

## Members of Parliament take Leadership to end Gender Based Violence

In concluding statement released after discussion on GBV during a meeting held in Dodoma on Monday, 27 June 2011, Members of Parliament pledged to take leadership in ending GBV in Tanzania. The meeting was organized and led by Human Development Trust (HDT) in partnership with AMREF who presented research on GBV in Iringa and Dar Es Salaam and KIWOHEDE who provides services to GBV survivors.

Under the chairmanship of Hon. Magreth Sitta said, it is a debate within the parliament on which year a girl should marry since at the age of 15 many of them are already in partnership and therefore allowed marry. “The club will put more emphasis on the marriage act and influence the parliament to amend it with consideration of a healthy and preferable age for marriage”, Hon. Sitta said.



*The Chairman of Parliament Hon. George Simbachawene provides his views after the presentation from HDT, AMREF and KIWOHEDE. On his right is the HDT Executive Director, Dr Peter Bujari followed by the Chairperson of Social Service Parliamentary committee Hon. Margeth Sitta*

During the meeting with MPs, the HDT Director of Programs Mr Simon Malanilo identified the specific findings on the law of Marriage Act which recognizes customary law, does not address domestic violence, is

silent about step children and it allows for early marriages where girls at age of 15 can be married with the consent of the parents or guardians. On the side of AMREF, Dr. Beat Mboya noted that the commonest form of violence was sexual violence followed by human trafficking and rape.

The meeting with MPs was among a series of meetings held by Human Development Trust (HDT) to create an avenue on dissemination of gaps identified in laws and policies that perpetuate GBV. The first one targeted media houses with intention to further educate communities on GBV. The media was also motivated and formed a club called Gender Based Violence Media Alliance (GMA) which

will be reporting events around GBV. The second meeting shared the findings with legal and human rights organizations who agreed to support the efforts.

The Chairperson for the Parliamentary Committee on Constitution Justice and Governance, Hon. Pindi Chana added that the problem is lack of awareness on the laws existing within the society. “What HDT has done in identifying the gaps within the laws is very useful and will help and raise awareness within the community” she said. Hon. Chana promised to work with her committee and Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs to explore development of by-laws at LGAs that can protect vulnerable groups that are likely to be affected by GBV. “Making efforts to access more resources, conduct researches to focus more regions; educate the communities on these laws and gaps, this will be useful” added Chana.

Meanwhile Joseph Msami from Wapo radio commented on the role of media to document and report issues related to GBV as means of addressing GBV at family level. “When we report matters concerning GBV we will be able to reduce the problem since information has power to mobilize and influence the community” he said.

Gender Based Violence (GBV) is a human rights abuse which is reflected in the fight against poverty but also impedes the progress in the national response to HIV and AIDS. It is widespread in the country in both rural and urban areas where women and girls do not have equal rights as men and boys to participate in social, economic and political arenas limiting satisfactory prosperity of their lives. Specific acts of gender based violence include among others: domestic violence which is physical and sexual abuse; raping; use of derogatory language; early

marriages; female genital mutilation; unwanted pregnancies; forced labor; unequal division of property between men and women; infection with HIV and STIs and human trafficking especially of girls for domestic work and prostitution.

*The HDT Director of Programs Mr Simon Malanilo presenting the findings to MPs in Dodoma Hotel on gaps in laws that perpetuate GBV*



HDT, KIWOHEDE and AMREF under the support of UNDP implemented a project on Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) with the aim of enhancing universal access by affected women and girls to available services. In the project, AMREF undertook a research on extent of SGBV in Iringa and Dar Es Salaam, KIWOHEDE was supported to provide services to the survivors of SGBV and HDT undertook advocacy that included reviewed laws and policies related to SGBV to identify the existing gaps.

According to news received currently, GBV champion MPs met as agreed on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> June and established a club under the leadership of Hon. Margareth Sitta as the Chairperson, Hon. Juma Nkamia (Deputy Chairperson), Hon. Rosweeter Kasikila (Secretary) and Hon. Martha Mlata (Treasurer). Other MPs who joined the club include Hon. Lucy Nkya (Deputy Minister for Ministry of Health and Social Welfare) and Hon. Umyy Mwalimu (Deputy Minister for Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children). Mobilization is ongoing to gain more MPs for club membership especially men.