

# The impact of domestic conflicts on victims in Marondera: Effects and solutions

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## Abstract

The research study was carried out to assess the effects of domestic conflicts on the victims' socio-emotional and psychological performance so as to come up with possible solutions. The study is mainly centred on qualitative approach. The study was carried out in Marondera and it focused on Nyameni suburb. A total of forty (40) participants drawn from a population of 400 households were used in the study. It came out that most people are unable to carry on with work as usual after a domestic dispute. It was established that it takes time for victims to perform their duties as usual after a dispute and the duration differs from individual to individual. The stress and depression which the victim undergoes works against productivity. In some instances one cannot plan ahead for the family as they always think that the relationship they are in is not the right one. In the case of children, they lack the sense of freedom and self-confidence and falls trapped both emotionally and in the situation. Thus, the children's future may be ruined and they may have problems in mixing well with others. This implies that victims of domestic conflicts are prevented from enjoying and realising their full potential as they get stressed up. Thus, domestic conflicts have negative effects on the victim's socio-emotional and psychological performance. The study recommended that people should be empowered to eradicate poverty which was seen as a major contributor of domestic conflicts. The government and civic society should complement each other and raise awareness to conscientise people on what domestic conflicts are and the policies that protect them from violence and where to report to when disputes occurred.

**Key words:** domestic conflict, gender-based violence, victims, stress, women, human rights

## 1. Background to the Study

Gender based violence is seen as a profound health problem for women across the globe. A World Development Report of 1993 identified rape and domestic violence as significant causes of disability and death among women of reproductive age in both industrialized and developing world. The World Bank estimates that these account for five percent of the healthy years of life lost to women in demographically developing countries. The mental consequences of wife beating identified include fear, anxiety, fatigue, post - traumatic stress disorder, sleeping and eating disorders. Together with physical injuries, these totally destroy women, dehumanise them and set up a willful, self- destructive mechanism, the negative impact on the quality of life being both severe and long term (Hale, 1990).

It should be noted that such conflict has important implications for socio - economic development. It is widely accepted that problems such as high fertility and hunger cannot be solved without women's full participation as they are burdened with the physical and psychological scars of abuse. However, according to the 4<sup>th</sup> United Nations World Conference on women, held in Beijing in September 1995 violence against women and girls concern around the lack of respect for and inadequate protection of women's human rights, persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child. It should also be noted that domestic conflicts affect the family fabric as family members fail to promote economic, social and emotional support to and for one another, in this sense, the family, as society's social unit fails to focus on the well -being of its members.

In Zimbabwe, just like anywhere else in the world, people interact with each other and tensions are bound to occur. Family kin or relations form part of everyone's existence, and family life encompasses the whole range of emotional experience. Relationships between wife and husband, parents and children, brothers and sisters, neighbors or between distant relatives can be warm and fulfilling. They can equally contain the most pronounced tensions, driving people to despair in filling them with a deep sense of anxiety and guilt. This side of life bellies the rosy images of harmony that are often emphasized in television commercials and elsewhere in the popular media. Indeed, domestic conflicts is a disturbing aspect as people, even in the closest relationships cannot be expected to think and act alike on all issues all the time. Sometimes, domestic conflicts deteriorate to gruesome levels claiming the lives of one or both partners as well as others who try to mediate in the disputes. This shows that effects of domestic conflicts prove to be more on the negative than positive. (Oyekanmi, 1997).

According to a study carried out by Musasa Project in 1997, confirmed by the Herald of Saturday 15 December 2007, domestic disputes are one of the leading causes of death of women aged between fifteen to forty years. The majority of murder cases brought before Zimbabwean courts were a result of domestic disputes and the victims were mostly women. The paper further points out that in most instances the fatalities occur within domestic sphere with the women and men who died having done so as a result of jealousy, money disputes, a failure to

accept that a relationship is over, suicides with men killing their wives and girlfriends and then later killing themselves, among others. Indeed, poorly managed conflicts are known to have adverse effects on people who are not really involved in the conflict. For example, where a couple divorces, children suffer. Reaffirming the United Nations Declaration on violence against women, adopted in 1993, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action recognized violence as an obstacle to equality, development, peace and a gross violation of women's rights. Family violence takes place in many forms. One may be a victim without being aware of it. Abuse is not only physical, like kicking, punching and beating, but it is also psychological.

According to a paper on media perspective presented to Musasa Project seminar by the then editor of the Herald (Chakaodza), assault in the home must be the most common crime of violence committed in Zimbabwe and one violent that is widely tolerated by society. Indeed, there are many who may believe that some sort of physical correction is essential within a marriage. The paper further acknowledges that there are journalists who feel that domestic violence is either normal or something that is not very serious. There is a general tendency in society to see most of the criminals arrested or brought before the courts as somewhat unlucky people who used a little more force than they should. Chakaodza also admitted that the media does not report much on wives being beaten and usually give only modest coverage to the severe assaults that lead to death. For example, a 24-year-old Sunningdale woman died at Parirenyatwa hospital after a domestic fight with her husband aged 20. Such cases are reported because they led to death. It is from this background that the study sought to assess the domestic conflicts in order to come up with possible solutions.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Domestic conflicts are one of the leading causes of deaths and poor performance of women and children in life. The majority of murder cases brought before Zimbabwean courts are a result of domestic disputes and the victims are mostly women. This calls for a study to establish causes and full impact of domestic conflicts so as to come up with possible strategies to curb domestic conflicts

## **3. Research Questions**

This study attempts to address the following questions:

- What are the major causes of domestic conflicts?
- What are the major effects of domestic conflicts?
- What measures can be put in place to reduce domestic conflicts?

## **4. Review of related literature**

### **4.1 The Concept 'Domestic Conflicts'**

The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993) defines conflict against women as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women. It should be noted however that this focus on women does not deny the fact that men experience violence but 'violence against women' refers to a manifestation of sex inequality as explained by the Marxist feminists in a system which fosters control of the oppressed class (women) by the oppressors (men). The focus on women also serves to maintain the unequal balance of power that exists between men and women. The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act of 2006 defines domestic conflicts as any unlawful act, omission or behaviour which results in physical or mental injury or death inflicted on the complainant by the participant. Domestic conflicts can also be defined as willful intimidation, assault or repeated battery. Similarly it can be a partner of abusive and threatening behaviours that may include physical, emotional, economic and sexual violence as well as intimidation and coercion. This implies any abusive violent coercive, forceful or threatening act or word inflicted by one member of a family household on another (Ali, 2002).

The Ministry of Women's Affairs Gender and Community Development manual (2006), acknowledges that in Zimbabwe, like in most countries, domestic conflicts have reached alarming levels in our country. Physical violence (conflicts) refers to issues such as beatings, fighting, killing, pushing, hitting, slapping and injury. It further identifies potential victims as women, men, boys/girls, those under someone's control, the vulnerable groups and workers. According to the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development's resource manual, men's perception of violence (conflicts) is that they are justified to beat wives, discipline them and it is said to be a sign of love for women if husbands beat them and it is also a sign of ownership because of lobola. Women on the other hand generally accept or expect violence and the men do not expect them to hit back or take any action. Instead, women are expected to keep silent on incidences of violence. The manual also points out that women and children are more vulnerable to domestic conflicts and the conflict takes place anywhere- no place is safe that is it could be at home or on the streets. This agrees with what was said by the United Nations (2012) that in Zimbabwe, it is still a long way to go before women and girls can fully enjoy their fundamental rights, freedom and dignity to guarantee their well being.

#### **4.2 Major Causes of Domestic Conflicts**

The rights of women are violated in a myriad ways. Several authorities have come up with varying causal factors to domestic conflicts. These include extra-marital relationships, culture differences, financial management and disrespect of in-laws. In most instances married couples are too jealous of each other as they administer and reciprocate their relations as couples. It is inevitable that most men and women jealously keep a close eye on each other. For instance they regularly check and inspect cell phones of each other and go to the extent of fighting if they find each other talking to someone. Men often keep the recording of their wives' cell phones as proof, most of which will be witch-hunting for extra-marital relationships (Taboola, 2015; Harm and Barder, 2002). The above information concur with recent publications of musicians, the likes of Aleck Macheso and Mathias Mhere where their families are in shambles because of extra-marital affairs through cell phone communications.

A study by Ali and Gavino, (2000) reported that women with low level educational status and unemployment and newly married are more frequently abused. Similarly one research showed that women in America showed that because of their lack of financial contribution they perceived themselves as powerless. The wife is placed in a submissive position from the whole family including in-laws. This implies that even disobeying and arguing with in laws cause domestic conflicts (Ommororgebe et al, 2010; Howard 2002).

Development programmes cause domestic conflicts. Development should be understood as a process, not a product. Societies are always changing, some improve while others fail. Development practices intend to provide both tools that can be applied the entire societies or specific communities. Such interventions are intended to move communities or societies from situations in which they are believed to be worse off to a situation in which they are assumed better off. These interconnections of development factors often cause further conflict escalation. For example, administrative chaos in under financed government bodies often causes the transference of responsibilities from the central state to non-governmental organizations, local government and private sector. The result is that such organizations assume duties that may be well beyond their capacities, which causes further conflict. For example, these organizations lack training in facilitation, mediation and negotiation as well as the theoretical knowledge of conflict resolution, so conflict escalates with no one knowing what to do with it (Olympio, 2004).

Development programmes introduce inadequate resources into the communities for which people compete and this can have the effect of exacerbating rates of conflict in the household where men might vent their stress. They further argued that Women In Development (WID) approach led to an exacerbation of conflict in the home as the approach sought to identify women's position by concentrating on women in isolation and not by addressing the problem of gender relations and subordination. Development planners moreover, tended to give a blind eye to problems of a private nature and tolerating the conflicts (Home and Truths, 1999).

Globalization causes domestic conflicts. The global imposition of neo-liberal market values, through the implementation of various world trade agreements and Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPS), has initiated and forced rapid widespread economic change in developing nations and societies by integrating local trade into the global competitive market. For example, large multi-national companies in developing countries are continuing to recruit young women workers in developing countries to work in processing plants and garment factory. This is leading to changes in the traditional roles of women within the family and exacerbates domestic conflicts (Home and Truths, 1999).

According to Gender Based Violence publication by World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations International Children's Emergency Relief Fund (UNICEF) of 2001 infertility can be a cause of domestic disputes. Infertility leads to one of the partners to seek for more opportunities to getting children outside marriage. This causes and perpetuates domestic conflicts. Poor male hygiene in homes and unpaid loans may also cause domestic conflicts. Women In Law and Development In Africa (WILDAF) points out that squandering income from cash crops by husbands at harvest time may cause domestic conflicts. Abuse affects the way the abused feel about themselves. They may feel sad, lonely, and frightened. They may feel ashamed and guilty and may use alcohol and drugs to help them cope. They may also lose confidence of themselves and some may feel depressed or even commit suicide. They lose the love of their family and may go to jail (Action for Life, 2006).

#### **4.3 Major Effect of Domestic Conflicts**

Conflict, irrespective of the way it presents itself and the environment it occurs, has dysfunctional and disruptive impact on the society. Studies have shown that domestic conflicts can lead to child abandonment. In conflict zones, women who are raped repeatedly become pregnant and have little choice but to continue with the pregnancy. The children born of sexual exploitation and their mothers need psychological attention and economic support. A large proportion of women accepts the children and raise them but can be rejected by their husbands and become a financial burden and a source of lingering shame of their families. In some cases, families force their daughters into marriage with whoever will have them including the same man who attacked them. Victims also experience deep feelings of stigma. In addition, Children exposed to domestic conflicts may respond to adults with anger, distress and increased aggression towards peers. These children are more likely to be homeless. It is also

reported that the stresses associated with conflict in the home may cause usual adolescents risk taking and escape behaviours worse and they may begin to participate in family violence themselves. The wife is placed in a submissive position from the whole family including in-laws. This implies that even disobeying and arguing with in-laws cause domestic conflicts (Ommororgebe et al, 2010; Howard, 2002).

Lack of control over when, who and how to have sex has exposed women to HIV/AIDS. The power imbalance and inferior status of women in relationship with men makes it difficult to negotiate for safe sex, thus making them highly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. It also points out that domestic conflicts on the family bring increased medical expenses, potential loss of income due to time taken off work and affects children's education as they may have to take time off school. Domestic conflicts make the home a place of fear rather than a place of comfort and security. Children who live with domestic conflicts tend to copy it so it turns to spread and continues to the next generation thus creating a cycle of violence (Musasa Project, 2002).

Domestic conflicts affect the ability of a woman to look after her family, resulting in her neglect of the children or she may not be able to go to work because she is physically or emotionally injured. This will affect her income or can cost her job. Wife beating negatively affects the family fabric since family members fail to promote economic, social and emotional support to and for one another. This implies that the family, as society's basic social unit fails to focus on the well-being of its members (Lour, 1989).

Several studies by psychologists say children in conflict homes often suffer from all sorts of problems that include failure to interact well with others, to perform in the best of their ability in school and other spheres as well as to enter into and keep healthy relationships later on in life. It is highly likely that these children (both sons and daughters) will find themselves repeating the same cycle of violence in their own homes. These children's futures are destroyed as some of them never manage to live normal lives after abuse. Due to domestic conflicts, children might develop speech difficulties, become over reactive, and suffer from a loss of appetite, disturbed sleep (nightmares) as well as bedwetting. Where children, especially girls take on adult roles by caring for family members, often siblings and they miss out a lot on their childhood. (UNICEF, 2005).

UN has established "one stop centers" for restoration of dignity of survivors of domestic violence in various areas. The One Stop Centre programme recognises that domestic violence is a complex problem with medical, psychological, social, cultural, economical, and legal and human rights dimensions. Domestic conflicts affect the state, economically and socially. Health care system becomes overburdened when resources are directed to victims of violence instead of treating people who are sick or are involved in emergency cases; more police protection of women has to be provided. The victims of violence are an expense to their employers, as they tend to take a lot of time off. Some victims are forced to stop working and hence the state suffers loss of skilled workers (Musasa Project, 2002).

Domestic conflicts have a significant cause of disability and ill health among women of reproductive age in both industrial and developing world. For example, the Herald of Thursday 8 May 2012 gives the case of a resident of Makoni district who had been physically, emotionally and economically abused for over four years. The paper reported that the problem started when she gave birth to a baby girl in 2007. She was accused of being a witch and a useless woman for not giving birth to a baby boy. In the end the husband threatened to kill her and broke her leg with an axe handle. The mental health consequences of conflicts in the home identified includes fear, anxiety, fatigue, post-traumatic stress disorder, and sleeping and eating disorders. Together with physical injuries, these totally destroy women, dehumanize them and set up a willful self-destructive mechanism, the negative impact on the quality of life being both severe long terms (Oyekanmi, 1997).

Women subjected to conflict may stop participating in the development of their community because of low self-esteem and loss of confidence. Children brought up in a violent family are likely to be victims or perpetrators themselves later in life. In addition, conflict can cause the family system to breakdown, and when this happens, the number of people who need to be protected by society increases. For example, more people may need the services of a shelter (Musasa Project, 2002).

#### **4.4 Measures that can be put in place to reduce Domestic Conflicts**

Domestic conflicts put women and children under considerable stress. There is therefore a need for women empowerment through increased schooling and improved financial capacity so that they participate in the decision making process of the family and society at large (Ommororgebe et al, 2010; Howard, 2002). There is need to encourage harmony through media publicity. The role of media is crucial to the issue of conflicts against women; both in terms of how media cover the issue and how media may be used as a tool to help activists and governments raise awareness and implement programs on this issue. Media should also project the means to combat violence and could play a leading role in persuading society to be more supportive of women and their role in society. However, the mainstream media is very much politicized and it picks up women issues according to the political interest of patron political parties. Due to the lack of resources and trained work force, the media is not capable to produce widely impressive materials. Some of the women issues like trafficking, prostitution



and rape come in the media just to create sensation. The media seems to be less concerned about women's issues and rights. (Pratyoush, 2005; Woolfe and Jaffe, 1999).

Participants on a workshop on Violence against Women and the Role of Media agreed, that the media has a crucial role in the prevention of domestic violence by raising awareness and educating the public. The media has a key role in shaping public opinion and therefore has a central part to play in breaking down prevailing stereotypes and negative patterns of behaviour that can lead to domestic violence. Moreover, the media can help victims of domestic violence by publicizing information about support services accessible. Communities should openly confront exploitation, abuse and violence through the media and civil society groups in order to reduce domestic conflicts. Women's organisations should be invited to talk at schools, churches or workplaces about domestic violence and educate people on how they can be involved to reduce it (UNICERF, 2005; Chan and Dennis, 1992).

Awareness is the first step towards a supportive and tolerant society A high-level awareness-raising event organized as part of a project currently being implemented by UNDP and UN Women in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy entitled Preventing domestic violence through competent national institutions and an accountable and transparent judicial system is organised. Participants at the discussion included over thirty journalists and editors, a number of MPs and Government ministers, as well as NGO representatives and experts on the issue of domestic conflicts. While these views inevitably differed in certain aspects, a clear message emerged from the discussion that that only an integrated and joint approach involving all key stakeholders will be effective in changing attitudes to domestic conflicts. (Fracassetti, 2013).

Promoting Women in Development (PROWID) similarly explains in its report, Justice, Change, and Human Rights: International Research and Responses to Domestic Violence, that, the way in which women's complaints (of domestic violence) are recorded can either normalize or criminalize abusive behaviours. For these reasons, policies and protocols for intervention agencies are an important part of an integrated response. Agencies that deal with battered women need to do more than simply change the way they think or be more aware of the problem. Instead, the actions of those located in different parts of a coordinated system need to be centred toward victim safety and organized in ways that complement rather than undermine or subvert each other. With this goal in mind, practitioners' decisions and actions need to be guided by sets of protocol standards and, in some cases, direct policies. (Melanie, Shepard and Pence, 1999).

Howard (2002) emphasised the need to take into account protective factors and aspects of children's lives that enable them to overcome the damaging effects of living with domestic conflicts, some of which include:

- the qualities of the children themselves;
- easy temperament and high cognitive ability;
- good mothering;
- having one reliable source of support and comfort, eg, a mother, grandmother or teacher; and
- peer groups.

## 5. Research Methodology and Participants

The research study was a case study undertaken to gather the view of the participants on the effects of domestic conflicts on victims' socio-emotional and psychological performance. This study adopts the qualitative research methodology as its main approach of generating data. As a process, the approach enabled the researcher to understand a social or human problem basing on holistic picture, formed with words, reports details of researched and conducted in a natural setting. The total population to be studied in this case is Nyameni residents in Marondera. The total number of households in this suburb is about 400 and there are two government primary schools that mainly draw their clientele from this suburb. Forty participants were selected as sample.

## 7. Findings

When asked their views on the concept of domestic conflicts, the participants had varied responses for their definitions. This might have been due to their differences in academic and professional qualifications and age as well as sex. Generally all pointed to the view that domestic conflict is to a greater extent an abuse and harassment to the females than to males. The study findings indicate that the majority of the participants know what domestic conflicts are. Most of the participants view domestic conflicts as repeated or habitual pattern of battering and verbal abuse. A few of the participants view domestic conflicts as the inflicting of physical injury by or household member on another. A few other participants viewed it as any abusive, violent, coercive, forceful or threatening act or word inflicted by one member of the family or household on another and finally all of

the participants indicated that all the three definitions were ideal for domestic violence. Given below are some of the responses from the participants on what they perceive to be the definition of the domestic conflicts:

**Participant 1:** *It has to do with habitual pattern of battering and verbal abuse by family or household member on another.*

**Participant 2:** *Any abusive, violent, forceful or threatening act or words inflicted by one member of a family or household on another.*

**Participant 3:** However, one of the participants interviewed openly remarked: *"to say the truth I do not know what domestic conflicts are"*.

The above sentiments concur with the definition given by the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act of 2006 that domestic conflicts are any unlawful act, omission or behaviour which results in physical or mental injury or death inflicted on the complainant by the participant.

### 7.1 Major Causes of Domestic Conflicts

Findings on causes of domestic conflicts highlight that most of the participants agreed that culture differences cause domestic conflicts. Quite a number of them indicated that poverty is a major cause of domestic conflicts. Others pointed that lack of respect for others as well as squandering income are cause of domestic conflicts. Most participants showed that in Zimbabwe, poverty causes domestic conflicts because of economic and political deprivation. These findings corroborated with those by several researchers who found out that violence against wives is an outcome of the belief fostered in all cultures, that men are superior and that the women with whom they live are their possessions to be treated as they consider appropriate (Oyekanmi, 1997).

A few of the participants disagreed that lobola and infertility cause domestic conflicts while one participant was of the view that unpaid loans can only cause domestic conflicts if they are not known by the other spouse. These arguments are in complete contrast with what has been found out by Schuler (1992) who argues that the male's belief is that, having paid for a wife, to beat her is well within the husband's rights Furthermore, a Gender Based Violence publications by WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF (undated) points out that infertility leads to one of the partners to seek for more opportunities to getting children outside marriage thereby indulging in extra marital affairs causing perpetual conflicts. The findings indicated that different people from different religious backgrounds have different views on causes of domestic conflicts.

Notable among other major causes are;

- poverty;
- culture differences;
- squandering income;
- lack of respect for others;
- difference in academic and professional achievements;
- unpaid lobola;
- financial management;
- infertility; and
- not giving birth to a son

These causes though varied are in line with what other researches reported as causes of domestic conflicts. They indicated that a wife is placed in a submissive position from the whole family including in-laws thereby causing conflicts in families/Disobeying and arguing with in laws are notable causes of domestic conflicts (Ommororgebe et al, 2010; Howard, 2002).

### 7.2 Major Effects of Domestic Conflicts

Findings on whether domestic conflicts have negative effects on the victim's performance show that all the participants agreed that domestic conflicts have negative effects on the victims' performance. This therefore is in line with what several researches found that confirms that domestic conflicts on the family brings increased medical expenses, potential loss of income due to time taken off work and effects on children's education as they may have to take time off school. (The wife is placed in a submissive position from the whole family including in-laws. This implies that even disobeying and arguing with in laws cause domestic conflicts (Ommororgebe et al, 2010; Howard, 2002). Similarly, the following was information from some of the participants:

**Participant 1:** *"Children who live with domestic conflicts tend to copy it hence they tend to be bully when playing with other students. Their listening skills are poor and they spend most of the time sleeping in class thereby failing to grasp most concepts. In some cases they isolate themselves -when others indulge in outdoor activities and they will be passive most of the time (Resident teacher of one of the schools in Nyameni).*

**Participant 2:** *"Victims of domestic disputes often come to hospital for medication leaving the work that they could have been doing and a lot of medication which was supposed to be channeled to ordinary patients is channeled towards the medication of the victims of domestic conflicts".*

**Participant 3** *one cannot even breastfeed her baby after a domestic dispute.*

The above remarks also support Mamwenda's social learning theory which states that what the child learns in his/her environment as he/she interacts and observe others assist him/her in becoming socialised, such that what he/she does is congruent with norms and expectations of his/her society. It was even sad to see some participants showing up the scars and marks on their bodies as a result of conflicts in the home. Some could not even clearly share their views as they could not avoid sobbing indicating the freshness and extent of conflict. One participant even wished death for she felt she could not stand the harsh conditions she was in. Another lady was so courageous to say out her plans to revenge. This was what she had to say, "You think those stories you read in the press are fiction? Men are very silly they deserve such revenges as burning them with hot oil or axing them when asleep." In concurrence with these findings are the several researches that indicated that domestic conflicts results in loss of life, divorce, hatred and strife in families. (The wife is placed in a submissive position from the whole family including in-laws. This implies that even disobeying and arguing with in-laws cause domestic conflicts (Ommororgebe et al, 2010; Howard, 2002).

Below are some of the major effects:

- stress and depression;
- unable to carry on with work as usual;
- failure to plan ahead for the family;
- it takes time for one to perform normal duties;
- children lack sense of freedom and self-confidence;
- children have problems of mixing well with others; and
- increased failure rate of children.

Most of the above findings concur with Musasa Project (2002) when it posits that domestic conflicts affect the ability of a woman to look after her family, resulting in neglect of the children or she may not be able to go to work because she is physically or emotionally injured. This will affect her income or can cost her job. Wife beating negatively affects the family fabric since family members fail to promote economic, social and emotional support to and for one another. This implies that the family, as society's basic social unit fails to focus on the well-being of its members (Lour, 1989).

### **7.3 Measures to be put in place to reduce domestic conflicts**

Findings on measures to be put in place in a bid to reduce domestic violence revealed that quite a number of the participants were of the view that pragmatic awareness campaigns involving the community should be conducted. The majority of them highlighted that communication of problems and issues at hand may reduce domestic conflicts and some pointed out that media should publicise and educate people on domestic conflicts. In addition to the above findings, three participants from interviews also remarked:

**Participant 1:** *"There is need to conduct outreach programmes where the communities would discuss human rights and domestic conflicts issues".*

**Participant 2:** *"There is need to encourage harmony through media publicity and religious gatherings".*

**Participant 3:** *"People need to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each other and try to resolve them amicably".*

The above findings are in agreement with what Chan and Dennis (1992) pointed when they suggested that women's organisations should invited to talk at schools, churches or workplaces about domestic violence and educate people on how they can be involved to reduce it. Communities should openly confront exploitation, abuse and violence through the media and civil society groups in order to reduce domestic conflicts.

Furthermore, participants pointed that the media has a crucial role in the prevention of domestic conflicts by raising awareness and educating the public. The media has a key role in shaping public opinion and therefore has a central part to play in breaking down prevailing stereotypes and negative patterns of behaviour that can lead to domestic conflicts. Moreover, the media can help victims of domestic conflicts by publicizing information about support services accessible. It also emerged from the participants that it is sad to see the media only portraying the causes and effects of domestic conflicts without giving possible solutions in remedy to these. One participant had this to say, " *The news papers and television report of domestic conflicts causes and effects on a daily basis yet we need a way out of these tortures.*"

Emerging also from the study was the need for Law enforcement agents to revise penalties and issuing stiffer punishments on domestic violence. Participants indicated that the Domestic Violence Act is not being implemented fully many people are suffering effects of violence when this legislation is not being used for their protection. Some had the opinion that the Government localise some of the laws that they are a signatory to regional and international level so as to help come up with beta solution to cubing domestic conflicts.

The study findings also showed the need for workshop and /conferences to equip people on what domestic violence is and its effects on the victims' performance as well as ways to stop it. It was suggested that the Government, through the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development together with Non Governmental Organisations should complement each other and arrange such informative gatherings.

Findings indicated that women should be empowered to eradicate poverty which was seen as a major contributor of domestic conflicts. This was in line with Howard (2006), who pointed that women's participation in paid work is an important dimension in the process of empowerment as it gives an indication of women's freedom and autonomy. It also suggests a greater ability on the part of women to break through the cultural norms and stereotypes that restrict them to the domestic sphere.

The boy and girl child should be socialised at a tender age not to yield to societal labeling and stigma will help them in their future relationships and build self-esteem and confidence. This concurs with several researches that indicated a great need for re-socialisation, where the community should attempt to act as mediators in resolving the family disputes and men can set up their own structures like Padare. This would see men looking at the other side of parenthood and educate their fellow men on the negative effects of violence in the home. Women on the other hand would be taught how to act so that their husbands do not hit them (UNICERF, 2005; Pratyoush, 2005; Woolfe and Jaffe, 1999).

## 8. Conclusions of the study

Whilst problems in marriage are inevitable, domestic conflicts are not the best option in solving them. The home is often known as a unit of security and happiness, but conflicts in the context of the home is part of the experiences of many people. Laws are there but domestic conflicts remain unchanged. Domestic conflicts and their threat reflect culturally defined notion of masculinity and femininity which serve to reinforce women's subordinate position and subjection to harassment and torture.

The causes of domestic conflicts are complex and varied. However, the onus of the problem rests upon the way the society perceives the position and roles of men and women, upon the way men and boys are socialised to believe that they should have control over women and girls. The interpretation of development as referring to social and human development should mean that domestic conflicts must be included in development policy. The problems of poverty cannot be resolved without full participation from all members of the community.

## 9. Recommendations

- The achievement of addressing domestic conflicts and violence require collective effort at community, national and global levels in order to respect their moral values.
- To solve tensions in marriages, families should sit down and reflect on its performance. As parents capture their children's sentiments, they continue to behave otherwise and become more serious and more meaningful role models because youths are the mirror of the adults.
- Women should be empowered to eradicate poverty which was seen as a major contributor of domestic conflicts by participating in paid work to break through the cultural norms and stereotypes that restrict them to the domestic sphere.
- There is need to raise awareness on domestic conflicts and their effects on the victim's performance as well as educating people on human rights.
- The media on the other hand should educate people on what domestic conflicts are, the policies that protect the victims of domestic conflicts and the steps to follow when violence has occurred.
- Women's organisations should advocate for polices on women's rights to make choices whether to get married or not without being labeled
- There is need to lobby policymakers and communities at large to stop domestic violence, to ensure that adequate resources are allocated towards fixing it and to make sure that all sexes enjoy basic human rights.
- Law enforcement agents should revise penalties and issue stiffer punishment on marital violence.
- The Government can localise some of the laws that they are signatories to regional and international level.
- The Government, through the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development together with responsible NGOs should complement each other and arrange workshops and conferences to equip people on what domestic violence is, its effects and solutions on the victims'



performance.

- Upholding women's rights should be an everyday issue because if violence of any sort persists in any community, there will be no progress in that community.

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