



# Jamii Thabiti

Towards a safe and secure Kenya

Saving the girl child remains Chief Wanyonyi's priority

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Safe Spaces that are a cradle of hope to Kilifi schools

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**Empowering girls on with skills on forms of violence**

## About the Jamii Thabiti Programme

The Jamii Thabiti Programme is about improving community security and safety. It intends to reduce levels of criminal violence, inter-communal violence and violence against women and girls by working with authorities, service providers and civil society organisations at national and county levels.

The Programme will build on the achievements of improved legislation and police accountability as well as new peace and security architecture at the county level. It will provide a more people-centred, long-term approach to peacebuilding, police reform and community security.

### International support

Jamii Thabiti Programme is being supported by the United Kingdom through the Department for International Development (DFID). It is being implemented by Coffey International in partnership with 30 organisations working closely with the Government of Kenya, including both national and county level institutions.

### Objective of the Programme

Jamii Thabiti will ensure a measureable improvement in the ability of national and county level institutions to tackle violence against women and girls, crime and inter-communal conflict, resulting in improved safety and security institutions at the national level and in eight counties of Kisumu, Bungoma, Kilifi, Kwale, Nakuru, Baringo, Wajir and Mandera.

The anticipated programme results include effective response to conflict and insecurity; improved policing; reduced gender based violence and better crime statistics.

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**Annette Wanyonyi, an administrator who has made it her duty to ensure children stay in school and perpetrators of violence against girls face the law.** PHOTO: GEORGE NGESA

# Saving the girl child remains Chief Wanyonyi's priority

**BY ODHIAMBO ORLALE**

**A** disciplinarian per excellence, Annette Wanyonyi is a no nonsense administrator who believes in the old adage spare the rod and spoil the child.

With her area of jurisdiction being Bukembe Sub-Location, assistant chief Wanyonyi is faced with the challenge posed by truck drivers who use the town's centre as a stopover before crossing through Malaba into Uganda.

With the trucks, come money making

opportunities and school children in Bukembe are lured to make a few shillings. For the girls the challenge is worse as they are not only forced into child labour but also sexual exploitation.

## **Streamlining public schools**

To ensure that children, especially girls, remain in school and concentrate on their studies, Wanyonyi has decided to use the cane. Residents of Bukembe Sub-location know her for not having patience with those who attempt to play truant or drop out of school. Since she was hired three years ago after resigning as a school

bursar, Wanyonyi has been in the process of streamlining public schools in a county where violence against girls is a daily occurrence.

## **Poor parenting skills**

Wanyonyi was speaking at a community forum organised by African Woman and Child (AWC) Feature Service under the Jamii Thabiti Programme to discuss safety and security in violence against women and girls. Wanyonyi blames challenges facing most children Bukembe on poor parenting skills and cites a case of a family which sold its only piece of land to save their son who had sexually molested a schoolgirl.

With sexual violence shrouded in a conspiracy of silence, Wanyonyi says reporting the vice has been left to the chief and police to take action with the most common cases being incest and defilement. The worst case she has ever addressed is that of a Form Two secondary schoolgirl who was defiled by a boda-boda (motorcycle taxi) operator.

## **Alert sounded**

The perpetrator abducted the girl and kept her incommunicado for two days until he was exposed. An alert was sounded by the girl's family. Working with the Nyumba Kumi Initiative and the Community Policing Committee members they identified the room where the boda boda rider had locked the girl.

Says Wanyonyi: "We went to that house, arrested the suspect and handed him over to the police. We took the girl to hospital for medical check-up before releasing her."

The case was heard to its logical conclusion and the perpetrator was sentenced to jail. However, Wanyonyi says, it was not an easy case to prosecute as the man's relatives attempted to compromise her while others tried to settle the matter out of court.

Wanyonyi recalls a case **PAGE 5>>**

# Kisumu's pupils adopt police officers for improved reporting of cases



Margaret Omondi, community representative at Gender Technical Working Group explains how Adopt-a-Cop will work for schools. PICTURE: JANE GODIA

## BY JANE GODIA

Ever since the Jamii Thabiti Programme rolled out, all activities held in the counties have given an indication that the girl child remains vulnerable to sexual violence.

However, access to justice remains farfetched as cases get compromised at family level. In finding a solution to this traumatising issue, the Kisumu County Gender Technical Working Group, which is housed at the Women Concerns Centre, is being innovative in addressing the problem.

Says Margaret Omondi, Executive Director Women's Concerns Centre: "We are adopting police officers within the programme, borrowing from Nakuru County within an initiative that was introduced by the Chief of Jamii Thabiti, Jaki Mbogo."

### Innovative process

Adopt-a-Cop activities will be held on monthly basis in eight schools within Kisumu County. "Police officers who are manning gender desks will be part of the team visiting schools," explains Omondi who is also the community representative

at the Gender Technical Working Group. She explains: "Counsellors will be present in sessions to offer psycho-social support to the children."

### Making police friendly to children

Police officers are being adopted in a way that will make the children learn to be their friends instead of fearing them.

"The Adopt-a-Cop initiative comes from the realisation that children normally take off when they see police officers," says Omondi. She notes: "We want to remove the notion of fear and make the children get used to the police so that when something bad happens to them, they can easily walk into a police station's Gender Desk and report."

Jamii Thabiti is working with Muhoroni, Ahero, Maseno and Kisumu Central police stations. The schools selected to pilot the project were identified by the County Director of Education because of the cases of violence that were being experienced within them.

### Pilot schools identified

Okanja and Karanda primary schools have been selected in Nyando; Muhoroni Township and St Agness primary schools have been picked for Muhoroni; St Marks Nyabera in Nyalenda and Kudho Primary School in Obunga have been identified for Kisumu Central; Maseno Mixed Primary School and Mariwa in Seme have been nominated for Maseno.

"In these schools we will be working directly with the Guidance and Counselling teachers in collaboration with one extra teacher who will assist them. They will be part of the activities," explains Omondi.

The police officers will sensitise the children on child protection and security as well as issues of reporting cases at the stations.

"We want to see whether there

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## Pupils adopt police for improved reporting

**<< FROM PAGE 4** will be change registered in the schools that have been targeted at the end of the year,” says Omondi.

The intention is to see whether children have been going to the police stations to report cases. In addition, there will be Speak-Out boxes that will be placed strategically for those pupils who cannot speak freely about the violations they are experiencing.

“The pupils will write notes about the violations they are experiencing at community level or within schools and insert them in the boxes,” says Omondi. “We will check the situation and address them according to location. If the violations are at the community level, we will hold sessions with the community. If a school has too many cases, we will sit down with the teachers and discuss what the children have written about.”

Paralegals and chiefs will be part of this process as well because of issues of referrals.

In some places like Kanyawegi in Maseno, the community has been protecting

perpetrators of violence against women and girls, making it very difficult for police to make arrests.

### Giving access for arrests

“In this case, the paralegals and chiefs, who are part of the community, will give access to the police to make arrests,” explains Omondi. “This is why under the Jamii Thabiti Programme, those who are members of community policing committees will also be involved because they can make arrests.”

Under Jamii Thabiti, community policing teams will sensitise the community on criminal violence, and partners will speak on violence against women and girls. Says Omondi: “We are supposed to work and coordinate together for the purposes of accessing justice at the community level.”

Already, African Woman and Child (AWC), a partner with Jamii Thabiti, with support of the Directorate of Community Policing, Gender and Children is engaging with community policing committees to set up sub-committees that will address violence against women and girls. **JT**

## Saving the girl child remains Chief Wanyonyi’s priority

### << FROM PAGE 3

of a Standard Eight pupil who was defiled by a man old enough to be her father. The case was complex because the suspect had allegedly married her after she was forced to drop out of school by her parents.

However, when Wanyonyi got wind of it, together with the neighbours, an alarm was raised. On realising he would be arrested, the perpetrator escaped to neighbouring Uganda. The girl resumed school and continued with her studies.

“With sexual violence shrouded in a conspiracy of silence, reporting the vice has been left to the chief and police to take action with the most common cases being incest and defilement.” ANNETTE

WANYONYI, ASSISTANT CHIEF IN BUKEMEBE, BUNGOMA COUNTY

### High illiteracy levels

Wanyonyi links the high rate of school dropout to poverty which has also led to high illiteracy in the area.

“The community does not value education and this is why I have made it my responsibility to cane any student who I find playing truant or engaging in child labour,” she explains. “In most cases I confiscate the goods they are selling and get them to go to school. I am now telling parents that if I find any child out of school I will have them arrested.” **JT**



Children who have been taken through the Adopt-a-Cop process. PICTURE: COURTESY OF WOMEN CONCERNS CENTRE

# Sensitising girls in and out of school to mitigate violence in Kilifi County



Eunice Chilumo, a guidance and counselling teacher in Kilifi County explaining to girls who are in and out of school on how they can protect themselves from various forms of sexual violence. PHOTO: RUTH OUMKHANGO

## BY RUTH OUMKHANGO

**H**alima Charo (not her real name) adjusts her seat as she listens to the facilitator addressing core issues that touch her life.

Not deterred by the weight of the three-month-old baby on her lap, Charo is moved and tears slowly roll down her cheeks.

“Had I received this information earlier, my life would not have taken this turn,” she whispers regrettably at the end of a presentation by the Sub-County Children’s Officer in Kilifi North.

Charo’s ambitions to become a nurse were thwarted when she became a teenage mother and was forced to drop out of school in class seven. Her disappointed

parents forced her to get married to the man who had defiled her. However, with an immature mind and not ready to be a mother or wife, she was soon back to her parents’ home.

### Forced into marriage

“I could not cope in this marriage because I was not ready for marriage and besides, the man who was supposed to be my husband mistreated me and did not want to take up any responsibility,” she explains.

Since then, Charo has had to put up at her parents’ home unsure of what will become of her future. She has to cope with relatives who ridicule her for having left her matrimonial home while at the same time the man who impregnated her continues to move freely in the community without fear.

“What pains me most is that I have to beg for support from relatives and friends while the father of this baby is not bothered at all,” says Charo. “My only hope is to bring up this child and go back to school.”

Charo is not an exceptional case. Many girls in Kilifi County are out of school due to teenage pregnancies as well as child and forced early marriage. Most of the girls are unaware of the next steps in life, they end up doing petty trade to take care of their families while others engage in child prostitution so as to put food on the table.

Eunice Jitwa Chilumo, a teacher at Mkwajuni Primary School and

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## Sensitizing girls in and out of school to mitigate violence in Kilifi County

**<< FROM PAGE 6** head of guidance and counselling programme reiterated the need for greater empowerment of both women and men so as to minimize long term vulnerability of girls to violence.

### Early marriages

“Most parents have abdicated their responsibilities and pushed their daughters into early marriages,” says Chilumo.

Charo was a beneficiary of a training on conducted by African Woman and Child Feature Service under the Jamii Thabiti Programme. The training brought together 18 girls in and out of school to equip them with knowledge and skills to understand the different forms of violence, what do when violated, the alternative support systems, and how to raise awareness about the violations they face.

According to Charity Mapenzi, Headteacher Mwanjoni Primary School, the strategy to empower the girls was critical as most of the girls lack role models in the community the can emulate especially when it comes to enhancing their education.

### Charting destinies

“The knowledge gained by the girls will empower them to become champions of their own destinies as well as increase reporting of such cases which remain very low at the moment,” explains Mapenzi.

The girls were challenged to use the knowledge gained to reach out to other girls in the community. It is hoped that the snowballing strategy of information sharing among the girls will mitigate cases of violence against women and girls in the long term.

During the workshop, the girls were

informed that there were opportunities within government institutions that can accommodate children of teenage mothers willing to pursue their education.

According to Kennedy Owino, the Sub-County Children’s Officer, also known as “Baba watoto” most of these facilities have not been utilised by teenage mothers due to lack of information: “Any girl who wants assistance should contact me.”

### Rescue survivors

Mapenzi said as a school they have been working with the Children’s Department and other relevant agencies in undertaking investigations, arrest and prosecution of perpetrators adding that they also facilitate the children’s department in the rescue of survivors.

Police Officer in charge of Gender Desk at Kilifi Police Station, Philip Dzombo also

noted that officers from the department have started a programme whereby they visit primary schools to educate children between the ages of 12 and 17 with emphasis on sexual offences; what the offences are and the jail terms; who is a victim or perpetrator of a sexual offence; what to do when such an offence is committed; what to expect in a police station, hospital or court and; the sentences for an offender when found guilty.

### Failure to report cases

Dzombo, however said that the greatest barrier to prevention and control of violence against women and girls in the area was the failure by aggrieved parties to report cases and lack of cooperation by witnesses especially when a close family member is involved.

“Our next strategy is to reach out to parents as most of them are culprits in compromising these cases,” noted Dzombo. **JT**



Girls who are in and out of school during a training organised by AWC in Kilifi County for them to understand their rights and how to protect themselves. PHOTO: RUTH OMKHANGO

# Charity Mapenzi vows no perpetrator who defiles school girls will go scot free

**BY RUTH OMKHANGO**

**A**s she sits under a tree outside the Kilifi Police Station's Gender Desk having a conversation with officer in-charge, one can easily notice the expressions on her face, an indication that the issues being discussed are important and close to her heart.

Just a short distance away a number of clients sit patiently under a shade waiting for their turn to be attended to by the same police officer.

Due to the scorching heat in Kilifi County, working in the refurbished metallic container that serves as the Gender Desk is unbearable.

On most afternoons, unless it's raining, the duty officer manning the Gender Desk is forced to shift his files and meet clients in the open space.

## **Regular police station visitor**

Unlike many people who have a phobia for visiting police stations, Charity Mapenzi, is a regular visitor to Kilifi Police Station. She visits the station at least three times in a week with the mission of pursuing justice for girls who are survivors of sexual violence.

"I want to see justice for survivors, especially girls from my community, and don't mind spending my time and money to ensure that perpetrators are dealt with accordingly," explains Mapenzi.

A headteacher at Mwanjumi Primary School, about 30 kilometres from Kilifi town, Mapenzi's ultimate goal is not only to increase the number of educated girls in her community but also ensure they pursue their education to the highest level.

For three years, Mapenzi recalls, she was the only woman in a primary school in Malindi due to lack of female teachers. She says most of the teachers in the area come from regions out of Kilifi County. This has challenged her to raise girls who will be able take up such positions in the near future.

## **Depressing statistics**

Fatigued by statistics that indicate Kilifi County has the highest number of defilement cases and low education completion rates for girls, Mapenzi uses the preventive approach of encouraging girls to work hard. However, she also punishes those who engage in wayward activities such as attending *disco-matanga* (funeral wake dances) that are a breeding ground for sexual violations.

"I am perturbed by reports about the poor levels of education and vicious cycle of poverty that is caused retrogressive cultural practices," she explains. "I make it a point of going to night functions, especially the *disco-matangas* to check if my pupils are there."

Says Mapenzi: "Those who will



be noted to have attended the *disco-matangas* will have their names called out at the school assembly the following day, and be punished."

Where she is not able to attend, Mapenzi sends spies to look out for the students on her behalf.

## **Ensure arrest of perpetrators**

As an opinion leader in the community, Mapenzi has devised a strategy to ensure that perpetrators of defilement that involve girls from her school are arrested and charged in court. By doing this, she is confident that many people will know the implications of defilement and refrain from engaging in sexual activities with young girls.

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Charity Mapenzi with students who she has empowered with knowledge on how to protect themselves from and report sexual violence. PICTURE: RUTH OMUKHANGO

**<< FROM PAGE 9** “I don’t spare anybody and the community around my school have come to understand that defilement is an offence,” explains Mapenzi. She recalls of an incident that shocked the community when she organised for the arrest of my subordinate staff’s son who had defiled a young girl. “They then knew it’s a serious issue,” she says.

Mapenzi’s efforts are slowly bearing fruit and the community has come to appreciate what she is doing. On many occasions they refer cases to her instead

of going to the local chiefs.

Headteachers from other schools within the community see her as a role model and invite to their schools to sensitise pupils and parents on how to deal with sexual violence cases.

A member of the Community Policing Committee that works with Kilifi Police Station, Mapenzi says this has enabled her have easy access to police officers.

She uses this position to communicate and organise for the arrest of perpetrators in good time before they can escape.

During a meeting for the Kilifi Community Policing Committee members organised by African Woman and Child (AWC) to establish a sub-committee on violence against women and girls, Mapenzi was selected to be part of this group.

**Going the extra mile**

For the sake of helping her community, she is willing to go the extra mile in assisting any girl go through the procedures of reporting a case.

“I use personal resources to ensure that a survivor is not denied access to justice including reporting to the station, getting P3 and post-rape care forms as well as transport to court,” says Mapenzi.

At the time of the interview, Mapenzi had six cases pending in court and the purpose of her visit to the Gender Desk was to check on the progress. Her only challenge is that the judicial process is slow and she is afraid that some of the girls will complete Standard Eight and leave school before the cases are concluded.

**Challenge of school holidays**

“I have a defilement case that has been on since 2015 when the student was in class six. Now she is in class eight and I am not sure if the case will be relevant once she finishes her Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examinations.”

Mapenzi laments that long school holidays in December remain a challenge because teachers don’t have control over the children and anything can happen during the festive season.

However, Mapenzi is optimistic that her efforts are not in vain and that she will be able to raise girls from her community who will rise up to be role models for others. **JT**

# Safe Spaces that are a cradle of hope to Kilifi schools



Peter Munuve, a teacher and mentor at Kibaoni Primary School in Kilifi County with the girls who are being mentored under the Safe Space Programme led by Pamoja for Transformation. PHOTO: PAUL ODUMBE

## BY JANE GODIA

Support for local community-based initiatives aimed at strengthening resilience against violence is what Pamoja for Transformation, a Jamii Thabiti partner working in Kilifi County is doing to address violence against girls.

Through supporting Safe Space mentorship in schools Pamoja for Transformation is working with local teachers, police and Kilifi County community to change societal norms that have helped advance violence against girls in schools.

So far Pamoja for Transformation has been able to establish four Safe Space Mentorship Platforms in Mtwapa, Kibaoni, Mbungoni and Kinunguna primary schools.

### Safe space mentorship

The Safe Spaces include police officers in charge of gender desks, teachers and boda boda operators.

Safe space initiative allows children to be open about the violations they are facing both within and out of school. It's a space that has been created to build confidence and trust for survivors of violence.

Corporal Phillip Dzombo, head of gender

desk at Kilifi Police Station says child sexual violence remains the biggest challenge in Kilifi County. "Many children are left on their own by parents are out of ignorance," explains Dzombo.

Dzombo's sentiments are echoed by Judith Mwarima, a teacher at Kibaoni Primary School, who is also a mentor within the Safe Space initiative. "There is a lot of work to be done in Kilifi since parents, particularly, are unable to control their children."

Halima Ali, a teacher at Mtwapa KPA Primary School notes: "We are handling many cases within the safe

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# Safe Spaces that are a cradle of hope to

**<< FROM PAGE 10** spaces that include sexual violence, child trafficking and students being recruited into terror gangs.”

## Police officers visit schools

Through working with organisations like Pamoja for Transformation, and after trainings with Jami Thabiti partners like African Woman and Child, Dzombo says police officers are now visiting schools and telling learners what to do should they be violated. He notes the Safe Spaces have brought confidence among students and allows them report violence perpetrated against them.

With this knowledge, Dzombo reports that cases of violence have gone down, and in general between January and June 2016 and the same period in 2017, fewer cases were reported. In May 2017, Kilifi Police Station did not have a single case of rape or defilement reported.

## Sharing sensitive information

Murabu says the Safe Spaces have helped in addressing violence against girl because they enable pupils share sensitive information. However, she notes, most problems that they come across are faced by girls. “For instance, we had a case of a total orphan living with an aunt who used her for sexual exploitation,” explains Murabu. “The girl is now pregnant, she even left school but because of the Safe Spaces, we were able to get her back to school.”

Murabu says: “Although there are many cases, we only record the serious ones that are related to sexual violence.”

Pamoja for Transformation has also included boda boda riders to be part of the safe spaces because they have been

## Challenges faced

- Initiative not easily understood because it involved sensitive issues.
- There are occasions when it’s not easy for all students to attend due to other school activities.
- Getting buy-in from other members of staff has not been easy.
- Staff involvement is limited though they welcomed the idea in the first place.
- Lack of teaching and visual aids that could help mentors demonstrate violence to the students in a better and effective way.
- Teachers are often too busy with other school responsibilities.
- Teachers taking away students from safe space talks.

named as key perpetrators of sexual violence against underage girls. Amstrong Mwaveka aka Bingo, is one of the mentors from the boda boda fraternity. “As a rider and parent, Mwaveka says he cannot run away from taking social responsibilities to ensure girls are safe. He represents boda boda riders where they hold meetings with students.

## Parental obligations

“I am currently mentoring 120 students and we work together with four teachers. I educate the students on how to understand their body development and not fall victim to boda boda riders,” explains Mwaveka.

He says when parents fail to meet their responsibilities then their daughters remain

vulnerable. “It’s unfortunate that most parents cannot buy for their daughters things like sanitary pads and they are forced to ask for money from boda boda riders.”

## Sexual exploitation

Mwaveka explains: “I tell them that even if they ask for money, they should not give in to sex since they are not ready to be mothers.”

He also advises them to use homemade pads that are reuseable as a way of avoiding the riders.

The mentors cite various challenges that they meet within the Safe Spaces. One of the challenges they face is time management especially when the programme collides with school time. They also says they do not have the right teaching material to use in creating awareness around violence.

## Addressing violence against girls

Joseph Eric Mwatore, a teacher at Kinung’una Primary School says he first interacted with Safe Spaces while teaching at Bungoni Primary School. He would later be transferred to Kinung’una where he introduced the concept to the new school.

Says Mwatore: “Safe space is about addressing violence against girls in school. We also use it for retaining girls in school so they do not go out to be wasted in society. We work with parents for them to see a sense of having girls retained in school including the ones who fall pregnant.”

All the mentors agree that joy only sets in when one registers success with a case. Says Ali: “Success is when we see positive changes in those who have come to Safe Spaces.” **.JT**

# Illiteracy and poverty form breeding ground for violence

BY JANE GODIA

**E**arly and forced marriages as well as inability to complete both primary and secondary education remain a huge challenge to women and girls in Kilifi County.

A session held by African Woman and Child (AWC) with members of the Community Policing Committee in Mtwapa revealed the harrowing experiences of violence that women and girls have to go through simply because they are illiterate or were unable to complete the education cycle.

Once a girl reaches puberty in Kilifi County, she is seen to be of marriageable age. The old men will have a sitting, locally known as *kanjama* (dowry negotiation). The amount given is very small and could be as little as KSh10,000 (#70) for a 13-year-old girl.

Renson Baraza, a police officer in Mtwapa says: “This is when violence towards the girl begins. A parent who has received the money will immediately remove the girl from school.”

## Community ignorant

He adds: “While it’s a criminal offence to marry off an underage girl, police often arrest the culprits but since the cases require witnesses, nobody is ready to speak out because those who can testify are the same people who sat in the *kanjama*. These *kanjamas* lead to defilement and rape.”

Ruth Ndinda, officer-in-charge of Administration Police in Kilifi South



A view into Mtwapa town. Community Policing members here blame illiteracy as the main reason behind high cases of violence against women and girls. PHOTO: DANIEL KATANA

“With girls’ education not valued, they end up being married early and the cycle of giving birth at an early stage goes across generations of women.”

RUTH NDINDA, OFFICER-IN-CHARGE OF ADMINISTRATION POLICE IN KILIFI SOUTH SUB-COUNTY

Sub-county says: “With girls’ education not valued, they end up being married early and the cycle of giving birth at an early stage goes across generations of women.”

Tarmohamed Kana, Chairman Mtwapa Community Policing Committee in Kilifi South Sub-County says: “It’s these cultural and traditional beliefs that have led to high levels of illiteracy and poverty, especially for the girl child and women in Kilifi County.”

While these women are married off early, the husbands expect them to go out and look for work to be able to

financially maintain the family including the husband’s drinking habit.

## Daughters sold off

“If they do not give money for alcohol, they are beaten,” says Kana. “When a man feels the wife is failing in managing his drinking, the next option is to sell off his daughter so as to get money for the alcohol.”

The situation is so dire because the women leave their daughters behind with the men since they cannot afford to pay for baby sitters. This also breeds a high level of incest since the men, majority of whom are jobless, have impaired judgement as a result of the drinking.

The women, who are illiterate also end up being the *mnazi* (traditional beer) sellers. With low levels of empowerment, they end up selling their underage daughters to the *mnazi* drinkers. The cycle of violation is repeated here because these men not only beat up the women, but force them into sexual escapades. The daughters who help their mothers sell the traditional beer, are not spared the sexual violence.

## Used as drug peddlers

Girls who are vulnerable, mainly school drop outs, end up being used by drug dealers as peddlers and informers. Their lack of empowerment leaves them at a very vulnerable position. “They also end up abusing drugs and getting money from anybody who shows signs of offering something,” says Kana. “The same girls are also swayed by boda boda operators. They end up being beaten whenever they ask for any money.”

Kana notes: “The rate of prostitution is high in Mtwapa because of the school dropouts who see transactional sex as the only option to earn income.” **JT**

# Amina Mohammed: Visiting schools remains top on my agenda

**BY ODHIAMBO ORLALE**

With a soft spot for women and children who have been molested or abused, Amina Mohammed has found her niche after 15 years in the police service.

As the officer-in-charge of the Gender Desk at Kisumu Central Police Station in Kisumu County, Mohammed does not shy away from joining hands with other organisations that work in ending violence against women and girls.

For her position to have impact, Mohammed plans to visit schools during Parents' Day so she can talk about the Gender Desk and how children, especially girls, can protect themselves at all times as well as share information with their parents, guardians and head teachers.

Before being posted to Kisumu, Mohamed served in Kiambu, Likoni and Maseno police stations. In the past year that she has been at the Kisumu Central Police Station, Mohammed speaks of notable success. They have managed to arrest and charge 30 suspects in court, four of whom have been convicted and jailed.

## Slow judicial process

The biggest frustration, she notes, is the slow judicial processes where most cases drag on for long due to adjournments and other underhand deals that discourage survivors, their relatives as well as witnesses and prosecutors.

Other challenges that Mohammed faces include the controversial disco-



“It’s at these functions (controversial *disco-matangas* (funeral wake music), conducted by bereaved families holding night vigils. ) that crime and sexual violence take place with the consequences being teenage pregnancy and school dropouts.”

AMINA MOHAMMED, GENDER DESK AT KISUMU CENTRAL POLICE STATION IN KISUMU COUNTY,

*matangas* (funeral wake music), conducted by bereaved families holding night vigils. “It’s at these functions that crime and sexual violence take place with the consequences being teenage pregnancy and school dropouts.”

Despite the frustrations because of *disco-matangas*, Mohammed says it’s hard to stop them because most leaders support them in the name of culture.

“There is need for public debate on the

way forward with regards to the *disco-matangas*,” she says. She also cites frustration of police officers by officials at the Children’s Department who take too long to resolve problems.

Among the successful cases that Mohammed can cite is that of a 14-year-old schoolgirl who was defiled in Nyan’gande Village in Nyando Sub-County by a 40-year-old man. On hearing about the incident, Mohammed moved fast and arrested the suspect. Due to the slow judicial process, the case is still pending in court.

Mohammed recalls the worst case that she has come across as being that of a married woman who was stabbed six times by her husband and left for dead. The suspect was later arrested but released on bond pending the health of the victim. “The case is dragging because one of the key witnesses is not cooperative and has refused to testify,” says Mohammed.

## Lowest moments

Mohammed’s lowest moments come when behind her back a victim or survivor and their relatives agree to settle cases out of court.

Another challenge faced at the Gender Desk is when a defilement case is reported at night and there is no safe house to take the victim. This forces her to seek alternative accommodation at the police station or take the survivor to her house on humanitarian grounds.

“This happens because police stations don’t have special cells for children,” explains Mohammed. **JT**

# Crisis for girls in Kaptembwa with rapists on the prowl



The sprawling Kaptembwa slum faces challenges of safety and insecurity against women and girls.  
 PHOTO: INTERNET

**BY CAROLYNE OYUGI**

The one room was only large enough to hold two beds — one for the father and the other for his three daughters. It would also serve as the couch for visitors and family to eat their meals.

However, this was not all. While the night is supposed to provide peace and rest for every family, three girls from Kaptembwa in Nakuru County were instead going through hell in the hands of their father. He would pick one after the other, and defile them throughout the night.

The girls' mother had left the town when she got a job opportunity in Trans Nzoia County, carrying with her the two youngest sons. She left the three girls behind with their father.

The girls aged 14, 13 and eight years respectively shared the one-roomed house with their father as their mother tried to make ends meet from wherever she was.

From January to March 2017, the man defiled his daughters one after the other.

## Turning point

This went on for some time until the eldest

**“ Kaptembwa Police Station is in a slum with high rates of unemployment which leads to idleness and crime. Illiteracy levels are very high coupled with drug and alcohol abuse as well as prostitution and child neglect,”**

CORPORAL BETH KAMAU, GENDER DESK OF  
 KAPTEMBWA POLICE STATION

daughter got tired. She wrote a heart breaking letter and gave to a neighbour to take to the police. The letter which was written in Kiswahili read in part . . . *“Father we plead with you to listen to our cry and stop destroying us. We plead with you to stop your bad habit or else we will call our mother to report you or we will run away from home. We plead with you in the name of Jesus Christ. . . .”*

This letter was presented at the Gender Desk of Kaptembwa Police Station where Corporal Beth Kamau reacted with speed. Immediately she received the letter, she went and picked the girls, took them for check-up at the Nairobi

Women's Hospital where they were treated and an arrest warrant issued for the man.

The girls are now in foster care and have been admitted to a different school. The eldest is a Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examinations candidate.

“I have been following the case to ensure that the girls get justice. Unfortunately their father ran away and we have not been able to arrest him. However, I will not rest until we put him behind bars,” said Kamau.

Such cases are not unique in Kaptembwa. Defilement, incest and rape including gang rape are very common with the cases increasing with each passing day.

According to Kamau, they receive about five incest cases per day which is very worrying.

“Kaptembwa Police Station is in a slum with high rates of unemployment which leads to idleness and crime. Illiteracy levels are very high coupled with drug and alcohol abuse as well as prostitution and child neglect,” Kamau explained during a meeting to establish a sub-committee on violence against women and girls within the Kaptembwa Community Policing Committee.

## Challenges

The community forum was organized by African Woman and Child (AWC) Feature Service within the Jamii Thabiti Programme. Jane Thuita, Officer Commanding Kaptembwa Police Station said they face many challenges trying to solve crime in the area.

“Solving cases of violence against women and girls is very complicated due to their sensitive nature. Many cases go unreported and some people also report to the area chief instead of coming to the police. Some cases also die along the way because witnesses disappear,” Thuita explained. “At times survivors and witnesses are forced to relocate due to threats from the perpetrators which then leaves the cases pending without witnesses.” **.JT**

# Community initiative seeks to protect girls from violence

BY FAITH MUIRURI

Data available at the Kisumu Central Police Station reveal that informal settlements lead in cases of violence against women and girls registered in the county.

The Gender Based Violence Recovery Centre (GBVRC) at Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Referral Hospital records three to four defilement cases per day. During school holidays, cases of defilement increase from seven to ten per day, with majority of the victims coming from the informal settlements.

However, this will soon be a thing of the past if an initiative rolled out by the Women Concerns Centre in Kisumu County succeeds. The initiative seeks to empower communities to become champions in protecting women and girls against violence.

According to Margaret Omondi, Coordinator of Women Concerns Centre, the initiative has roped in 20 community members who will work in committees that operate like the Nyumba Kumi Initiative to promote safety and security.

“Each member is assigned ten houses to monitor violence against women and girls in their locality. The group meets on a weekly basis just to share information on new cases.”

The initiative is being carried out in the informal settlements of Nyalenda, Manyatta and Usoma which have continued to register a high prevalence of defilement cases.

## Access to justice

The initiative is being implemented with support from Jamii Thabiti under the improved community security programme. It has helped to ensure survivors access justice and reduced the number of cases resolved informally.

“We have cases that we have followed up to court,” says Omondi citing a case where a man was sentenced to death last year for defiling a three year old girl.

The group in Kaloleni exposed a case of three girls who were being defiled by their uncle. “One of the committee members followed up this case for over a year. She faced a lot of challenges including being induced with bribes to drop the case but stuck with it until the accused was sentenced to 20 years in jail,” explains Omondi adding “they have become the community watchdog”.

Through the initiative, they have been able to bring on board the administration who include chiefs and Members of the County Assembly to stem the rising cases of violence against women and girls in the area.

“We also have paralegals in the group who play a critical role. The cases are handed over to paralegals who liaise with the police to make sure perpetrators are arrested and prosecuted.”

This has helped in increasing conviction rates and visibility of violence against women and girls cases in the community.

However, security of the committee members remains at stake because they live within the community.

“We have been able to manage this situation by ensuring that paralegals in one area, say Nyalenda, handle cases in Kaloleni and vice versa.”

The situation becomes critical when children who have been defiled at household level have to be rescued.

“If this child is removed from their home and placed in a rescue centre, education is disrupted unless the paralegals offer to shoulder the burden of providing transport to take the child to school.” **LT**



Community members in Kisumu from the informal settlements who will be working to ensure justice for survivors. PICTURE: WOMEN CONCERN CENTRE

# Know Jamii Thabiti Programme Partners

This is a programme being implemented in Kenya with about 30 local organisations on board. In every Issue, we will be profiling partner organizations. In this issue, we profile the following partner:

## Pamoja for Transformation

Pamoja for Transformation is a non-profit organisation founded in 2009 by a team of Kenyan peace practitioners in Kilifi County with the mission to support communities affected by conflict.

Legally registered as a Trust, Pamoja for Transformation operates under the vision of having a peaceful and just society free from poverty. It has continued to support community-based initiatives aimed at strengthening resilience against violence as well as promoting economic opportunities and employment.

Pamoja for Transformation operates at the nexus of security, peace and development. It works with community structures, civil society organisations and governmental institutions to support the creation of sustainable networks to address diverse conflict drivers of ethno-political and gender-based violence as well as poverty.

Within the Jamii Thabiti Programme, Pamoja for Transformation is situated in the prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) component that aims to improve the community knowledge of, and interaction with, safety and security service providers as well as communities in Kilifi County.

Pamoja for Transformation focuses on enhancing coordination of existing VAWG

initiatives, providing technical support to strengthen their ability to engage at various levels and supporting efforts to prevent societal barriers that promote the vice.

Other activities include supporting safe space mentorship in schools; community awareness and advocacy forums through community media-radio and dialogue meetings as well as capacity building on prevention of violence against women and girls and legal processes.

The organisation also works at enhanced coordination of existing violence against women and girls' programmes and initiatives as well as providing technical support to strengthen their ability to engage with Kenya Police Service and Director of Public Prosecution.

Pamoja for Transformation builds capacity to ensure police station front desks are able to provide professional response and referral services.

Within the Jamii Thabiti Programme, Pamoja for Transformation has been conducting sensitisation forums to enhance public support for policies that relate to ending violence including National Policy for Prevention and Response to Gender Based Violence and those that relate to anti-sex tourism in Kilifi County.

So far Pamoja for Transformation has been able to establish four safe space mentorship platforms in Mtwapa, Kibaoni, Mbungoni and Kinung'una primary schools. This is being done in collaboration with the police who are part of the programme.

The organisation has established a male-only platform comprising of teachers, chiefs, youth, Council of Elders to

champion prevention of violence against women and girls. Boda boda (motorbike taxis) leadership from Mtwapa have been brought on board and the secretary is one of the school's mentors.

Another achievement has been the Gender Based Violence Network in Malindi and Kilifi which has been revitalised and is actively raising issues as well as responding to and rescuing children and women.

Implementation of the Programme has not been easy and Pamoja for Transformation has faced several challenges. These include a high demand for and limited resources to reach out to other sub-counties and schools like Magarini where violence against women and girls is very high. The VAWG programme is limited to Kilifi North and Kilifi South sub-counties where the identified police stations are based.

Another challenge is the regular transfer of police officers who have participated in the Pamoja for Transformation activities without any replacement leading to reduction in and buy-in from the police.

The upcoming General Election is heightened by tense political activities that are a threat to peace and security. These have overtaken the project activities as a matter of priority. The communities feel that focus should be on supporting electoral processes including civic education.

Another emerging issue comes from the effects of the prolonged drought which led to in Kilifi County. Most residents turned to organisations like Pamoja for Transformation for food and other personal needs that the project does not support. .JT