

# Increasing Community Awareness and Improving Response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in Yeri



Photo: GBV awareness with youth can be the caption for the photo that says caption/Nonviolent Peaceforce

Yeri is a payam of Mvolo county approximately three hours' drive from Mundri Town. Despite the existence of several protection concerns especially related to SGBV, as noted in NPs assessment of Mvolo in April 2019, there are a lack of protection actors operating in the area. During the assessment, the team found that early marriage and early pregnancy as well as domestic violence were the primary forms of violence occurring regularly at the household level. Compounding upon this issue are barriers to SGBV response including lack of knowledge of the referral pathway as well as fees that result in difficulties for survivors to access justice services. In response to protection concerns identified during the assessment, on October 24, 2019, the NP Mundri Team travelled to Yeri payam to conduct focus group discussions with women, men, and schoolteachers to gain further insight into the prevalence and impact of SGBV in the community.

Based on information gathered in the focus group discussions, NP returned to Yeri from November 26 to November 28 to conduct a series of awareness raising activities and workshops on SGBV prevention and response as well as to strengthen the SGBV referral pathway and improve access to justice for survivors. These activities included a SGBV workshop for the Mother's Union in Yeri on November 26, a SGBV workshop for law enforcement, judiciary and soldiers' representatives on November 26, as well as an awareness raising activity on November 27 for 61 children (34 boys and 27 girls) that used songs, games, and discussion to teach good and bad touch and the detrimental impacts of early marriage and pregnancy.

During the SGBV workshop with the Mother's Union, one of the women said that this was the community's first time openly discussing SGBV and that the community lacked an organized group of women that could raise women's issues and campaign for equal respect and recognition of women's roles in the community.

NP also met with the acting commissioner on November 27 to discuss the issue of fees for survivors to access justice services. In Yeri, the chiefs have been handling issues related to SGBV cases however, SGBV cases, particularly rape cases, are sometimes escalated to the local court or forwarded to Mundri. Survivors pay a case filing fee of 500 SSP to the boma chief, 1000 SSP to the payam chief, and 1500 SSP to the paramount chief. During the discussion with the commissioner, the team emphasized that the fees serve as a barrier for survivors to access justice. While the commissioner responded that the chiefs still accept cases from survivors who cannot pay fees, he recognized that the police collect a fee from survivors to file form 8, a police form filled by SGBV survivors and those with injuries to allow the person to access healthcare treatment. The team supplied the commissioner with the memorandum regarding form 8 indicating that no fees should be collected from survivors to file this form and that SGBV survivors are under no obligation to file form 8 prior to accessing health treatment. Though the commissioner agreed to discuss the memorandum with the police, as of January 20, 2020, the fee is still being collected. As such, NP will continue to advocate for the discontinuation of the fee for SGBV survivors both in Yeri and at the state level.

After the meeting with the commissioner, the team proceeded to meet with the clinical officer of a health partner to clarify services available for SGBV survivors in Yeri. The clinical officer reported that a few weeks prior, he and a colleague received training by the health partner in case management for SGBV survivors however, the health team was still waiting for post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) kits and other necessary materials to provide response services. The clinical officer also indicated that NP should continue conducting SGBV awareness throughout Yeri to increase the community's knowledge of the importance of accessing health services within 72 hours of a SGBV incident.

Prior to NPs departure from Yeri, a participant of the SGBV prevention and response training with the Mothers' Union said, "We appreciate the organization of Nonviolence for training us on SGBV prevention because indeed these things happen among our community in Yeri but we request them that next time it should be more than two days because as we can all see today the training was very good and enjoyable but the time was not enough."

Going forward, NP plans to return to Yeri for another multi-day trip to provide SGBV awareness and prevention and response workshops throughout the community as well as follow up on the SGBV referral pathway and access to justice services for survivors, including to continually advocate for the removal of police fees for survivors. NP has also raised the issue of lack of psycho-social support for SGBV survivors in Yeri to the Minister of Gender and in SGBV working group meetings and will continue to advocate for improved SGBV response for survivors throughout the state.



Photo: SGBV workshop for law enforcement, judiciary and soldiers' representatives/ November 2019/ Nonviolent Peaceforce