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Political Battles on Women's Bodies: Post-Election Conflicts and Violence Against Women in Internally Displaced Persons Camps in Kenya

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Abstract

The Kenya 2007 December presidential election results were violently challenged. For months, political protests accompanied by violent attacks and violent reaction by government security forces, led to "ethnic cleansing" particularly in the Rift Valley region resulting in deaths of more than 1,500 people and internal displacement of about 450,000 others. Women and young girls experienced various forms of gender violence during and after the conflicts in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. Using in-depth interviews with women living in a camp, NGOs and government agencies, this article focuses on the continuing bodily violence that internally displaced women face in their everyday lives in camps. I demonstrate how a range of structural level violence - economic inequalities, unequal power relations between men and women, social acceptance of violence, inaccessible justice systems for reporting violence against women, and lack of basic services - shape and intensify intimate violence experienced by women and girls. I argue that their experiences require us to expand our understanding of violence against women as a human rights issue and for human rights scholars to engage more with the IDPs issue.

Key Words

Human Rights; Violence Against Women, Internally Displaced Persons; Kenya

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Internal displacement remains one of the world's most significant human rights and humanitarian challenges as millions of people are displaced every year by conflict, violence, human rights

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violations, disasters and development projects. Statistics indicate that by the end of 2011, there were about 26.4 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) globally (UN High Commission for Refugees 2013). IDPs are among the world's most vulnerable people. Unlike refugees, they have not crossed an international border and are, therefore, legally under protection of their own government – even when that government may be the cause of their flight (UNHCR 2013). Using field work data, this article focuses on a Kenyan IDP camp as a result of the 2007/8 post-election ethnic conflicts in order to call attention to experiences of internally displaced women, especially their bodily experiences of violence. It examines the social and structural contexts in which women in camps experience violence. I argue that the experiences of displaced women require us to expand our understanding of violence against women and address the structural location of this violence as a human rights issue. By so doing, the article contributes to human rights debates that address gender violence as a result of forced migration occasioned by electoral conflicts.

The Kenya 2007 December presidential election results were violently challenged. For months in 2008, as Kenya's opposition party (Orange Democratic Movement) leaders and the incumbent administration (Party of National Unity) failed to agree on which of them exactly won the elections, they also fanned ethnic hate and despondency (Center for Rights and Education Awareness 2008). In the two months after the elections, political and social protests accompanied by violent attacks and equal violent reaction by government security forces, led to "ethnic cleansing" particularly in the Rift Valley region. Ethnic polarization and violence led to more than 1,500 deaths and displacement of an estimated 350,000 - 450,000 people (International Commission of Jurists-Kenya and Kenya Human Rights commission 2012). The majority were Kikuyu, an ethnic group living in the predominantly Kalenjin Rift Valley region.

International mediation by the African Union (AU) led by former UN Secretary General, Dr. Kofi Annan, facilitated dialogue between the two political alliances and committed to a Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation Process (KNDR) - signed on March 4, 2008- to resolve the crisis and address long term solutions to election violence. This process developed four main agenda; immediate action to stop the violence and restore fundamental rights and liberties; address the humanitarian crisis, promote reconciliation, healing and restoration of calm; overcome political crisis and; address long term issues and the root cause of the conflict, including constitutional, legal and institutional reforms (Wanyeki 2008). The process also saw the establishment of a commission of inquiry into the post-election violence and a Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission. With respect to legal prosecution, the International Criminal Court (ICC) in January 2012

confirmed cases for some prominent politicians and a senior government official for allegedly planning and funding the violence. These included the current president and deputy president elected in March 2013. At the national level, the Kenyan police and local judicial system have failed to investigate and prosecute crimes and to ensure justice for victims. The AU Panel of Eminent African Personalities continues to monitor Kenya's implementation of the four agenda.

The KNDR agreement, however, came after months of painful deaths, loss of property, bodily and psychological harm, and displacement of thousands of people across the country. Women paid and continue to pay the highest price for the violence over five years after the post-election conflicts. Many women live with memories of a political battle staged on their bodies through acts of sexual violence and other forms of gender violence. Additionally, they continue to experience physical, sexual and a range of structural violence despite the existence of various laws and human rights instruments protecting their rights.

In this article, therefore, I focus on the continuing violence that women face in their everyday lives in the camps that are supposed to protect and provide for people fleeing violence. First, I provide a brief overview of internal displacement. I follow with a conceptualization of violence against women (VAW) and then I analyze data collected from displaced women, NGOs and government officials in Kenya from July-August 2012. I draw connections between structural violence and micro level or intimate violence experienced by women and young girls in the camps. This contributes to current debates that emphasize treatment of VAW as part of a larger concern for women's rights and equality and thus part of broader social structural conditions in the society, which entails addressing issues of poverty, unemployment, housing, food security, societal norms and related economic and social rights issues (Ertürk and Purkayastha 2012). In so doing, I argue that understanding these women's experiences of violence calls for a broader conceptualization of VAW as a human rights issue.

AN OVERVIEW OF INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2013) indicates that by the end of 2011, some 42.5 million people worldwide were considered as forcibly displaced due to conflict and persecution. They included 15.2 million refugees and 26.4 million IDPs. The figure on IDPs excludes the 14.9 million people internally displaced by natural disasters. Yet, many countries do not have a legal framework for the protection of IDPs. In fact, as part of its humanitarian assistance, the UN developed Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (UNGPID) in response to the observation that while the number of refugees was declining, that of IDPs was on the rise and that by early 1990s, IDPs had outnumbered refugees (Kenya Human Rights Commission 2009). In

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addition, because IDPs have not crossed any recognized state border, the existing international law applied to refugees could not cover them. The UNGPID contains 30 guiding principles which identify rights and guarantees relevant to protection from forced displacement, protection and assistance during displacement and during the resettlement and reintegration process (KHRC 2009). Kenya is one such country that did not have a policy on displacement.

In the absence of a local legal framework, Kenya relied on the UNGPID and the Great Lakes Region Protocol (GLRP) to respond to the violence. The country recently passed the Internally Displaced Persons Act 2012 that makes effective the UNGPID and GLRP. However, despite the presence of these international instruments, the government's response to the violence is wanting (CREAW 2008; ICJ and KHRC 2009, 2012; KHRC 2008; Kamungi 2009; Kamungi and Klopp 2007) IDPs face a range of risks related to their displacement, including threats to their physical security and integrity, gender violence, lack of access to housing, education, health, land and property. One of the major concerns of women's rights groups in Kenya has been gender violence experienced by women during and after the election conflicts. I argue that their continued vulnerability to risks of violence in camps is ultimately linked to failure of the government to address the root cause of the recurrent ethnic political conflicts in Kenya, gender inequalities and the lack of provision of essential services in camps. This linkage requires that we examine how we understand VAW.

CONCEPTUALIZING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

At the 1993 UN conference on Human Rights in Vienna, global activism by women drew attention to the issue of VAW. The 1993 UN Declaration of Elimination of Violence against Women defined VAW as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life" (United Nations 1993). The 1995 Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing included a section on VAW to encompass gender based violence in the family or in the community or perpetrated by the state that results in physical, sexual, psychological harm or suffering to women in private or public life (Merry 2006). This definition expanded the understanding of VAW far beyond the confines of homes and intimate relationship violence within private spheres to violence which occurs within a continuum from private spaces to public contexts. This made visible, for the first time, the structural circumstances that promote a continuum of violence including street harassment, violence within families, violence in times of conflict and sexual violence (Ertürk and Purkayastha 2012) to

draw our attention to hitherto neglected arenas of society in which VAW occurs, such as the IDP camps in Kenya.

Scholarly research on VAW has pointed out how private and public spheres are linked to shape this violence (Bennett 2005; Britton 2006; Ertürk and Purkayastha 2012). Importantly, the UN office of Special Rapporteur on VAW has pushed for a definition of VAW that goes beyond individuals and cultures to link it to institutional arrangements in the society that shape this violence. VAW is thus conceptualized along a continuum from the intimate partner violence that occurs in the private spheres to community and violence by the state (Ertürk and Purkayastha 2012). Yet, in spite of this definition, current practices in addressing VAW still largely treat it in isolation from structural circumstances that determine this violence. I use this broader definition of violence that is more consistent with current thinking in human rights because it lends us an opportunity to examine how various forms of structural level violence continue to allow bodily assaults-sexual and physical - experienced by internally displaced women living in camps in Kenya.

Structural violence is the systemic failure of social institutions to meet its' people's basic needs. Unlike direct violence such as physical injury and death, it is usually invisible. It is embedded in ubiquitous social structures and normalized by stable institutions and regular experience (Winter and Leighton 2001). Structural violence takes the form of political, legal, economic or cultural disadvantage. Whenever people are denied access to society's resources, physical, sexual and psychological violence exists. It is, therefore, a gross violation of human rights.

Theoretically, the Kenya government is committed to safeguarding women and girls from all forms of violence. This is seen through its ratification and adoption of various international protocols including the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Declaration of Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVAW), Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR); International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Kenya is also party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR). Additionally, there are national legal provisions that protect women and girls from violence, such as the constitution and the penal code. Kenya has in place a National Gender Policy and a National Gender and Equality Commission. Despite all these legal provisions, Kenya has yet to eliminate or significantly reduce VAW that is understood within a historical and cultural context of traditional patriarchal domination, colonial rule and attendant introduction of new economic and social structures that disrupted kinship relations (Federation Women Lawyers-Kenya 2002; CREAM 2006),

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neo-liberal policies and participation in the global market economy. The government largely adopts a 'non-interference policy' on VAW because this violence is considered a domestic affair or an issue for elders in the community to deal with. This also has to be understood in the context of the state's role in gender construction that perpetuates VAW (Brush 2003, Majstorovic and Lassen 2011). On the contrary, addressing VAW requires a consideration of the intersecting factors of social, economic and political structures that instigate this violence (Ertuk and Purkayastha 2012, True 2012). In this article, I argue that economic marginalization, failure of government to ensure basic life conditions, the social acceptance of violence, the failure to create an effective oversight mechanism where violence can be reported and addressed, and the failure to demobilize militia gangs have worked collectively to shape the intimate (physical and sexual) violence experienced by women and young girls in the camps to which they were forced to migrate after the post-election violence.

CONFLICT, FORCED MIGRATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Whereas there is a wealth of literature on gender violence in countries that have experienced conflicts, particularly war, much less has been written about election violence, internal displacement and the continuing violence that women experience in the camps. Yet, as the literature above suggests the number of IDPs is on the rise. IDPs have no refugee status thus, the prevailing international legal frameworks do not apply to them. Further, many countries do not have policies that protect their rights. Consequently, IDPs experience extreme vulnerabilities to structural level violence because there is neither strong commitment nor structured efforts to address their plight. Because many countries experiencing conflicts have poor government infrastructure, affected populations are sometimes isolated and inaccessible due to the conflict. Additionally, victims of violence, especially women, have strong cultural disincentives to report sexual violence and little government, legal or material support to do so. This makes them more vulnerable to further forms of violence.

Scholars on armed conflict and gender violence, such as Pillay (2001), identify the underlying causes of violence as unequal power relationships between men and women manifested in social practice and beliefs that promote male superiority and female inferiority; the social acceptance of VAW that is socially sanctioned as a form of discipline in peacetime and legitimizes the use of violence during war and afterwards; and the construction of masculinity particularly through peer group pressure. The patriarchal structure of society enables men to use and abuse their power. Turshen (2001), in her analysis of the political economy of rape in Rwanda and Mozambique furthers the discourse in

the systematic use of rape in civil war. War is used to strip women of their political and economic assets - reproductive and productive labor power and personal assets of property. Moser and Clark (2001) develop the concept of a gendered continuum of conflict and violence that encompasses social (inter-personal), political and economic violence. Critical to their analysis is the type of power that uses violence to gain or maintain power. Additionally, Meintjes, Pillay and Turshen (2001) have addressed the continuum of violence in periods before, during and after the war. They note that in all these periods, there is a relation of VAW to sexual control and the allocation of resources. This is especially so in the African tradition where most women do not have access to resources in their own right. During war, rape becomes an important strategy of asset stripping by displacing populations from contested lands (Turshen 2000). In the aftermath of war, men use VAW and women's fear of violence to reinforce their hold on women, they compel women to comply because they need to re-establish or preserve control over their wealth and resources and above all women's productive and reproductive labor (Meintjes, Pillay and Turshen (2001). Indeed, these authors argue that the gender violence that women experience in war time increases when fighting dies down. This is supported by True (2012: 5) who points out that "post conflict and post-humanitarian crises and natural disaster processes have tended to deepen gender inequalities in economic and political participation, negatively affecting women's vulnerability to violence."

This literature is critical to providing a framework for understanding gender violence in conflict and post-conflict situations by illuminating the structures of power that allow for violence to occur at all the levels along the continuum of violence. I, however, argue that there is need for gender and human rights discourses to engage more with internally displaced women, who constitute an extremely vulnerable population to violence. Using field data, this article focuses on post-election violence in Kenya to contribute to this wider discourse by analyzing how structural violence shapes power dynamics at the micro level leading to bodily violence experienced by women and girls living in IDP camps.

DATA AND METHODS

Data for this article comes from qualitative research I carried out between July and August in 2012. I conducted ethnographic interviews with nine women aged 35-66 years from an internally displaced person's camp in the Rift Valley region in Kenya; four in-depth interviews with government officials and five in-depth interviews with NGO staff involved in advocacy or service provision in the camps. I carried out the interviews in three different languages -English, Kiswahili (national language), and an ethnic language, Kikuyu- depending on each participant's level of education, ethnic background or language of

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choice. All interviews lasted between 1-2 hours. I transcribed the interviews and translated those that were in the local languages to English. I include observations of living conditions and infrastructure in the camp. Additional data derives from various human rights and women's organizations reports on human rights violations during and after the conflicts. I also draw on the government's documented response to IDPs. My analysis of this data makes visible some of the structural violence that women and girls living in the camp experience and how this shapes their bodily experiences of violence –sexual and physical.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN AND YOUNG GIRLS IN IDP CAMPS

The Commission of Inquiry into the Post -Election Violence in Kenya (CIPEV) reported several factors explaining the causes of post-election violence (CIPEV 2008: 22). They include: inequalities, ethnicity and violence; failure to demobilize militias and organized gangs; and lack of effective oversight mechanisms for reporting VAW. These aspects, though inadequate explanatory factors for VAW, point to the institutionalization of violence in Kenya that has made it easy to manipulate economically marginalized populations by the political class. Further, they allow for proliferation of violence supported by local cultural norms meaning that violence can be employed for a variety of reasons, including winning an election. It is important to note that the CIPEV report formed the basis for the ongoing case at the ICC and largely informed national response efforts such as provision of services in camps and resettlement. However, I would argue that, as pointed out by scholars (Meintjes, Pillay and Turshen 2001; True 2012), the emphasis on addressing rights and material needs in the aftermath of conflicts tends to mask the reconstruction of patriarchal power despite recent emphasis on women's human rights. They argue that although both rights and needs are important for post-war reconstruction, neither is adequate either alone or in combination, for enabling women to realize substantive advancement because neither approach recognizes the real need for social transformation (such as ending traditional gender restrictions) rather than the reconstruction of the past. True transformation encompasses addressing the gendered inequalities that are rooted in the structures and processes of the political economy of violence against women. This includes recognizing women's social and reproductive roles and contributions, as well as their desires as sexual beings (Meintjes, Pillay and Turshen 2001; True 2012). Therefore, the institutionalization of violence, and the inadequate responses to VAW post the 2007/8 election conflicts in Kenya have continued to shape the bodily experiences of violence for women and girls living in camps as the study findings suggest.

Intimate Partner Violence: Sexual and Physical Violence

The institutionalized political and economic violence has had direct bearing on women's bodily experiences with violence in the camps. Sara, one of the research participants sadly observed, "Things are not the same anymore." Poverty and the attendant problems of hunger, poor housing conditions and sanitation, lack of or inadequate access to quality health care including reproductive health for women, child malnourishment, school drop-out among young boys and girls, have shaped violence at the family level in various ways.

One dimension of how violence has manifested itself at the family level in this camp is through sexual and physical abuse of women by their partners, as Sara narrated:

My husband beat me up because I refused to have sex with him. He came back home at night drunk and was loudly demanding for sex in the presence of the children. Our tents are very small and we have three children but he still wants me to have sex. Some couples quarrel until they throw each other out of their tents like my neighbors did.

This quote illuminates the many layers of violence in displacement camps that are a result of political conflicts. These include poor housing and overcrowding in tents, conditions which offered no privacy for marital sexual relations as children slept in the same room with their parents. Yet, male partners forcefully demanded for sex from their wives in disregard of the presence of children in the room. Additionally, physical abuse often accompanied sexual violence. Sara reported that her husband beat her because she refused to have sex with him. In this connection, Ertuk and Bandana (2012:145) point out that the state's "policy of non-intervention in the private sphere has often been the domain of male supremacy." However, even 'private' space in the camps becomes problematic such as in crowded, tented camp conditions as exemplified by Sara when she notes that other couples fought in full glare and knowledge of their neighbors. The lack of privacy for marital sexual relations coupled with women's subordinate status in society rendered Sara vulnerable to abuse by her husband.

It must be noted that VAW as experienced by women in this camp, is embedded in cultural understandings of gender and sexuality within the marital institution in Kenya, which privilege men's right to their wives' bodies. In almost all traditional Kenyan societies, the male spouse was regarded as the supreme head of the family, the provider of food and security. Under this patriarchal system, women were regarded as subservient to the male. Masculinity was defined by competitiveness, aggression, independence and suppression of emotion. These traits and

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social practices rendered forms of male dominance acceptable and helped maintain it. On the other hand, femininity was associated with traits such as passivity, complicity, dependence and sentimentality, depicting weakness, subordination and lower status. Further, a woman had little power to participate in family and clan decision-making processes. Even today, these gendered inequalities persist and are continuously discursively reproduced (though sometimes challenged) through language, religion and other social practices. This negative stereotyping is an effective way of silencing women and leads to the creation of an image of powerless, submissive and inferior group (Abudi, Yieke and Kitete 2011). Therefore, a society where the balance of power makes it difficult for women to negotiate sexual practices (when, where, how) within marriage, places women's bodies at risk of violence from their partners.

The power imbalance ensures that forced sex and consequent physical assault remain silenced in the spheres of the family and often women blame themselves or find ways to rationalize the actions of their partners. Sara reported that her husband loudly demanded sex because "he came back home drunk." This rationalization of men's behavior was also evident amongst other participants as Maria observed, "Men are affected by the post- election conflict until sometimes they just drink alcohol. They do not drink because they want to; they do so because of the many problems we face here, my sister." This implies that women should understand the reasons that facilitate their husband's drinking habits and the consequences of this drinking-sexual or physical abuse -as told by Rosa:

Eh! Couples here separate and this is caused by those problems (discussed earlier in the interview). Sometimes wives do not understand how things are. They think that they are like they used to be before (the conflicts) when they would wake up and tell their husbands that they need money for sugar and soap. But now when women ask for those things, it becomes a quarrel. These quarrels have been brought about by problems. So today you hear that some couples have marital problems, you hear they have fought and things like that.

These quotes demonstrate that the participants made links between political conflicts that sent them to the camp, current socioeconomic conditions in the camps, the drinking behavior of their husbands, and physical and sexual violence. These women associated their experiences of violence with failure of the government to resettle them whereas cultural norms within marriage that expect women to internalize, justify and silence abuse were not brought to the fore. Neither did they talk

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about their right to protection from sexual or physical abuse by partners. This implies that these women played their role as wives- a term that often connotes property of the male 'bought' through payment of bride price which some male members have used as a justification for control over their wives. No wonder then that the majority of women emphatically said they would not report violence to the police or anyone in authority. This was either because they had learned to live with it and ignore their partners, the cases of violence were not serious, there was no one to report to or there would be no action taken against the men thus creating more problems for the women. As expressed by Rosa that, "Sometimes there is even no need to waste time going to the police, nothing will happen. It would just create more tension in the house. You would rather spend that time looking for food." When the women mentioned "haki yetu" (our right), they undoubtedly referred to the right to own land, as promised by government, in order to better their lives. This they hoped would reduce violence.

In Kenya, women are primarily responsible for agricultural production and cultivation. Without rights to land, women are unable to feed themselves and their families, and provide access to shelter, education and healthcare. The question of women's control and access to land has to be seen in historical context. In pre-colonial Kenya, the role of women and girls was to farm the family land (owned communally), harvest, and sell farm produce. This gave women control and access to land and ensured some economic empowerment from sale of produce. However, in colonial Kenya, the British redistributed land and introduced cash crop farming. Women were particularly affected by this system as they lost access and control of the land. Because, they were no longer able to produce and sell subsistence food, they became more and more economically dependent on men. This led to the intensification of domestic patriarchy reinforced by colonial social institutions (McKenzie 1990). As colonialism continued, the perceived importance of female agricultural contribution to the household diminished as their vital role in food production was overshadowed by the more lucrative male-controlled cash crop cultivation. The growth of commercial crop production and the introduction of private land rights adversely affected women's access to land (McKenzie 1990). Despite this, gender relations have not been unilinear; they are linked in complex ways with shifts in the political economy of Kenya and household differentiation (Francis 1995). Thus, the question of gender equality and land rights for women remains important even as these rights are currently guaranteed in the new 2010 Kenyan constitution. Women bear the burden of provision for their families. It is in this context of land rights that the women in camps demanded for quick resettlement and silenced violence.

Therefore, the endurance of intimate partner violence in the camp has to be seen in the context of myriad factors. These include the

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social acceptance of violence, unequal power relations between men and women manifested in beliefs and values that promote male superiority and female inferiority and the objectification of female as property owned by male, failure of government institutions to ensure basic life conditions in camps, lack of resettlement of IDPs and ensuring land rights, lack of prioritization of violence by both women and government, laxity of police in prosecuting perpetrators of violence, low levels of community sensitization on existing laws on the rights of women, and a culture that blames the victim for violence meted on them and abhors reportage- particularly of close family members. Evidently, these factors allow for further cycles of VAW to occur in the camp.

Violence Against Young Girls: Sexual Violence, Exploitation and Unplanned Pregnancies

Another dimension of violence relates to sexual exploitation of young school-age girls, particularly those who discontinue school because their parents cannot afford to pay for it. Education is a basic right enshrined in the ICESCR and guaranteed in the Kenya constitution under economic and social rights 43 (f) which states that, “every person has the right to education”. Kenya has a “free” primary school education (8 years) policy- parents meet all school-related expenses except tuition. On the other hand, parents have to pay for secondary school education. Due to unemployment and poverty, many parents in the camp cannot afford to educate their children who hence drop out of school either at the primary or secondary school level.

Kenya defines a child as anybody under the age of 18 years. There are laws providing for child rights and child protection, most commonly the Children’s Act. These rights are also enshrined in the constitution under the bill of rights and in the penal code. They include the right to life, education, health care, protection from sexual exploitation and harmful cultural rites that are likely to negatively affect the child’s development. Girls are more vulnerable to violence. The women and child rights movement has led to criminalization of acts that were traditionally considered a norm such as teenage marriage and (consequent) pregnancy even though some communities still unlawfully practice child marriage, often fuelled by poverty.

During my camp visits, I often saw many children in the camp because they were not in school. The women I spoke with narrated problems experienced by these children, particularly girls as Maria observed:

Those (boys and girls) who have finished their primary schooling also have many problems...For the girls, it is worse because they are selling their bodies in order to make money. Men, both within and outside the camp,

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are actually using them. There are many teenage pregnancies and many young families in the camp.

As illustrated in the excerpt, young girls have sexual relationships for economic exchange. It is important to note that sexual exploitation occurs where local social norms allow for such behavior to occur. Betha concurred with the above quote noting that,

I know a young girl here, she has three childrenThis place is like a town (prostitution). They do it day and night, in the maize field and the abandoned airstrip; there is no need for lodging.

Sadly, economic desperation and living conditions in the camp override consideration of these relationships as exploitative. As a result, there have been very few arrests of sexual abuse (rape) of minors. Even cases of rape, as one NGO participant, Ruth, told me are rarely reported:

I have dealt with about 3 or 4 cases of GBV (Gender Based Violence). I have worked there (camp) for almost 2 years and even over. A minor was abused by the uncle. We reported to the police and the man was arrested. The three cases which I have come across there, the men were arrested. We just got them arrested. And the women, sometimes they don't say (report). All what we normally see is a lot of abortions.....I think they have seen more of problems and they find as if they will never overcome that problem and they tend now to stay with it. It has become part of their life. And we really don't know what we can do about it.

As the three quotes above demonstrate, sexual abuse is "part of women's life" in the camp. I have noted earlier that cultural norms and inaccessible justice systems inhibit women from reporting cases of abuse. In addition, an official from the gender unit at the local police station noted that amongst other challenges such as underfunding, "the unit is under police jurisdiction making it inaccessible to the public." Attitudes associated with gender discriminatory practices in police stations discourage reporting of violence. Thus, sexual violence becomes a 'normal' bodily experience for these young girls. As Ruth suggests, women in the camp "have seen more problems." This means that there are other more significant problems that take priority in their lives than bodily assaults. They thus do not report assault and exploitation of younger girls. Many of these girls are minors under Kenyan law. As stipulated in the sexual offences Act (2006), the offenders should be

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charged for engaging in sex with a minor. Instead, the consequences of normalizing and condoning sexual exploitation are borne by the bodies of these young girls. One of these consequences is unplanned pregnancies and related risks of abortion.

Teenage pregnancy and abortions, as highlighted in the last two excerpts, are of major concern to both women and some of the NGO representatives that I interviewed. Teenage pregnancy is not only a violation of the young girls' rights, because it is fuelled by poverty, but it also diminishes their life chances. In addition, when abortions occur, they are carried out clandestinely because abortion is illegal in Kenya. This sometimes results in dire post-abortion complications placing a higher financial burden on the mothers of these girls who have to meet post-abortion care costs. On the other hand, teenage pregnancies increase the likelihood of violence in the family as Betha narrated:

Sometimes there are disagreements between couples over how to deal with the children's behavior. Or sometimes a man beats up his daughter for becoming pregnant because she is adding an extra burden to the already destitute conditions. That is one of the reasons they (daughters) leave to go and seek employment as domestic house helps in towns and cities and send money back to us to care for their babies. The money they send back also helps us a little.

This excerpt details the never-ending cycles of violence that girls living in this camp experience as a result of the post-election conflicts. They drop out of school due to financial problems, engage in sexual relationships for money, some get pregnant and are susceptible to further physical violence by their fathers for being pregnant. Further, as noted in the quote, some young mothers have to leave their babies in search of employment where they work as minors. It is worth noting that in Kenya, employment of minors often under exploitative conditions as domestic workers is not uncommon (International Labor Organization and Kenya National Bureau of Statistics 2012). The quote, thus, highlights the interwoven nature of the various levels and forms of violence that these girls experience. This further questions the schisms between private and public spheres of violence that has mainly informed government's intervention leading to neglect of VAW that occurs in "domestic" spheres in the IDP camps.

RESPONDING TO VAW IN IDP CAMPS: THE CHALLENGES

There are various responses addressing VAW in camps but these efforts are faced with many challenges as I discuss below.

Funding of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Programs

Immediately after the election conflicts in 2008, humanitarian agencies led by the United Nations, particularly UNHCR, formed a Protection Cluster whose mandate was to coordinate response efforts during the crisis. This cluster had two sub-clusters: Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence, which constituted of government, civil society organizations and UN agencies. According to the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) website, the protection cluster transitioned into a national Protection Working Group on Internal Displacement (PWGID) chaired by government agencies-Ministry of Justice, National Cohesion and Constitutional Affairs and the KNCHR. There were two field based Protection Working Groups in my study site while UNHCR provided secretarial support. The mandate of the working groups was to address the needs of all displaced persons in Kenya (KNCHR 2011), gender violence included. Where I conducted this research, a senior official from the Ministry of Gender, Anita, noted that the GBV working group is mainly involved in community sensitization on gender violence, providing psychosocial support for survivors of violence, education for young girls, and provision of antiretrovirals among others. However, she pointed out that the working group, which draws its membership from different government departments and various organizations, faces funding problems:

We have our GBV working group, which is being coordinated by this office, and we have several members, quite a number of them NGOs, CBOs, FBOs and government ministries like Ministry of Justice. We have some from the children's department, police department, all those who are dealing with issues of gender based violence. So we have actually that. Sometimes we, okay the challenge is, we are not really funded, we just do our own fund raising and we reach out to communities and estates.....whether they are in the camp or not we manage to reach them and sensitize them on gender based violence issues. So we are working very closely with the civil society organizations.

The above quote from a senior official shows that the government chairs and coordinates the working group yet the same government provides inadequate funding for GBV programs. An official from the gender unit at the local police station also decried underfunding by government. This apparent discrepancy questions government's commitment to end VAW and protect the rights of women and girls as enshrined in human rights protocols especially since the same government, through its various

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institutions and functions, has contributed to the shaping of gender relations in Kenya. As Brush (2003) has noted, states are not gender neutral but view and treat women and men unequally, for example, through exclusion of women from citizenship and social policies and practices regarding VAW that privilege men as heads of household with women occupying a subordinate status. The response efforts by the working group- sensitization and psychosocial support - are laudable. Nevertheless, they need to engage more broadly with challenging government systems to address systemic problems that result in violence in IDP camps.

Working Relationship Between Government and Human Rights Organizations

There are notable areas where government has collaborated with human rights organizations involved in monitoring IDP issues, such as in the development of an IDP policy. But, interviews with representatives from both sides revealed tensions between them. Human rights organizations including the IDP network accused government of human rights violations, slow progress in resettlement and over emphasizing resettlement over other human rights concerns in the camps. Conversely, Paulo, one of the senior government officials I spoke with felt that these organizations, like the Human Rights Commission, were overly demanding yet the government had made every endeavor to ensure the resettlement of IDPs. When I asked Paulo whether and how they worked with the commission, he responded:

Yes we do, a lot, they have their staff on the ground and we interact a lot on issues. But you see again our perspective as government and their perspective is not in tandem. If something happens, they want to come and tell the government “can you do this immediately.” Sometimes my hands will be tied.....I have to talk to Nairobi. I have to write to Nairobi.

This tension does injustice to addressing VAW in camps. For example, when human rights organizations demand for elimination of conditions that shape violence in the camps, such as provision of food, health, education and sanitation, the government seemed less concerned with this as Paulo continued:

You cannot satisfy everybody as a government. It's impossible, even the funds are not there. The prices of food have also escalated and the ministry of special program's budget has remained the same. Therefore,

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providing the amount of food that is enough for everybody is not possible.

Noticeably, the 'lack of tandem' between government and organizations does little to end the experiences of violence by women in camps. Further, it points to lack of knowledge or ignorance of the myriad linkages between addressing political ethnic conflicts, provision of essential services, and VAW. This conceptualization of VAW as an isolated factor informs the government's lack of attention to and inadequate funding for GBV programs.

Politicization of Resettlement Process and Government Bureaucracy

Participants noted that the resettlement process had slowed due to political interference and government bureaucracy. Both civil society organizations and media have constantly highlighted tension and differences of opinion between government and politicians or amongst politicians on how and where to resettle IDPs. Further, the procurement process within government departments complicate efforts towards addressing IDPs' problems. This slow process in the structures of government and politics has increased the length of time that women have to endure conflict-related forms of VAW in camps. As observed by Paulo, politics is a major challenge in resettlement:

One of the biggest problems that we have as the government is politicization of the whole process. Okay, in as much as the process was genuine, politicians have taken advantage of this to castigate government. They use it to look for votes or they use that to go and tell their communities that they are disadvantaged; why is this other community being favored? You know that politicization sometimes has even affected the rate at which we are buying land because we get a piece of land somewhere and the government cannot buy it because of politicization and other issues that are brought by host communities against the resettlement. So, politicization is a major issue.

As is evident in the above excerpt, ethnic politics continue to derail government efforts in resettling IDPs. Politicians were accused of inciting their constituents not to accept resettlement of IDPs in their community. This happened particularly in places where some members of the community have less land than that to be allocated to the post-election conflict survivors or where there are members who have been displaced or evicted from government land and forest reserves and have not been given land by government. This resistance, instigated by

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politicians, has deep roots in historical and colonial processes of land distribution and economic marginalization, which the government has failed to address adequately. What is, however, significant is the effect of these politics and government inadequacy on the various forms of VAW in camps. Women's bodies become the ground on which structural failures and political battles play out.

CONCLUSION: WHAT IS NEXT FOR DISPLACED WOMEN?

Structural violence - built into the systems of a society - deprives people of basic needs and resources that are critical to human development. It is a gross violation of human rights, which manifests in the powerlessness of the poor to reduce their suffering and to control their environment. As I argued in this article, the failure to address various problems embedded in Kenya's social structures - economic inequalities, provision of basic essentials, culture of violence as manifested in the formation of gangs used by politicians to settle political scores, gender inequalities and unequal power relationships between women and men, and the creation of an effective and accessible justice systems - have rendered women and girls in the IDP camp susceptible to multiple levels and various forms of violence.

Gender scholars have pointed out an integral link between private and public spheres of violence and clearly argued that the two cannot be separated, as has been the practice of state policies and institutions (Abraham 2000; Ertürk, 2008a; Ertürk and Bandana 2012; Ferree 1990; Sutton 2010). Ertürk and Purkayastha rightly note that there are a range of policies, institutional arrangements and practices that enable violence within private spheres, and that the "public/private codification in international law has for long served as an ideological barrier to the human rights system from responding to the violations of rights experienced by women in private life" (Ertürk and Purkayastha 2012:45). Sutton (2010) adds that women's experience of violence in the family is not bound to the private but is critically related to material expressions of community and public space. Using ethnographic data, this article has highlighted how VAW within the camp is linked to poverty and economic marginalization, lack of basic services, cultural norms in Kenya that support violence, inadequate justice systems, violent gangs and the politics that created these camps in the first place. I highlighted a specific case of post-election conflict with regard to female survivors living in camps to foreground the continuing violence that women experience in all spheres of their lives and to call attention to engagement with VAW that occurs in forgotten spaces such as IDP camps.

The conditions under which these women live constitute gender-based violence and are a gross violation of their rights. Evicted from their lands and businesses, these women continue to bear the burden of production, reproduction and sheer survival in camps while they remain

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largely ignored by government whose main concern has been economic development and politics of succession. They have lived in deplorable conditions for over five years, with inadequate essential services. These circumstances have shaped the various forms of violence experienced by women and girls within the camp. We must also understand this violence in the context of patriarchal hierarchies and other systems of subordination and inequality that create multiple layers of discrimination for women (Ertürk and Bandana 2012) in order to effectively address VAW.

Scholars have pointed out that the ways in which violence is conceptualized acts as a fulcrum for effective policy and practice on eliminating VAW (Ertürk and Bandana 2012). This, therefore, means that addressing VAW should take into consideration the continuum of private and public violence (Ray and Purkayastha 2011). There is great recognition of VAW in camps by both government (especially the ministry of gender) and civil society and there are attempts to address this through encouraging reporting of perpetrators of violence, community sensitization and education on gender violence. However, these efforts must critically engage with structural level interventions, including challenging the enduring patriarchal domination of women, if we are to better the lives of displaced women. There is also massive pressure by civil society, especially national and international human rights organizations to protect the rights of IDPs, particularly women, and to help them reconstruct their livelihoods. Despite the tensions noted in this article between government and these organizations, these efforts need to be sustained at all levels in order to protect women's bodies from being the battleground for political supremacy.

The Government of Kenya has responsibility to protect displaced women in camps in light of the binding human rights commitments it has made both nationally and internationally, particularly the recent National Policy on the Prevention of Internal Displacement and the Protection and Assistance to IDPs (IDP bill) enacted by parliament in October 2012. This bill provides for a rights-based response to internal displacement in accordance with the bill of rights. It gives full effect to the Great Lakes Protocol and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. What is worth noting is that this IDP bill adopts the same principles in the UNGPID and GLP that were drawn upon in response efforts during and after the post-election conflicts yet cases of VAW and other human rights violations have been rampant in camps. It is, therefore, doubtful that the mere existence of a legal framework would create a difference for the lives of women and girls in the camps. This calls for the need to move beyond the fragmented equality and justice approaches in responding to conflicts and forced migrations to challenging structures that shape gender to determine women and girls' secondary status in Kenya (Meintjes, Pillay and Turshen 2001).

In conclusion, the aim of this article was to highlight that many people today are drawn into effects of political wars and conflicts, whether temporarily or long term. This means that there are more women living in delicate conditions which intensify violence. Even though camps are public spaces, the government treats them as though they were private spheres and largely adopts a “non-interference” policy on VAW. Given this persistent codification of private/public spheres, there are few attempts by the government to address VAW in IDP camps and structural conditions that shape this violence. It is important that human rights scholars examine this issue.

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