimed at women's economic empowerment.
- Develop a regional response to the effects of the global economic crisis on women in SADC, in relation to the continental economic growth.
- Make links between women's economic empowerment and statutory and legal instruments, and ensure the implementation of progressive laws through accountability measures, monitoring and evaluation.¹⁹

Global next steps

- Work collaboratively to have a stand-alone gender equality goal with indicators to empower women economically.
- Mainstream gender in other sustainable development goals.
- Strengthen global coalitions for an enabling economic justice framework with peer learning and networking in forums such as the Commission on the Status of Women.²⁰

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²⁰ C L Morna, S Dube, L Makamure and K V Robinson (eds) (2014) SADC Gender Protocol Barometer (2014) "Productive resources employment and economic empowerment" (online publication) in Economic Justice p.176 <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/page/sadc-research>