

## **THE EFFECTS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA**

"Today, I'm so happy. You know why? I'll be becoming a real woman, at least that's what aunty Maliyi told me. Aunty Maliyi is the best. I've been living with her ever since mum died. Well, I only started living with mum when dad died. Funny, right? That's how my life has been, moving from one home to the other. Did I mention the orphanage? Gosh, the excitement, I can barely concentrate. Permit me to recap. My name is Sarah Adozie, an orphan from the extreme part of Abia state, Nigeria and I am the happiest person I have ever met". I wrote this 8 years ago on that day. The day I would never forget.

The socioeconomic status encompasses an interplay between the social factors and economic factors, not just income and revenue but also somatic and mental security, educational advancement, financial security. It incorporates an individual's perception of their position in relation to their standard and expectations. Violence, as defined by The World Health Organization (WHO) is "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, emotional harm, mal-development or deprivation". Gender based violence (GBV) or Violence against women is perhaps the most widespread and socially tolerated of human rights violations, cutting across borders, race, class, ethnicity and religion [UN Declaration of 1993]. Violence against anybody owing to the fact that he or she is of a different gender is known as gender-based violence. Both the male and female genders have been victims of this callous action. However, this disease has inflicted itself mostly on females.<sup>1</sup>

There are various forms through which gender-based violence manifests itself including child marriage and forced marriage, rape, female genital mutilation, partner violence, human trafficking for sexual exploitation, street harassment and intimidation at places of work.

I remember the muffled screams that kept flying past my ears while I and the other girls waited in the hot room, seated on a mat, dressed in nothing but a white wrapper for the "rite". The excitement was beginning to slip away. Soon, it would be my turn and I still had no idea what awaited me. Was it going to be fun like aunty described it? The screams, they sounded nothing close to fun. I walked shakily down the hallway into this other room, even hotter than the one I left. There was a really dim light, only bright enough to see the silhouette of a huge man seated on a bed. "Good evening, sir", I stammered. Before I could open my mouth to ask what he needed me to do, he had already drawn close to me, started to touch me and tried to remove the towel, the only thing covering my body. I sensed danger and was about to scream but couldn't let out a sound, a cloth had been squeezed and ruffled into my mouth to stifle my scream. So, this was the muffled sound I had been hearing. This was what has happened to the other girls that went before me. I flung my hands in every possible direction, tried to fight him off but his grip became even stronger and more painful. A battle between a tiny, innocent 12 year old girl and a huge, dangerous "God knows what" year old man. I had never felt so weak, so little, so powerless, so scared, in my life. The pain was excruciating. Warm tears ran down my face.

Now, how does rape, genital mutilation, gender bias in work places, girl-child marriage, and other gender-based violence mentioned earlier affect the socio-economy? All human beings,

irrespective of gender have valuable potentials, gifts, abilities, brain powers to change the world. A large percentage of these human resources have been injured, disfigured, demolished and then burnt down by the act of infliction of gender-based violence. Estimates published by WHO indicate that globally, about 1 in 3 (30%) women worldwide have been a victim of either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup> It is well known that violence kills performance and potential. Domestic and sexual violence against women can often lead to a cycle of poverty through job loss, poor health, and homelessness. One can only imagine the magnitude of wealth and progress that has been flushed down the drain by this criminal. One can only imagine how much greater Africa would be if gender-based violence never existed.

Furthermore, in the workforce participation, the predilection of the male gender in Africa is very apparent. For example, women in Ethiopia and Ghana produce 26% and 17% less food than their male counterparts as a result of resource inequality.<sup>2</sup> Women face several challenges in finding formal work including lack of education and technical skills, weak protection against gender discriminatory hiring, and double burden of work with the expectation to continue housekeeping and childbearing. These encroachment on the rights of the female gender leaves the world handicapped and deficient.

I was surprised to be alive when I woke the next morning, on my bed. I was almost relieved that it had just been a nightmare until the wave of sharp pain from between my legs traveled through my body, then it dawned on me. I wasn't on my bed. In fact, I wasn't in my home.

It's been 6 years now since aunty Maliyi sold me to this man. I found the courage to run away and escape being his dog about a year ago. It hadn't been fun and taking care of a 5 year old child is no piece of cake. I don't know where my life is heading. I can't even think of what we'd eat this night. Where are these two powerless beings going to end up? On a bed of flowers in a golden mansion? I don't think so. I had always dreamt of being a leader and changing the world for the world. I'm sure those other girls had dreams too. What happens now?

Gender-based violence greatly encroaches on the socio-economic situation of Nigeria. Gender-based Violence, like every other form of violence has detrimental effects for the broader economy, both in the long and short term. It sabotages institutions, people's confidence and mental health. More research need to be conducted, more awareness and enlightening programs need to be created, more critical questions need to be asked, severe punishment need to be put in place. So, join me today to rid the world of this pest, to create a safer world for Sarah.

## References

1. The World Bank. Gender-Based Violence (Violence against Women and Girls). [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org). September 25, 2019.
2. Mizrahi, Simon (May 2015). Empowering African Women: An Agenda for Action (PDF). Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire: African Development Bank. Retrieved 23 October 2019.