

*An Overview of the
Fern Holland Legal Aid Clinic*

*ARC International
GBV in Conflict-Affected Settings*

Guinea, West Africa



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ARC International- Mission Statement

ARC International is a nonprofit, nonsectarian, international refugee assistance organization, headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota. ARC works to ensure the survival, health and well-being of refugees, displaced persons, and others at risk, helping them to rebuild productive lives of dignity and purpose.

ARC's goal is to share information and skills with those we serve, always with respect for their own knowledge and values.

Acknowledgements This document, although compiled by ARC's International Health Technical Advisor, Connie M. Kamara, is a compilation of information from various reports, proposals, and evaluations that have been written by ARC staff members. A great deal of appreciation is extended to all of ARC's dedicated staff, both local and international, in Guinea.

The quote at right is from a tribute to the late Fern Holland from the refugee women of Guinea as written by Willie S. Livingstone, Manager of the Fern Holland Legal Aid Clinic. Fern Holland worked with many dedicated international and local ARC staff to create the ARC Gender-Based Violence Legal Aid Clinic in N'Zerekore, Guinea. Fern was killed in Iraq in 2004 while working to empower women and make their rights a reality.

This brief overview has been written in memory of Fern L. Holland, Attorney. Her great passion for the rights of women and children and the concrete actions she took toward empowering the vulnerable inspired us and continues to guide us.



“Yesterday we were beaten, raped, condemned for prostitution, sexually exploited, without security, and always in tears without justice. Today, through the grace of Fern, the women and children of refugee status in Guinea can now say thank God the injustice is over. Justice has finally come for us. The fundamental rights of refugee women and children are now being recognized by the society.”

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Fanta's Story

“During the war, my father and husband were killed in front of me. The soldiers tied me up and threw my baby into a bed of biting insects. Many men beat me and raped me. I escaped to the bush and had been hiding there for two weeks. We had no food. I came to this camp yesterday for food and medicine for me and my baby. I am still bleeding from the rapes.”

- Fanta, 19

Fanta's story is a common one amongst refugees and internally displaced persons. Gender-based violence (GBV) is present during conflict when women and girls often experience violence, forced pregnancy, intentional HIV infection, abduction, sexual abuse and slavery, and rape. These women flee to places of refuge but are often met with even more violence: further abuse, increased domestic violence, and exploitation.

II. GBV Defined

GBV is defined 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, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”¹

III. A Multi-Sectoral Approach

An approach to addressing GBV that is widely accepted as a “best practice” is the multi-sectoral model. This model includes four primary sectors: health, psycho-social, security, and legal justice. Each of these sectors is essential to providing quality GBV services but must also work together in a comprehensive manner to ensure the effectiveness of such services. Legal justice tends to be the sector that is often neglected when addressing GBV. Often agencies feel that there are not adequate laws to back up their efforts or that decisions are difficult to have enforced. “Though recognized even in the earliest GBV programs as an important component of service delivery, the challenges of providing legal aid touch virtually all sectors providing GBV services: in order for the judicial process to be efficient and effective, health, psychosocial and security sectors must each contribute their expertise. Thus, developing legal processes requires a broad-based approach aimed at capacity-building multiple sectors at multiple levels.” Although challenging, legal support is an essential component to combat GBV.

¹ United Nations General Assembly, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, 1993.

² Ward, Jeanne. “Gender-Based Violence Among Conflict-Affected Populations: Humanitarian Program Response.” *Listening to the Silences: Women and War*. Ed. Durham, Helen and Gurd, Tracey. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers (Leiden), forthcoming 2005.

IV. Legal Aid

Legal aid helps to achieve redress for survivors while challenging the culture of impunity that may be protecting perpetrators. In addition, it promotes rights and offers protection. The provision of legal services to the survivors of GBV serves several important functions necessary to maintain a civil community and protect women and children, including: punishment and deterrence of those engaged in GBV; protection and rehabilitation of survivors; deterrence of others who might engage in similar acts and protection of those who would be their victims; and existence of a visible, reliable, and effective avenue of recourse for refugee women and children.

V. The Fern Holland Legal Aid Clinic

ARC International's Legal Aid Clinic was established in March of 2003 to provide free legal services for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV). It was established on behalf of Liberian and Sierra Leonian refugees living in Guinea who were unable to utilize the Guinean legal system and to pursue perpetrators under the Guinean law. In 2004 it was renamed in honor of Fern Holland, one of the primary drivers of the project who was murdered in Iraq in March 2004.

The Fern Holland Legal Aid Clinic is located in N'Zerekore town in the Republic of Guinea, West Africa. The Clinic is centrally located and accessible to approximately 40,000 refugees who reside in N'Zerekore, and another 31,000 refugees who live in the Kola and Laine camps near the town. Its primary objective is to defend survivors' rights and to diminish perpetrators' impunity. The clinic is staffed with trained Guinean lawyers and assistants whom are refugees. While the clinic's staff rely upon Guinean law in providing advice and prosecuting GBV cases under the national civil and criminal codes, arguments presented to the Courts also include references to international human rights conventions adopted by Guinea, as under Guinean law all international documents that have been ratified become part of the domestic order.

Currently, the Clinic processes an average of 20 cases every month. More than 95 percent of the closed cases are closed in favor of the clients' interest.

The Clinic has made a real difference in the lives of the refugees in Guinea. Based on feedback forms, nearly 100% of the beneficiaries have reported being "satisfied" or "extremely satisfied" with the Clinic's services. Where once a culture of impunity existed, women now feel empowered to pursue charges against those in the community who have raped, exploited, or abused them. Through focus group discussions, beneficiaries have also indicated a notable decrease in cases of GBV in the camps where the clinic operates; a decrease confirmed by other NGOs, particularly in the health sector, and by UNHCR itself.

VI. The Three Primary Services

Legal services offered by the Clinic aim to be as complete as possible. The Clinic offers information, advice, guidance, mediations, and legal representation. The aim is to facilitate the access to justice. The Clinic helps survivors to cope with judicial procedures which are often unknown or viewed as intimidating. Mediation is also an important service that is provided as it can build up the survivor's confidence in law. Many survivors are intimidated or afraid of perpetrator reprisals or rejection from the community and therefore mediation can be a good first step to a further legal practice.

“My younger brother and sister take me as their mother. They ask me for things and I can't do it; I don't have it. In general, women here are very poor. Young girls...need lots of things...body lotion, clothes, Kotex. It's a big problem when you are young, and you just decide to do sex. Men see when you are poor, and a man comes with money, and you just accept.”

- Mawa, 16

The ARC Legal Aid program does not limit itself to just combating the effects of such violence (providing legal assistance to survivors), but also aims to bring long-term change in the legal system and the refugee community itself. The Clinic provides three primary services:

A. Education

It has been generally agreed that causes of GBV are rooted in socio-cultural norms of gender inequality and discrimination. Thus, preventing GBV and promoting women's rights requires changes in gender relations within the community. In addition, only women who know about their rights can take effective action to exercise and advocate for them. Yet most women and girls themselves remain ignorant of their rights and of the laws, mechanisms, and procedures that protect and defend them. For all these reasons, education is central to the effort of recognition and protection of women against GBV.

The education programs of the Clinic are helping to change the environment that fosters GBV. The programs focus on the following groups: refugees, community leaders, government and non-governmental aid workers, UNHCR employees, physical and mental health care providers, bar owners, hotel owners, video club owners, law enforcement personnel, and Guinean officials charged with the responsibility to protect refugees. The sessions include information about the clinic's services, the substance of the laws the clinic handles, and the penalties associated with violation of the laws. Through these educational sessions refugees become more knowledgeable about their rights and would-be offenders are deterred.

B. Confidential Advice and Legal Representation

Providing legal advice and representation to the survivors of violence and exploitation serves several important functions necessary to maintain a civil society and protect women and children, including: (1) punishment and deterrence of those who engage in criminal activities; (2) protection and retribution for the survivors; (3) deterrence of others who might engage in similar acts and protection of those who would be their victims; and (4) the existence of a visible, reliable, and effective avenue of recourse for women and children.

The Clinic's mandate is limited to the following types of cases: physical and sexual violence, domestic abuse, sexual exploitation, child prostitution and the pimping of children, forced prostitution, threats, paternity suits, and child custody/kidnapping. These categories were established based on the needs identified by the various investigative teams, consultations with refugees, community leaders, the UNHCR, NGO partners,

and suggestions made by refugee leaders during a conference held in December 2002.

Regarding legal action on GBV cases, the problem in Guinea is not the substance of the law but rather the lack of its enforcement, mainly because of ignorance of the texts, cultural barriers, and gaps in academic training. By filing cases, the Clinic promotes the enforcement and the rule of law within the Guinean legal system. The Clinic's pursuit of cases throughout the law enforcement and judicial processes causes the Guinean legal system to function as designed and serves as training for Guinean officers and prosecutors. In addition to the informal training and in order to support and reinforce this action, official and regular trainings, courses, and workshops are conducted for law enforcement personnel in charge of security and protection of refugees in Guinea, including camp security, judicial officers from police/gendarmerie, and the judiciary of the N'Zérékoré regions.

These trainings cover:

- International human rights law (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Bill of rights, CEDAW and CRC),
- Refugee law and UNHCR mandate
- Guinean domestic provisions on GBV and criminal and civil procedures to be followed

There is a real need and interest in such training. After the national workshop organized by ARC in August 2004 on the "Review of the Guinean legislation regarding GBV: problem of content or lack of enforcement?" which was attended by more than 60 Guinean officials, ARC received written requests for such trainings from partners such as camp security trainers, judiciary members newly appointed at the N'Zérékoré Courts (in August 2004), and prison authorities.

C. Government Advocacy

The difficulty the Clinic and the courts face in applying international law arises from the lack of penalties for violations, and the inconsistencies between the Guinean penal code and relevant sections of the international covenants; this also presents a due process concern given the lack of notice. Women and children are not adequately protected under Guinean law. Moreover, the domestic laws of Guinea are inconsistent with many of the international conventions that Guinea has signed and ratified. However, in a review of legislation, ARC found that the lack of application of existing law is an even greater problem than the need for legislative reform.

Recently, as mentioned above, ARC held a national seminar on Guinean legislation regarding GBV. The session included members of the judiciary, the national assembly, NGOs, UN staff, and security forces. The session served to inform the decision makers about GBV issues.

Having one barrister within the Clinic seems absolutely necessary for real impact and advocacy of the cases. Through his/her plea and judiciary actions, the barrister is a key element in making the system responsive and in ensuring the investigation of the complaint. Lawyers don't have the same power and influence on law enforcement personnel and - in most countries - they are not allowed to plea in front of courts. The barrister can play a key role in ensuring that police or judicial officers' interpretations of the law are in line with the spirit and letter of legislation that is of potential use to survivors of GBV.

VII. Legal Aid Clinic Staff Responsibilities

The Clinic staff includes a lead lawyer, two assistant lawyers, two legal assistants, and several administrative support staff. The assistant lawyers handle client intake and initial interviews, the assistant lawyers provide legal advice to clients, and the lead lawyers argue cases in the courts and represent clients in mediation.

The Clinic's staff takes in cases, either self-referred or referred by partners, during weekly visits in the camps and through the constant presence of a team in the clinics' main offices. Services delivered are legal advice, mediation, or legal representation according to the nature of the case (civil, criminal), the seriousness (severity or gravity, crime or offense) and the wishes of the client. Confidentiality is strictly ensured. The program aims at ensuring a safer and more respectful environment for the refugee women. Therefore some follow-up agents are in charge of monitoring the Clinic's clients after their cases are closed in order to assess their satisfaction with the clinic services and/or their possible needs of further assistance. For example, in a clinic-sponsored mediation, these agents make sure that the two parties involved effectively respect the agreement; or after a court action, they will make sure that the ex-client is not receiving any threats and does not need any further legal assistance.

During the initial interview, all clients are advised of the confidential nature of communications and the attorney-client privilege. They are also informed that no action will be taken without their express consent and only upon their written request. The Client Intake Form includes a consent form, which authorizes the Clinic to take action on behalf of the client. The Intake Form also includes an authorization for the Clinic to release information to UNHCR and NGO partners who can assist the client in seeking medical and psychological treatment and assistance with safety concerns.

“Engaging clients in understanding the legal process and promoting their control over the legal process are both priorities for (the clinic). The client intake procedure, including a consent form and a confidentiality statement, stresses that clients are the primary decision-makers for pursuing prosecution and have the right to drop their cases at any time. After receiving information on their rights and their options for recourse, the clients must authorize written consent for the clinic to take action.”³

In addition, the ARC staff makes referrals for the following services: psychological, physical, and social consequences. It is absolutely imperative that the GBV response comprises a group of comprehensive services that will reduce the harmful after-effects of GBV and prevent further harm and trauma. Referral partners help the Clinic's staff in meeting the non-legal needs of the Clinic's clients or in taking actions necessary to the resolution of the case, such as the approval of medical care for women refugees in town and those who do not have refugee cards, registration of refugee women and children, issues involving unaccompanied and/or abused minors, and safety issues.

The Clinic staff relies upon Guinean law in providing advice and prosecuting cases. Most cases are dealt with under the Guinean penal code; however, cases of paternity and child custody fall under the civil code. Arguments presented to the N'Zerekore Court may also include references to international documents and covenants that have been adopted by Guinea. Under Guinean law, all international documents that have been ratified by the Guinean Government become law without implementing legislation. Members of the N'Zerekore court participated in a conference that ARC held in December of 2002 and agreed at that time that international documents ratified by Guinea should be accepted as law and applied as such in Guinean courts.

Refugees seek legal advice by walking into the N'Zerekore office and requesting assistance. They also are

³ Ward, Jeanne. 2005

permitted to send a messenger or an agent of some kind to ask for a consultation in another location, such as a safe house or women's center. In addition, once a week, a lawyer and legal assistant team travel to the refugee camps to provide legal services to refugee women and children who are unable to access services through the N'Zerekore office.

"I now have somebody to fight for me."

"I've gotten my self-esteem."

"I'm gaining respect and courage."

VIII. Community Response

"Clients have provided feedback via focus group discussions held periodically by the clinic to ascertain client satisfaction with the services, to document any challenges encountered during the legal process and to request recommendations for improving the clinic's services. During weekly women's group meetings, women are encouraged to discuss openly any issues regarding the clinic and/or any other services that are provided for them. The feedback received from clients has, in general, been positive. Women shared that the clinic has made a positive impact on their self-perception and treatment within the community. Some of the responses include, 'I now have somebody to fight for me,' 'I've gotten my self-esteem,' and 'I'm gaining respect and courage.' Clients have communicated that the clinic offers and symbolizes the protection, care and guidance one should receive from family members."⁴

IX. A Second GBV Legal Aid Clinic Opened

Due to the positive response in the community that the Clinic has received a second GBV Legal Aid clinic was opened in Guinea in May, 2004 in the town of Kissidougou. The clinic was established at the ARC GBV office in Kissidougou town with referrals from all three Albadariah camps of Kountayah, Telikoro and Boreah. From May through November 2004, 54 cases have been processed by this clinic with 100% of the clients expressing "extreme satisfaction" with the outcome reached by the clinic. Most clients are from the refugee camps (as per UNHCR statistics with a total population of 20,000) a few are self-referred from Kissidougou town (estimation of 7,000 urban refugees).

X. Legal Aid Clinic: Information, Education, and Communication Materials

The following IEC materials from the Fern Holland Legal Aid Clinic, including posters and dramas, were developed by and for refugees. ARC takes a community-based approach to developing and implementing all programs and encourages beneficiaries to take as much ownership and responsibility as possible. The selected posters were created by artist Paul Zayzay Bannah. The dramas, written for a predominately oral community, are in creole english and have received a positive response.

⁴ Ward, Jeanne. 2005



FAMILY ABANDONMENT/CHILD SUPPORT

Giving BIRTH to a CHILD creates
RESPONSIBILITIES



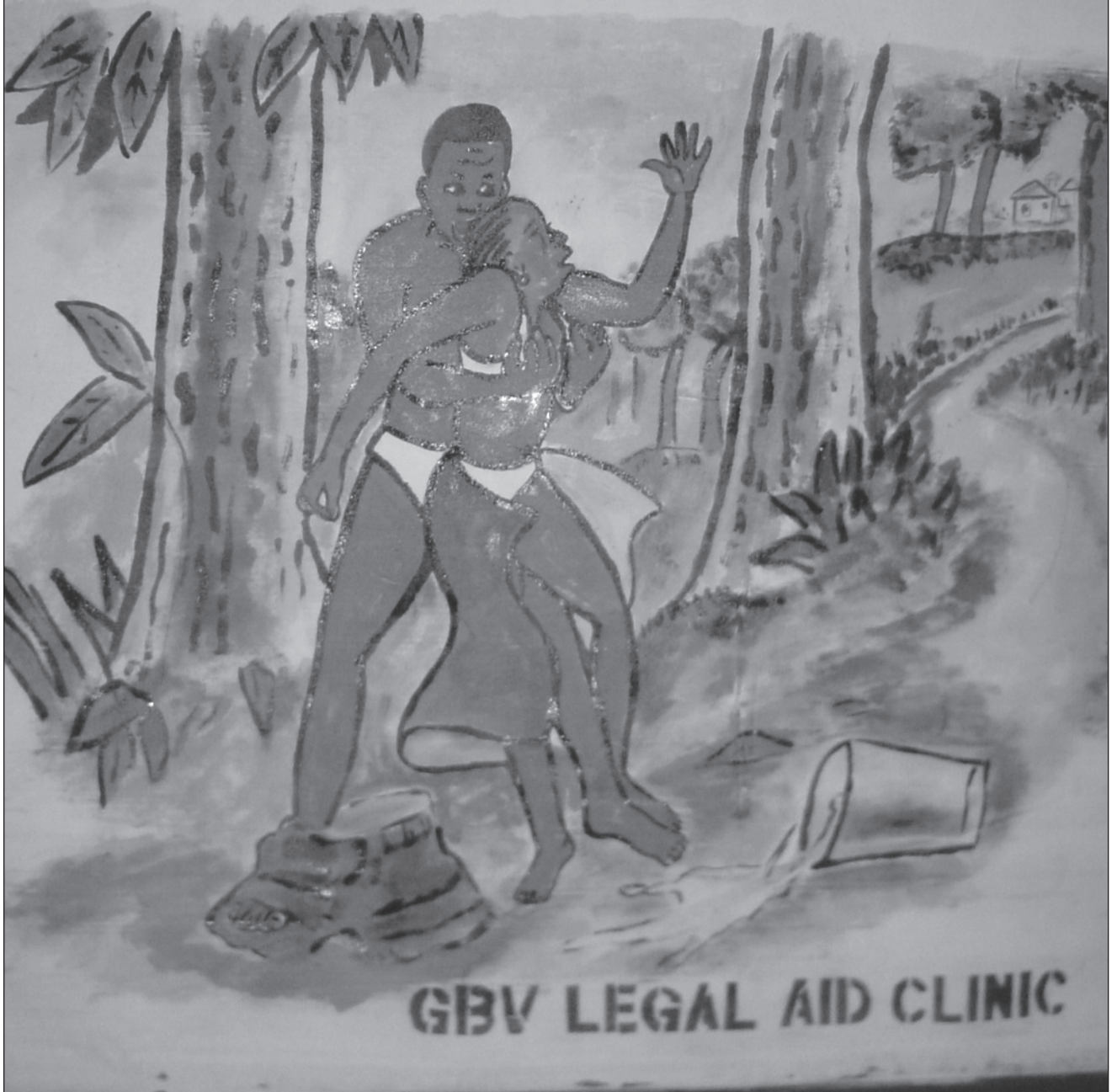
GBV LEGAL AID CLINIC

Family Abandonment/Child Support: Giving birth to a child creates responsibilities



RAPE

Rape is **NEVER** a woman's fault
and is **ALWAYS** illegal

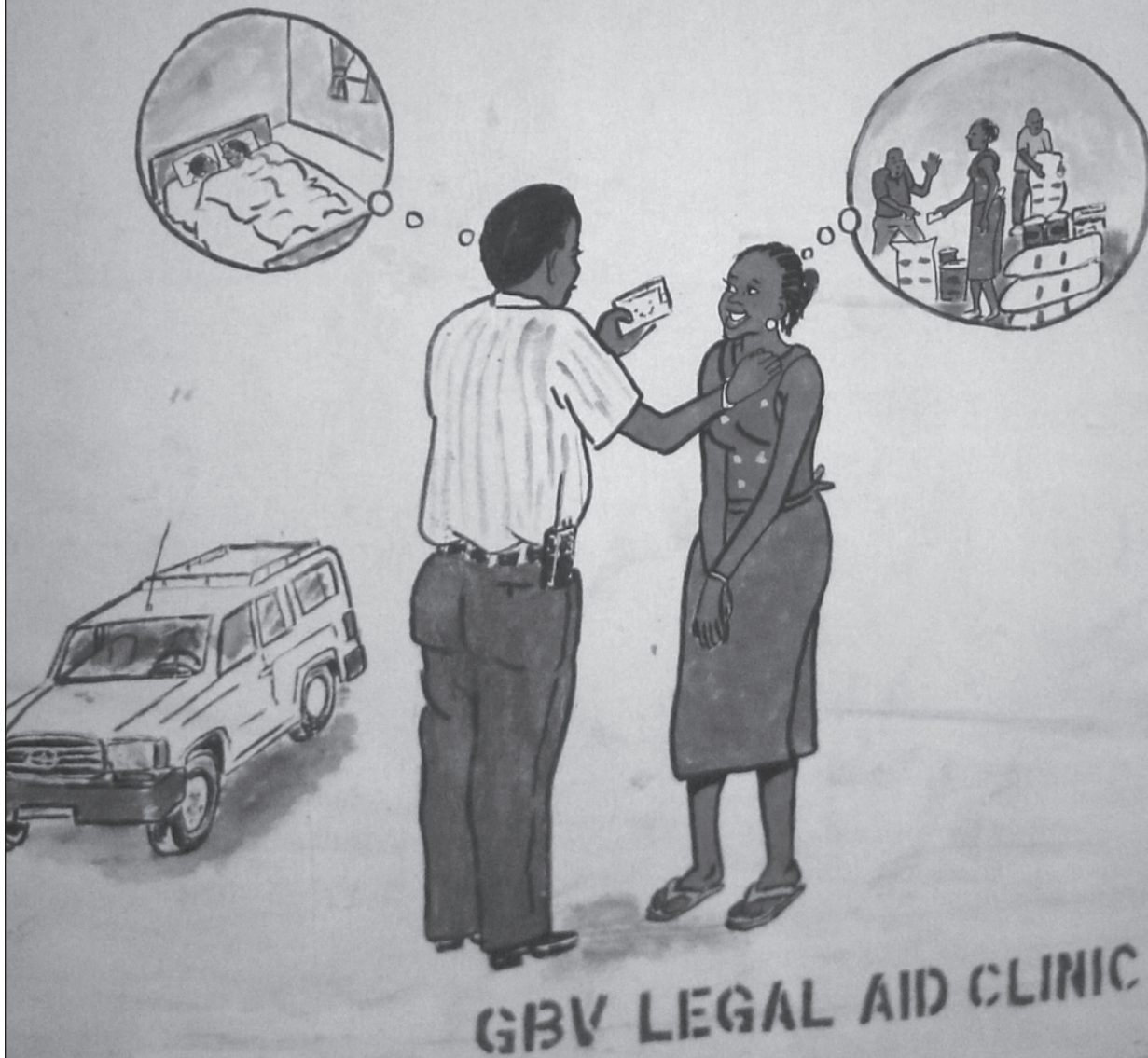


Rape: Rape is never a woman's fault and is always illegal



SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Abuse of power and position to gain sexual favour is condemned by law



Sexual Exploitation: Abuse of power and position to gain sexual favour is condemned by law



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Beating a woman is a violation of
human rights**



GBV LEGAL AID CLINIC

Domestic Violence: Beating a woman is a violation of human rights

Drama 1: On Rights of a Woman

I HAVE A SAY IN THIS MATTER – DOMESTIC DECISIONS MATTER

CAST:

Korto, wife

Sulonteh, husband

Paul, community worker

Kpakolo, messenger

SCENE I (At home)

Korto: Sulonteh! Sulonteh!

Sulonteh: Yes! What happen?

Korto: Who took the bulgur and the oil from here?

Sulonteh: I did, so what?

Korto: What did you do with it?

Sulonteh: I sold it to buy my shoes.

Korto: But you should have told me.

Sulonteh: For what? I am the head here.

Korto: But the head is attached to the tail.

Sulonteh: My friend, if you don't have anything to say go find something to do. For me this lecture is over.

Korto: Okay, but remember I also have a say in this matter.

SCENE II (1 week after)

Sulonteh (angrily): Wait! Korto! Korto!

Korto: Yes Sulonteh, what happen again?

Sulonteh: So who took the balance oil and bulgur and soap from here?

Korto: I did, I also sold them to get me some items which I badly needed.

Sulonteh: You have no right to do that (he slaps her after an argument and she runs to the community worker crying with a report).

The CW sends his messenger to get Sulonteh.

SCENE III (At the community worker's office)

- Paul: Sulonteh, thank you for coming, please tell me why you slapped your wife?
- Sulonteh: Because she is my wife and I have the right to slap her when she misbehaves.
- Paul: What did she do?
- Sulonteh: She sold our supplies without informing me.
- Paul: Oh thank God you said our supplies and not my supply? Korto also told me you sold some of the supplies too, is that right?
- Sulonteh: Yes, I did, but I am the man.
- Paul: Okay Sulonteh, Korto says she doesn't want to stay with you anymore because of your attitude. What do you have to say.
- Sulonteh: Oh, then who will take care of the children? Who will cook or wash my clothes and how will we divide the ticket?
- Paul: Now you see Sulonteh. If you expect me to answer these questions, then you have to remember that Korto has a say in this matter n'est ce pas?
- Sulonteh: Okay, yes. Please beg Korto for me. I am wrong. I will not do this to her again.
- Paul: Thank you for realizing your fault. Please remember that though Korto is a woman and your wife, she has the same rights that you have. She has a right to make decisions affecting the family, but in collaboration with you. Both of you should discuss your problems and agree on one thing before making decision.
- Sulonteh: Oh my people I did not know that women had rights. Let us respect their rights too. They too have a say in this matter.

THE END

Drama 2: On Rape and Attempted Rape

CAST:

Sia, beautiful young lady
John, perpetrator
Alfred, member of the community
Abu, member of the community
Mr. Conteh, elder of the town
Ma Korpo, elder of the town

SCENE I (At the main road)

Sia is walking sexily with her friends to fetch water and suddenly met Abu who had been eyeing her for a quite a long time. She smiled at him, which sound to him that she was in love with him.

SCENE II (Two days later)

Sia, this time alone, is going to fetch water

John hide himself somewhere aiming to advance his lovely intension to Sia. Suddenly he appears when she come close by. He begin telling Sia that he loves her and will love for them to be together.

Sia (being angry about his intension):

Hey, do not feel because I was smiling with you the last time means that I was in love with you. I don't love you.

John:

Sia, you are forced to accept my love or else I will do something bad to you. Out of a sudden, he starts harassing her and then rapes her.

Sia (shouting):

Someone come and help me...

Fortunately, some people living near the scene came. They asked what had happened and later carried Sia to the health post.

SCENE III (Two months later)

Alfred coming in action met with his friend, Abu. He announced that John had been sanctioned to 10 years in prison of rape.

Abu:

That's wrong, because the girl was the one who provoked John. She had gotten what she wanted. The man was not to be punished for that.

Mr. Conteh came in during the argument between Alfred and Abu.

Mr. Conteh:

You always have to get the permission of the lady. When she says no, you should always respect her wish or else, if you forced her, you will be charged for rape.

Ma Korpo: Be careful because when the girl is a minor even if she agrees, do not have sex with her or else you might end in jail because having sex with a minor is considered as a crime.

Abu And if you try to rape her but to no success, just an attempt?

Mr. Conteh: That is also condemned by law like rape.

THE END

Drama 3: On Sexual Exploitation

CAST:

Bintu, refugee woman
Maxwell, NGO worker
Yassah, legal assistant

SCENE I (At the verification center)

Bintu came across an NGO worker responsible for giving ration cards to refugees. She told him that she has no ration card and have four children and also her husband is being hospitalized at the clinic. She really needs this card.

Maxwell (being moved by the lady during the discussion):
Don't disturb me while I am talking with my friends. You can come during lunch hour.

SCENE II (During lunch time)

Bintu came during lunch time to meet the Ngo worker.

Maxwell: Ah, here you are again. Well, I thought about you. I am going to sleep in the camp today. Bintu, I love you so much and if you are nice to me, I will help.

Bintu cries, asks him please to change his mind but he refused so she finally accepts his demand.

SCENE III (At Bintu's house)

Yassah came to render visit to Bintu but met her quiet and confused.

Yassah: What is the problem Bintu?

Bintu cries and tells her friend what had happened between she and the NGO worker

Bintu: I am very ashamed and feel so bad..

Yassah (being so angry of the act done to her friend):
You shouldn't have accepted, you should have said no. It is his job to give ration card to people. He should have given it to you without asking anything. What the man did is not considered as a good behavior, and is even punishable by law because is an abuse of someone's vulnerability. This man can be severely charged and punished by law

THE END

Drama 4: On Family Abandonment and Child Support

CAST:

Hawa, young refugee girl

Amadu, NGO worker

Ma Josephine, community worker

Mary, legal assistant

SCENE I (At Amadu's house)

Hawa comes to Amadu announcing that she is pregnant by him.

Amadu: What? Stop that joke. That is not my responsibility. I already have a wife and children. I don't want any outside child and will like for you to abort the pregnancy.

Hawa: No, I am not going to abort this pregnancy and you are the family to this child.

Amadu: Okay, if you have refused, then leave my house immediately.

SCENE II (At the community worker's office)

Hawa (having given birth to her child) explains to the community worker that Amadu had abandoned her, he doesn't want her any longer and had also refused to take the child's responsibilities.

Ma Josephine: Thank you very much for your explanation. I am sorry for what is happening to you presently but this case is a bit complicated because the solution depends on the law and I don't know the law. But if you accept, I know some people who are specialists in law and can help women. Their program is called the Legal Aid Clinic, and they are here every _____ from 10 am to 3pm.

Hawa : Thank you madam. I will like to meet them when they come.

SCENE III (At the Legal Aid Clinic)

Josephine sends her assistant to call Amadu. Amadu arrives.

Mary I thank you Amadu for responding to our call. I am going to mediate between you and Hawa. Amadu, you have your responsibility as a father even if you are not married to take care of the child. You can even decide not to live together with the woman, but you have to be giving money every month as child support. Is it clear? Anyway, how much do you earn per month?

Amadu declares the amount.

Mary: Fix the amount according to the law. Here is the document between the two of

you for paying your child support. You can sign.

Amadu thanks the legal assistant and later sign the document.

Hawa Also gives thanks and sign the document.

Mary: Thank you, but what I will love to explain to you is that there are severe consequences if you refuse to respect this agreement. Then Hawa can take legal action against you.

Amadu: There will be no problem, I agree and will respect this document. I am OK to pay for the child as long as I don't have to go back to his mother. I well understood all what you explain me. I am OK with it.

Hawa: Oh thank you so much. Now I can buy food and medicine for my child. I thank you very much Mary and also Josephine for having settle this problem.

THE END

Drama 5: Gender Justice at Last - Legal Aid Clinic or Physical Violence

CAST:

Alice, IRC community worker. *International Rescue Committee* (A partner NGO to ARC)

Musu, victim

AB, legal assistant

Sore, judicial assistant

Martha, Musu's friend

Sarah & Massa, community members

SCENE I (At the community worker's office)

Musu: Kpoh! Kpoh!

Alice: Yes! Please enter.

Musu enters with swollen eyes, limping on one leg she greets the community worker faintly.

Alice: Oh, hello, please have a seat. What happened to you? How did you know my office? What is your name?

Musu: (crying) well, my name is Musu. I have been listening to your awareness program on GBV issues and have even attended a workshop conducted by you on women's rights. One boy call John beat me and wounded me this morning. I want legal action against him.

Alice: Well, I am sorry Musu for this thing that happened to you. I can help you get medical attention, counseling and skills training, but I can not do anything for legal action. But I know some people who can help you. They come here every _____ by 11:00 a.m and they are known as the Legal Aid Clinic.

Musu: The Legal Aid Clinic? Who are they?

Alice: They are here to help women and children who suffer from gender-based violence.

Musu: Which kind of violence?

Alice: All sexual violence like rape, all physical violence like beating, threats, child support, child custody, paternity etc.

Musu: You mean like what happened to me, can they help me?

Alice: Yes, but you are the one who decides. If you are interested come on _____ at 11:00 a.m at this office. I will introduce you to them.

SCENE II (Thursday at the community worker's office)

Alice: Welcome once again. Musu please meet AB and Sore of the Legal Aid Clinic. These are the people I told you about last week.

AB: Nice to meet you Musu. I am AB, a Liberian like you and I am responsible to listen to your case and tell this French lawyer what you told me. Her name is

Sore – lui c'est une cliente. Elle s'appelle Musu.

Sore : Soyez les bienvenus. Nous sommes la pour vous. Je m'appelle Sore, je suis Assistant Juridique.

AB : He says welcome his name is Sore and he is one of the Assistant Lawyers at the Legal Aid Clinic.

Musu: Thank you.

AB: Now please tell us your problem. Let us assure you that nobody will hear about this problem who has no business hearing about it.

Alice asks for an excuse and leaves.

Musu: (crying) How can you people help me?

AB: Based on your choice, we can ask the guy who beat you to come here so that we can settle it between you. We can also offer you advise on what to do or we can follow this case in court for you free of charge. We have a lawyer who will plead the case for you free of charge but you yourself will have to be available in following up at every stage as the case progresses. We also want you to always say nothing but the whole truth. If you lie on anyone, it can be punished if it is discovered. The choice is yours. Whatever you decide, we will help you.

Musu: Okay, let me go and think. I will come back next _____

SCENE III (At Musu's house in discussion with her friend)

Musu: Bah Martha, this thing that happened, I met the Legal Aid Clinic. They can help me get justice but I am thinking, I don't want people to say I am bad.

Martha: Musu self ya, suppose the boy was going to kill you. You think the donors and international community are spending their money for bluff? Look at you, this case is serious if you compromise it people like John will not stop these kinds of habit. He will do it to other women thinking that he is right and that he can go unpunished. Women have the right to live free of violence. There are laws and international conventions regarding these infractions.

Musu: Thank you Martha. Two heads are better than one. I will take legal action against him through the Legal Aid Clinic next _____

SCENE III (At Musu's house in discussion with her friend)

Sarah: (crying) oh Massah look at me. Joe beat me and almost broke my hands. I don't know what to do. He told me to carry him wheresoever I wish and that nothing will come out of it.

Massah: Look bah, go to the Legal Aid Clinic. You remembered Musu who was beaten by John. The problem was settled through court by the Legal Aid Clinic. In fact John was condemned by the court where he admitted his guilt. He understood what he has done was very wrong and now he respect women

Sarah: Thank you Massah. I am going to see them this _____. I know my problem will be solved.

THE END

