

**FACTORS THAT LEAD TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN  
KIBRA'S LAINI SABA, NAIROBI CITY COUNTY**

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## DECLARATION

This project paper is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree in any other university.

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This Project paper has been submitted with my approval as the University Supervisor.

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## **DEDICATION**

To my family and to all my dear friends for their patience and continued support and advice. God bless you all.

To all women and men who have made it their obligation to help the abused and battered women, you are the embers of hope within my heart and a source of inspiration.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>DEDICATION</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>vii</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS</b> .....	<b>viii</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.3 Objectives of the Study .....	4
1.3.1 General Objective.....	4
1.3.2 Specific Objectives.....	4
1.4 Assumptions of the Study .....	4
1.5 Justification of the Study.....	5
1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study.....	5
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	<b>6</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	6
2.2 Causes of Violence against Women .....	6
2.3 Norms that propagate women’s vulnerability to domestic violence .....	11
2.4 Women in Traditional African Society.....	15
2.5 The Practice of Wife inheritance .....	16
2.6 Theoretical Framework.....	18
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>21</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	21

3.2 Research Site .....	21
3.3 Research Design .....	23
3.4 Study Population.....	23
3.5 Sample Population and Sampling Procedure .....	23
3.6 Data Collection Methods .....	23
3.6.1 Secondary Sources .....	23
3.6.2 The survey method.....	24
3.6.3 Key Informant Interviews.....	24
3.6.4 Focus Group Discussions (FGD).....	24
3.7 Ethical Considerations .....	24
<b>CHAPTER FOUR .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>FACTORS THAT LEAD TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN KIBRA'S</b>	
<b>LAINI SABA.....</b>	<b>25</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	25
4.1.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents .....	25
4.2 Factors that lead to Violence against Women.....	26
4.2.1 Marital Status .....	26
4.2.2 Level of Education .....	27
4.2.3 Monthly Income.....	28
4.2.4 Battering .....	29
4.2.5 Parental Violence .....	30
4.2.6 Curbing Violence against Women.....	31
4.2.7 Challenges Resulting from Violence Against Women .....	31
4.2.8 Forms of Abuse.....	33
4.3 Why Battered Women Stay.....	34
4.3.1 Respondents' understanding of the meaning of violence.....	35
4.3.2 Women in positions of power in the area.....	36
4.3.3 Report of assault cases to the area of chief.....	36
4.3.4 Social Worker .....	37
<b>CHAPTER FIVE.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>41</b>
5.1 Introduction .....	41

5.2 Discussions.....	41
5.2.1 Why most women in Laini Saba face Violence from Men .....	41
5.3 Conclusions .....	43
5.4 Recommendations.....	43
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>47</b>
Appendix 1: Survey questionnaire .....	47
Appendix 2: Focus Group Discussions (FGD) .....	51
Appendix 3: Key Informants Interview Guide .....	52

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 4.1: Age Distribution of Respondents..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Table 4.2: Effect of education on the employability of the respondents..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework.....	20
Figure 3.1: Kibra Slum Villages .....	22
Figure 4.1 Factors that lead to violence against women.....	26
Figure 4.2: Respondents marital status.....	27
Figure 4.3: Respondents Level of Education.....	28
Figure 4.4: Respondents' monthly Income.....	29
Figure 4.5: Perpetrators of abuses suffered by respondents .....	30
Figure 4.6 – Parental Violence.....	30
Figure 4.7: Curbing Gender Based Violence .....	31
Figure 4.8: Challenges resulting from Violence against Women .....	32
Figure 4.9: Reporting on Violence Cases .....	32
Figure 4.10: Person to whom violence was reported.....	33
Figure 4.11: Forms of Abuse .....	34



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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed at finding out factors that lead to domestic violence against women in Laini Saba of Kibra. Data were collected using the survey method, direct observation, focus group discussions and key informant interviews. The study found that cultural factors, social factors and economic factors fuelled violence against women who live in the research site. The study also found that battered women do not seek help from families or legal aid and when they do, police and legal help agents are reluctant to help. The study, therefore, concludes that while many traditional practices are slowly dying due to modern ways of life, beating women in Laini Saba seems to have defied the process.

## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

<b>CREAW</b>	-	Centre of Rehabilitation and Education of Women
<b>CEDAW</b>	-	Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against women
<b>FIDA</b>	-	Federation of Kenya Women Lawyers
<b>UN</b>	-	United Nations
<b>UNIFEM</b>	-	United Nations Development Fund for Women
<b>GVRC-</b>		Gender Violence Recovery Centre
<b>NGO</b>	-	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>CBO</b>	-	Community-Based Organization

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

The United Nations defines violence against women 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 ( CEDAW, 1993:13). Violence against women is not unusual nor is it committed only by abnormal, psychologically disturbed individuals. On the contrary, it is perhaps the most pervasive form of abuse, a universal phenomenon that cuts across all divisions of class, race, religion, age, ethnicity and geographical region (Pickup, 2001:11).

The Centre of Rehabilitation and Education of Women (CREAW) asserts that domestic violence is rampant in Kenya (CREAW, 2011:10). Incidents of violence take place when the children are present, according to a baseline survey carried out in Nairobi (FIDA, 2010:12). Such children are victims of domestic violence because they get emotionally stressed throughout their lives.

Male dominance over women has historical roots and its functions and manifestations change over time. Among the historical power relations responsible for violence against women are the economic and social forces, which exploit the female labour and female body. Economically disadvantaged women are more vulnerable to sexual harassment, trafficking and sexual slavery (Gelle, 1972:13). For instance, in recent times the national debate about gender-based physical violence has focused on men as

the victims of violent wives, instead of the much more prevalent targeting of women. In fact, open dialogue about violence against women is almost non-existent.

Abrahams (2007:45) suggests that several factors at each of the levels below may increase the likelihood of gender-based violence. At the individual level, the factors include the perpetrator being abused as a child or witnessing marital violence in the home, having an absent or rejecting father, and frequent use of alcohol. At the level of the family and relationship, cross-cultural studies have cited male control of wealth and decision-making within the family and marital conflict as strong predictors of abuse. On the other hand, community level women's isolation and lack of social support, together with male peer groups that condone and legitimize men's violence, predict higher rates of violence. Finally, societal level studies around the world have found that violence against women is most common where gender roles are rigidly defined and enforced and where the concept of masculinity is linked to toughness, male honour, or dominance (Abrahams, 2007:50). Other cultural norms associated with abuse include tolerance of physical punishment of women and children, acceptance of violence as a means of settling interpersonal disputes, and the perception that men own women. The more risk factors present, the higher the likelihood of violence (McEvoy, 2012:20).

Among the historical power relations responsible for violence against women are the economic and social forces which exploit female labour. A woman washing clothes in an informal settlement in Nairobi earns as little as KES 100-250. In addition, denying women economic power and economic independence is a major cause of domestic

violence against women, as it prolongs their vulnerability and dependence usually on the perpetrator.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Traditionally, in any African culture, men had the right to discipline their wives because patriarchal domination was the norm. Today, women and girls are exposed to gender-specific types of violence. Attacks range from socially accepted disciplining, such as slapping of women by their intimate partners, to extreme domestic violence using crude weapons, rape and gang rape, sadistic methods of sexual and non-sexual torture and violent deaths and mutilations (McEvoy, 2012: 18).

Most cases of domestic violence against women in Kenya often occur in private homes where nobody bothers to investigate and are subsequently not reported. Unfortunately, incidences of violence usually take place with children present. Such children end up being victims of such cases of domestic violence for the better part of their childhood due to emotional and physical abuse. This might later replicate itself in their adult lives and get perpetuated with little being done by the Kenya government's legal system and the society not taking note of the vice that exists among them in the first place (FIDA, 2013)

It is because of these reasons and more that the researcher deemed it necessary to unravel the factors responsible for the prevalence of violence against women in Laini Saba, Kibra.

This study, therefore, sought to answer the following questions:

How does the socialization of girls and women pre-dispose them to violence?

How does poverty make women vulnerable to violence against them?

How does the belief that it is right for their husbands to beat them, predispose them to violence?

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.3.1 General Objective**

To explore the factors that predispose women to violence.

#### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

To determine the extent to which the socialization of girls and women pre-disposes them to violence.

To find out how poverty makes women vulnerable to violence.

To describe how the belief in the superiority of men predisposes women to violence.

### **1.4 Assumptions of the Study**

The way girls and women are socialized by society predisposes them to violence.

Most women are not economically empowered and this makes them vulnerable to violence.

Cultural beliefs have made women believe that it is in order for their husbands to batter them.

### **1.5 Justification of the Study**

Conflicting laws and cultural practices affect women's ability to advocate for their rights in a patriarchal society and within protection mechanisms that are male dominated. This study has unveiled some opportunities to be used by women survivors of domestic violence. It is hoped that policy makers in the area of gender, and the NGOs and CBOs working with the Laini Saba Communities, will have additional knowledge, and come up with informed strategies for gender sensitive planning. Academicians and researchers should also find these findings useful.

### **1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

This study was done in Laini Saba in Kibra. The study focused on the factors that lead to violence against women. The main focus was to identify what causes domestic violence in this area. The study was limited since just a small percentage of people were interviewed through survey questionnaire. It also became difficult when some people were narrating their experiences and became emotional and broke down. Despite spirited attempts to create a good rapport with respondents, some of them answered the researcher with such caution that bordered on mistrust. However, the presence of NGOs, CBOs, and chairladies of women groups in this area whom they are familiar with, made them open up more.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The literature is reviewed under the following themes: causes of domestic violence; norms that propagate women's vulnerability to domestic violence; and the support systems available to help with recovery. The chapter also discusses the theory that guided the study.

#### **2.2 Causes of Violence against Women**

Gender-based violence is generally understood to include physical, sexual and psychological abuse from intimate partners. Explanations from gender and development approaches show that the root cause of violence against women is not psychological damage to individuals or external economic or political factors but, rather, it lies in the unequal power relations between women and men, which ensure male dominance over women and are a feature of human society throughout the world' (Pickup, 2001:19).

The UN (1989) suggests that family violence is a by-product of societal structures where authority lies in males, with women conditioned to accept their secondary role. The UN continues to state that where the man's assumption of superiority in a marital relationship is threatened by the wife, violence is applied.

FIDA (2008: 27-28) has summarized the causes of gender-based domestic violence into the following factors: political and legal factors, socio-economic factors, and socio-cultural factors.

To begin with, political and legal factors that address the laxity on the part of law enforcement and legal system in the country are well explained by a random assessment done by COVAW on survivors of sexual violence who claimed that they could not gain access to a document that is considered fundamental for justice to be carried out, i.e., a P3 form (free off any charge) that is supposed to be filled by police and medical officers when a victim is reporting rape (COVAW, 2013:2). If a victim is denied this form the case is easily dismissed even before the justice process begins. Limitation of women from public life and lessening their participation in decision-making processes at all levels increases their vulnerability to violence, since it cuts them off from support (Terry, 2007:3). The Inability of criminal law to enshrine specific measures to protect women from violence and to punish perpetrators presents an unlikelihood that an effective framework for the reduction of violence against women will be created (Pickup, 2001: 263). Such measures, e.g., refuge, integrated support systems for the mother and her children, financial aid and at least taking over the fight from the NGOs, would act as an indication of the government's commitment to opposing violence.

Very low levels of education leading to economic disenfranchisement and, subsequently, poverty are very strong examples of socio-economic factors. Here the problem stems from their formative years, where the girl child is not allowed to go to school or is subjected to early marriage. Lack of information leave girls in the dark and subjects them to limited access to legal support and advice thereby exposing them to poverty early through property grabbing. Therefore, illiterate female-headed families often face breakdowns and once widowed they will end up in informal settlements like Kibra (Sue, 1991:138). In addition, due to her inability to negotiate

for property and other means of generating income, her dependency on the mercies of her abusive husband's relations is perpetuated and subsequently makes it difficult for her to set out on her own (Terry, 2007:15).

Childhood socialization has also been offered as another cause of violence in marriage. The argument is that women are trained to believe that their value is attached to the men in their lives, as fathers, brothers, husbands and sons, and are ostracized if they displease or disobey these men. Women, for example, are educated to see their self-esteem as being attached to the satisfaction of the needs and desires of others and, thus, are encouraged to blame themselves as inadequate or bad if men beat them (Ondicho, 1993:50).

Cultural factors such as the belief that women should be beaten by their husbands when they have done wrong are serious contributors to the problem of violence. For instance, the majority of women have very little control in sexual contact, with husbands exposing them to HIV and AIDS. Upon their husband's death, women get forced out of the home by in-laws since they have no right to inherit the husband's property (Terry, 2007:16). As is customary in certain religions, cases of domestic violence are referred back from the courts/police to the clan on the intervention of religious leaders for arbitration, often minimizing the abused woman's claim (UN, 2005:91). Male interviewees in certain parts of Kenya's informal settlements say that the main reasons why men beat their wives are cultural. For some tribes, 'unless you beat [. . .] she can't be a good wife' (Mc Evoy, 2012:28). Anecdotal evidence suggests that violence facing poor women is so "unremarkable" that it is considered

as a non-issue for the media, police, political class and, by extension, the Kenyan state.

The effect of this violence is a public health problem due to the acute morbidity and mortality associated with the assault and because of its longer-term impact on women's physical and psychological health. Psychologically, the victim develops a growing feeling of anxiety and uncertainty due to fear of further violence after the first incident, however minor. The isolation suffered brings about an inability to relate well in public, since she is either prohibited from socializing or her ability to make contact is sabotaged. The perpetrator gains significance in the life of the victim hence controlling her views on herself which are usually negative. There is bound to be serious erosion of personality integrity (individualism), loss of confidence, self-esteem and respect. The woman believes that she is responsible for what is happening to her hence feeding her sense of guilt and shame (Abrahams, 2007:18).

There is a lack of sense of physical safety due to what happened to her, leading to inability to be at ease or trust what is going on around her. She suffers permanent damage to physical health after severe acts of sexual and physical violence. Physical and emotional abuse both create an atmosphere of fear, shame, uncertainty and lack of trust places a barrier between women and those around them who could have acted as sources of support.

One would ask why they cannot just pick up and leave or why they return to the abusive relationship after leaving in the first place. Well, for a woman experiencing domestic violence, there are complex issues that surround her staying, leaving or

returning. First, she may be experiencing confused, ambiguous and painful feelings about the relationship. Others might be relating to the practicalities of leaving - the losses that will be sustained in the process, access to material resources and support, loneliness, having to manage alone, the needs of her children and the fear of retribution (Abrahams, 2007: 17). This underlies the effects that domestic violence has had on her physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

Studies have shown that domestic violence has led to many Kenyan women having children out of marriage, since marriage tends to 'spoil' a relationship by giving the man too much power control over the woman (Kariuki, 1989:25).

Domestic violence against women can also lead to complicated disorders like post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSDs), self-harming behaviours and suicidal tendencies if the victim is not properly monitored (Abrahams, 2007:23). Women emphasize that the mental consequences of these acts and of the other emotional abuses they had gone through were the hardest and worst to bear in comparison to the physical assaults (Abrahams, 2007:25).

Less attention to other aspects of parenting due to preoccupation with safety for her and the children (emotional unavailability) creates a vacuum in authority and control, leading to children who have witnessed their father abusing their mother. At times they challenge their mother and become physically aggressive towards her. The father can use them also to undermine and manipulate their mother (Horwath, 2007:104).

### **2.3 Norms that propagate women's vulnerability to domestic violence**

Kenya as a country tolerates a culture of violence against women, and values and positions women much lower than men. Violating a girl or a woman becomes a casual activity. Children are oriented and socialized in a violence prone environment. When these children grow up, they become elders, chiefs, police and security officers, nurses and doctors, pastors, priests and sheikhs, lawyers, magistrates and judges, who collectively deal with violence against women in the course of their work. Therefore, their actions towards the abused women and children are informed by their upbringing (Mc Evoy, 2012:48).

Rape within marriage and intimate-partner is viewed as battering, but no law explicitly outlaws these acts, despite years of activism against them. Official argument is that there is not enough evidence to prosecute these cases (Mc Evoy, 201:58).

In the recent past there has been an erosion of customary norms and practices coupled with gradual weakening of support systems that used to provide social safety for widows and orphans. Urbanization and industrialization with more focus on nuclear families and individual economic advancement are cited as reasons for increased property grabbing and evictions. Widows without sons are more prone to evictions and dispossession compared to those with male children (Terry, 2007:16).

In certain instances rights of women might have been guaranteed in their religious rights, e.g., Quran, etc., but when it comes to customary laws, the woman has no right to property. At the same time customary laws also allow practices like arranged

marriages without consent and negotiated bride wealth, forced widow inheritance, and female genital mutilation (UNIFEM, 2005:34).

Ongoing conflicts, extremes of poverty, high levels of corruption, and the impact of resource exploitation to feed global markets all increase the risk of enslavement in many African countries. Child and forced marriages are still tolerated in the context of informal or 'traditional' legal systems in many countries (Pickup, 2001:25). When the conflicts are going on, the woman, courtesy of the aforementioned, definitely loses the little control she has on her body (sexual contact with her new husband), thereby exposing herself to all kinds of torture and sexual violations let alone diseases. Corruption or inequitable access to essential goods and services has had a negative effect on the nutritional status, personal security and physical and mental health of women. When humanitarian assistance is not based on consultation with women and does not take their needs into account, women and girls may be left with few options and forced to turn to prostitution in exchange for goods and services (UN, 2002: 14).

Francline Pickup, in his book, "Ending Violence against Women" (2001) states that the problem of violence emanates from the unequal balance of power relations between women and men, ensuring male dominance. A male-dominated society ensures that the girl child does not go to school, especially in rural/remote settlements, thereby limiting her from information at an early stage in life. At this point even if she is forcefully married or forcefully circumcised she already has limited access to legal support and health care in case of a deadly eventuality like the whole operation going wrong (Pickup, 2001:27).

It has become normal for governments to formulate laws on different problems facing their populations, including domestic violence against women, but a lot less has been done to enforce legislation and to tackle the underlying causes of the problem. This problem emanates from the imbalance of power between women and men and the way in which gender roles are articulated at all levels of society (Pickup, 2001:28).

A low level of literacy (though this is debatable since certain women with the help of CBOs through NGOs have found their voices despite having not had proper education and excelled in either business/political field) has locked many women from public life and decreased their participation in decision-making processes at all levels. This increases their vulnerability to violence by cutting them off from the help that could offer support and find solutions to problems, e.g., legal protection, counselling and advice (Terry, 2007: 2).

The torture of women and girls in armed conflict has been increasingly documented. Women and adolescent girls have been tortured for holding prominent political or community positions, for speaking out against opposing groups, or for resisting violence against themselves and their families. They have been targeted for being educators and for their roles as cultural symbols of their communities. They have been tortured as a means of attacking the men in their lives, whether fathers, husbands, sons or intimates, rather than on account of their own actions or public identity. The torture of women and adolescent girls has been carried out to violate the victim's sense of herself as a person and as a woman (UN, 2002: 27).



In practice, Nairobi's current gender-based violence management system, which is undoubtedly the best in Kenya, is stacked against the survivor of violence from the start due to a lack of integrated teamwork. The criminal justice agencies cannot perform if the police are not on board; the police cannot perform if forensic evidence is not collected by health professionals; and health professionals cannot perform if society encourages women not to seek medical help. Put simply, the stronger the linkages, the more likely the survivor will be able to obtain formal justice. The need for a holistic system is well recognized here, and without it the woman remains vulnerable (Mc Evoy, 2012:55).

Vulnerability to violence against women persists if there is lack of specialized and sometimes counselling services, and insufficient training on counselling for gender-based violence survivors against a domineering patriarchal culture. At times, because of this, victims or survivors of domestic violence fail to attend counselling sessions (National Commission on Gender and Development, 2010: 6).

Most battered women opt to stay in marriages because of many reasons, such as the fear of being called a divorcee, no safe place to go, children and financial constraints. More frequently, the women blame themselves and not their batterers. The women feel like they are failures in the community and society at large. One feels lonely and a reject to the society as no one wants to know one's problems. It is therefore assumed as an implicit acceptance of a man's right to beat and control his wife (Ondicho, 1993:131).

## **2.4 Women in Traditional African Society**

In presenting the traditional role of women in Africa, one has to scrutinize carefully the source of information. Some studies, especially the more recent ones, present a more balanced picture of male and female roles in African society. These studies point out some positive facets of women's role in African society, such as a certain amount of equality, independence and even power in some instances (Ondicho, 1993:15).

One of the most significant features of the traditional African society is polarization into what is female and what is male. In almost every aspect of society, males and females are separate. Since division of labour separates the sexes, husband and wife each pursue their own tasks during the day. The husband eats with the men of the camp, his wife with the women and children, and each goes his or her separate way to the well or market (Dupire, 1969:48). When a woman marries, although she will live in her husband's family, still continues to belong to her own kin group which is for her an immediate refuge should she leave her husband's house for one reason or another and in particular, if she is ill-treated (Aglemagnon, 1962:152).

Often the husband will send expensive presents to lure her back and gain forgiveness. If her reasons for leaving are justifiable, the husband not only loses his wife but also the bride-wealth that he gave for her. On the other hand, if a woman is not justified in leaving her husband, her kin may have to pay back the bride wealth. In some pastoral societies, e.g., Maasai and Tuaregs, the female's kin may even coerce her into returning if they are asked to return the bride-wealth (Friedl, 1975:6).

A woman was forcefully carried away into marriage on Rusinga Island. The woman had come from the market carrying her basket on the head when all of a sudden some young men grabbed her lifted her and put her on a bicycle. The bicycle was ridden fast to the home of her prospective lover/husband. She was taken right to the simba (bachelor's hut), the house for the boyfriend and the boyfriend bolted it from inside and had sex with her by force. After sex, traditionally she became a wife (Obonyo, 2012:117).

### **2.5 The Practice of Wife inheritance**

Wife inheritance is a worldwide practice, and a number of Kenya's communities embrace the tradition albeit in varied forms and degrees. It is especially popular among groups in western Kenya such as the Abasuba, Luo and Luyia. Among the Luyia communities, the eldest son would inherit his father's widows, but not his own mother. Several terms have been used to describe this form of remarriage following the loss of a husband. One of the terms is widow/wife inheritance, a type of marriage in which a widow marries a kinsman of the late husband, often his brother (CREAW, 2008:16).

A woman widowed, later inherited and became HIV positive narrated how she was married in a polygynous home; they were four women sharing a husband. The husband died and she was inherited by a brother in-law who, in the next few years, inherited another woman who was HIV positive. In a short while the man who inherited her together with the widow he inherited died. She too started ailing and discovered that she was also HIV positive (Obonyo, 2012:113).

Another woman explained how her mother-in-law was inherited at the age of 90 years. She says her husband who was the son of this woman died and she was not supposed to be inherited before her mother-in-law and therefore the mother-in-law was inherited the night before her son's burial. The mother-in-law commented that it was the most shameful thing she experienced in her life time because that night her daughters and sons-in-law had come for a sleep-over before burial as it is customarily observed in Suba community (Obonyo, 2012:65).

Wife inheritance and cleansing practices take a number of different forms depending on the clan. Among the Luo community in Western Kenya, there is non-sexual wife inheritance, whereby the coat of an inheritor is placed in a widow's house overnight to symbolically cleanse her. This generally applies to widows beyond childbearing age. Second, there is inheritance involving long-term sexual relations, typically with a brother of the deceased, in what amounts to a marriage. Third, there is a combination of cleansing and inheritance, whereby a widow first has sex with a social outcast (known as *jater* in Dholuo) who is paid to have sex with her to cleanse her of her dead husband's spirits, and is then inherited by a male relative of the dead husband. Fourth, there is a cleansing alone, where a widow has sex with a *jater* to cleanse her, but her relationship with the *jater* does not develop beyond that encounter (Obonyo, 2008:16).

Many women among the Abasuba are excluded from inheriting, evicted from their lands and homes by in-laws, stripped of their possessions, and forced to engage in risky sexual practices in order to keep their property. When they divorce or separate

from their husbands, they are often expelled from their homes with only their clothing (Obonyo, 2012:24).

## **2.6 Theoretical Framework**

Feminist theory is one of the major contemporary sociological theories which analyze the status of women and men in society with the purpose of using that knowledge to better women's lives. Feminist theorists have also started to question the differences between women, including how race, class, ethnicity, and age intersect with gender. Feminist theory is most concerned with giving a voice to women and highlighting the various ways women have contributed to society (Anderson, 1997:13).

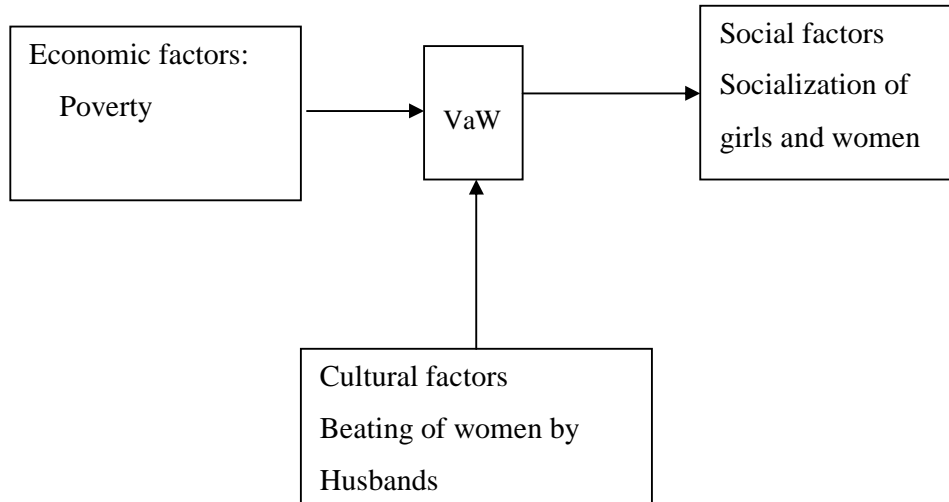
Theories of gender oppression go further than theories of gender difference and gender inequality by arguing that not only are women different from or unequal to men, but that they are actively oppressed, subordinated, and even abused by men. Radical feminist theory analyses patriarchy as the primary cause of women's oppression. Some of the proponents of this theory, who include Susan Brownmiller (1975), Andrea Dworkin (1988) and Eva Figs (1970), emphasize the use of power relations to explain violence against women. Radical feminists argue that patriarchy emerged through men's control of female sexuality and this explains men's violence against women and the many cultural practices designed to control female sexuality (Anderson, 1997:48).

This study was guided by the gender oppression theory, a feminist theory that addresses women's experiences of social situations being different but also unequal. The theory argues that not only are women different from or unequal to men , but that

they are actively oppressed, subordinated and even abused by men (Pickup, 2001:30). Pickup also explains this point further by pointing out that the root cause of oppression against women lies in the unequal power relations between women and men, which ensures dominance over women by men. The theory identifies physical violence as being at the base of patriarchy and since it is a feature of society throughout the world, it is true to say that women face domestic violence all over the world.

Studies among Kenyan women show that marriage to them tends to spoil a relationship by giving the man too much power control over the woman (Kariuki, 1989: 25). To support the theory further women have been forced out of their homes after the death of their husbands just to keep them from inheriting property that they may have contributed towards establishing (Terry, 2007: 14). Customary law also bars women from inheriting property such as land from their fathers.

The conceptual framework in Figure 2.1 shows how violence against women is affected by poverty, socialization of girls and women and cultural beliefs such as husbands beating their wives over small issues.



**Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework**

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

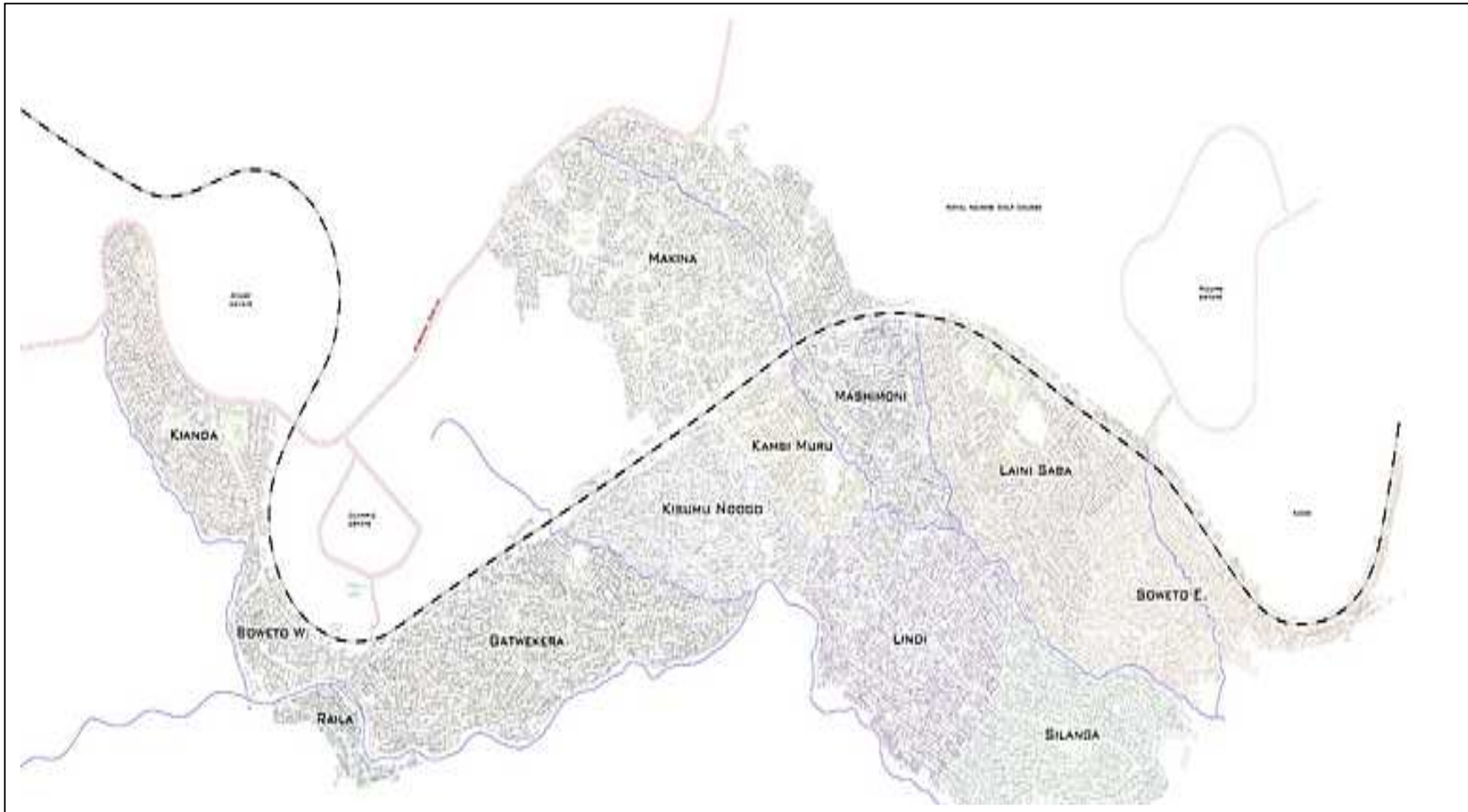
#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes the methodology that was used in this study. It describes the research site, research design, study population, sample population and sampling procedure. It also describes data collection methods, and data processing and analysis. The Chapter ends with a discussion of the ethical considerations that the researcher had to observe.

#### **3.2 Research Site**

This study was conducted in Laini Saba of Kibra, Nairobi City County. Kibra is situated in Nairobi's South-Western urban zone approximately seven kilometres from Nairobi City Centre (Map. 3.1). It is one of the largest slums in Africa with an average population of more than 900,000 people (Umande Trust, 2010 : 3). The slum stands on 2.5 square kilometres of land. Kibra as a whole is an informal settlement comprising of ten villages covering approximately 250 hectares of land. The villages are Lindi, Kisumu Ndogo, Soweto, Makina, Kianda, Mashimoni, Siranga, Gatuikira, Laini Saba and the newly founded Raila village. The informal settlements suffer from a host of challenges. The residents live under mass poverty leading to a collection of sustainability challenges. Access to clean water, improved sanitation, good housing, solid waste management, proper health care, security and energy are some of the most fundamental challenges faced by slum dwellers. Laini Saba is a cosmopolitan village which carries almost all the 48 communities of Kenya.





**Figure 3.1: Kibera Slum Villages**

The arrow shows Laini Saba Source: [www.kibera.org.uk/maps.html](http://www.kibera.org.uk/maps.html)

### **3.3 Research Design**

This study combined a descriptive and cross-sectional methodology and utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. Fieldwork was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, data were collected using a structured questionnaire which was administered face-to-face. This involved interviews with women of all categories, singles, divorced, widows and married.

### **3.4 Study Population**

The study population consisted of women residents of Laini Saba who are survivors of violence, divorced from abusive spouses or disinherited widows. These women were identified through their groups of Table Banking.

### **3.5 Sample Population and Sampling Procedure**

The study used the lists of the groups in Table Banking to select the sample population. There are four Table Banking groups in Laini Saba. Each group has 25 women; I identified 48 women for sampling, 12 women from each group using simple random sampling.

### **3.6 Data Collection Methods**

#### **3.6.1 Secondary Sources**

Secondary data were obtained from non-governmental organizations, community based organizations, Gender-Violence Recovery Centre, published and unpublished. Items by researchers involved in work on similar or related topics, newspapers, magazines, published articles, theses, official government documents and the internet.

### **3.6.2 The survey method**

A standardized questionnaire (Appendix 1) was administered to the respondents. The questionnaire had both open-ended and closed-ended questions touching on their own opinions, attitudes, views, knowledge and perceptions and experiences regarding violence against women.

### **3.6.3 Key Informant Interviews**

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with four key informants. These included a leader of an NGO, a leader of a CBO, the Area Chief and his Assistant. Leaders of the NGO and CBO were men. The interviews provided an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon as both male and female key informants explained issues from their own perspectives. A key informant interview guide (Appendix 3) was used to collect the information.

### **3.6.4 Focus Group Discussions (FGD)**

Four focus group discussions were held each of which had 12 discussants drawn from the Table Banking groups. A focus group discussions guide (Appendix 2) was used to collect the information.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

None of the participants were harmed or exploited by the conduct of the research. Community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the representatives that the community has worked with were briefed on the objectives of the study before the interviews were carried out. Confidentiality was maintained. No names of the respondents have been revealed.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**FACTORS THAT LEAD TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN**

**KIBRA’S LAINI SABA**

**4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents research findings on the factors that lead to violence against women. The chapter starts by outlining the social and demographic profile of the respondents. It then presents findings on respondents’ understanding of violence, the types of violence, and reporting on the violence.

**4.1.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents**

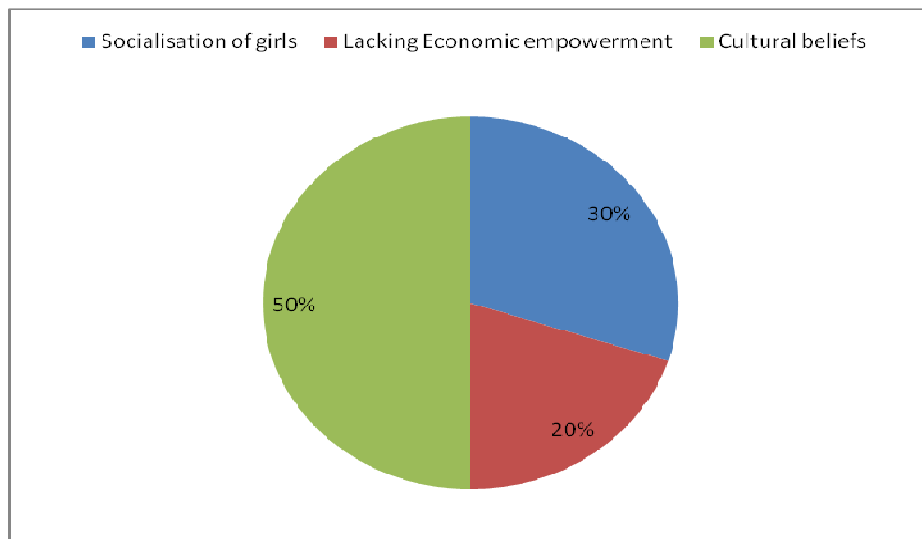
Out of a total number of 48 respondents, 22% were in the 16 -25 age category, 33% were in the 26-35 age category, 27% were in the 36-45 were in the age category, while 18% were in the 46 and above age category (Table 4.3).

Age Distribution	Frequency	Percentage
16 - 25	10	22
26 - 35	15	33
36 - 45	12	27
46 and above	8	18

**Table 4.1: Age Distribution of Respondents**

## 4.2 Factors that lead to Violence against Women

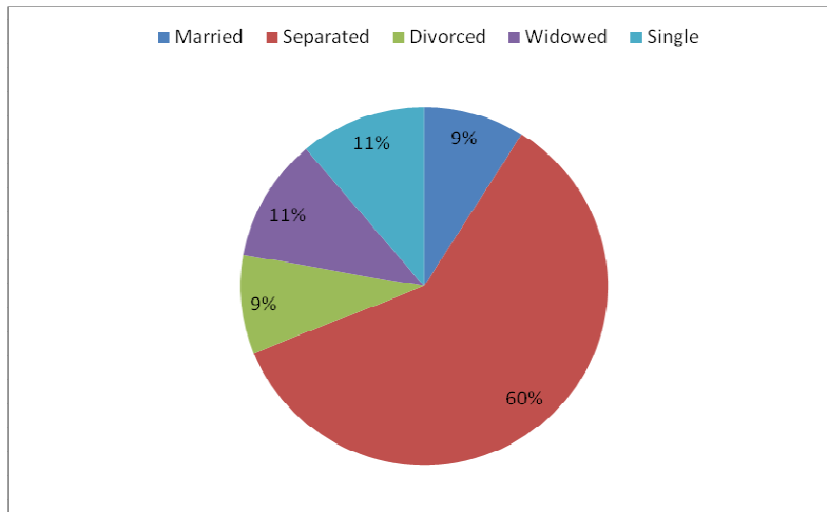
The way girls and women are socialized in communities affects them negatively since it makes them believe that they are inferior to men. Men, therefore, take advantage and suppress the girls. This accounted for 30% of the responses. Suppression leads to all manner of violence against the women. Other factors cited by the respondents were lack of economic power, that is, poverty (20%) and cultural beliefs (50%). These findings are summarized in Fig.4.1.



**Figure 4.1 Factors that lead to violence against women**

### 4.2.1 Marital Status

Analysis of marital status of the respondents show that 60% were separated from their husbands, 9% were married, 9% were separated, 11% were single, and 11% widowed. This shows that all the respondents had been married at some point except 11% who are still single (Fig. 4.2).



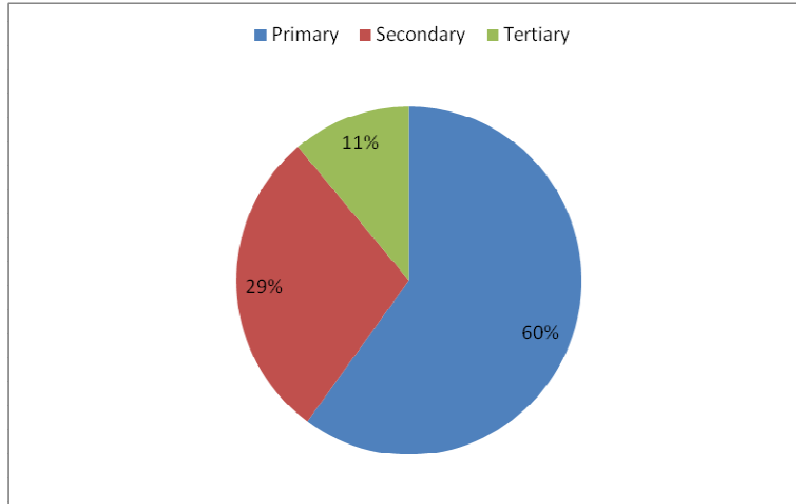
**Figure 4.2: Respondents marital status**

#### 4.2.2 Level of Education

Figure 4.3 shows that 11% of the respondents did not have any formal education, 60% had attained formal education up to primary school level, while 29% had attained secondary level of education (Fig. 4.3).

This shows that most of the women who are survivors of domestic violence had only attained up to primary level of education. Due to this, ignorance is pronounced in most of the women. Lack of education enhances continuity of violence since a non-literate person will not try to curb the problem by reporting since she is unlikely to be conversant with what the law or other agencies have outlined to govern such social problems. All this is due to ignorance, which is a product of lack of education. In line with this, the Courtesy Centre of the Study of Domestic Violence and Reconciliation (1983) states that improved socioeconomic conditions and education

may reduce ignorance and the risk of domestic violence. Education level has also to some extent affected the occupation and income level of the respondents.



**Figure 4.3: Respondents Level of Education**

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	41	91.1
No	4	8.9
Total	45	100.0

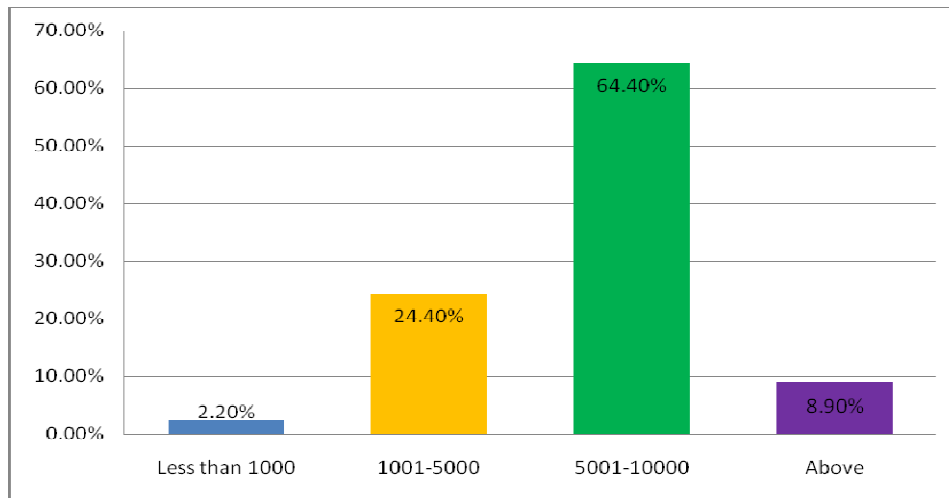
**Table 4.2: Effect of education on the employability of the respondents**

The findings in Table 4.2 show that most of the respondents agreed with the question that education affects an individual's employability.

#### **4.2.3 Monthly Income**

On income levels, 64.40% of the respondents earned between KES 5,000 and KES 10,000 monthly while 24.40% earned between KES 10011 to 5000, 2.20% earned less than KES 1000 and only 8.90 earned KES 10,000 per month (Fig. 4.3). Income level

is an important variable since it determines the affordability of services in one's environment, the ability of the drop-outs to rebuild their dream and enroll in school as well as the drop-outs ability to see their younger siblings and their children through school.



**Figure 4.4: Respondents' monthly Income**

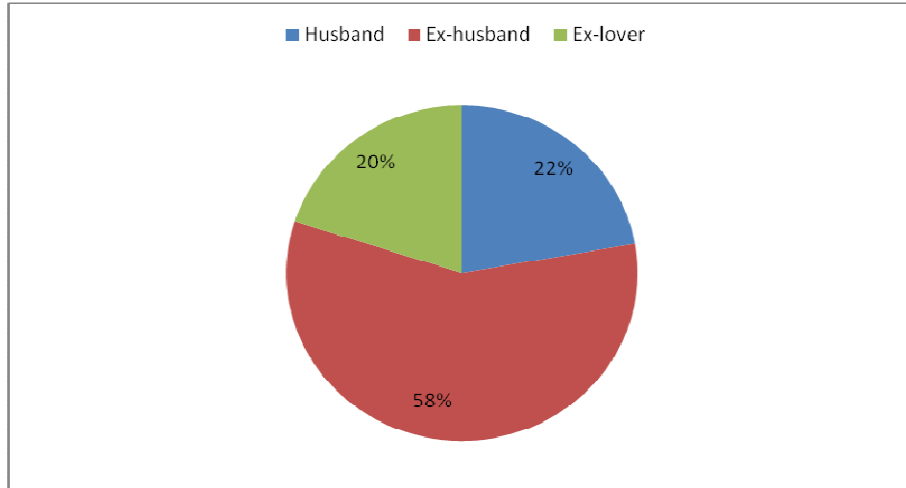
Most respondents reported of not having been assisted in provision of basic needs, by their perpetrators who only provide assistance seasonally and neglect their role of providing for the family. Most of their salaries were spent on alcohol consumption and leisure. The area Chief reported that most of the cases brought to him by women were those of claims of neglect by their partners.

#### **4.2.4 Battering**

The findings in Fig. 4.4 in indicate that 58% of the respondents reported that they were battered by their ex-husbands, while, 22% were being battered by their husbands. On the other hand, the singles complained of having been battered by their ex-lovers. The study shows that most women suffer physical abuse (battering) from their own husbands. It also shows that most women who are or have been in



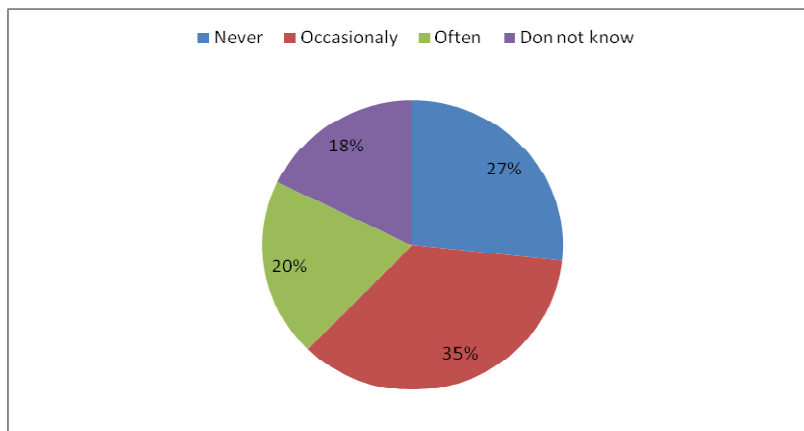
relationship with male partners have at one point or another suffered physical battering.



**Figure 4.5: Perpetrators of abuses suffered by respondents**

#### 4.2.5 Parental Violence

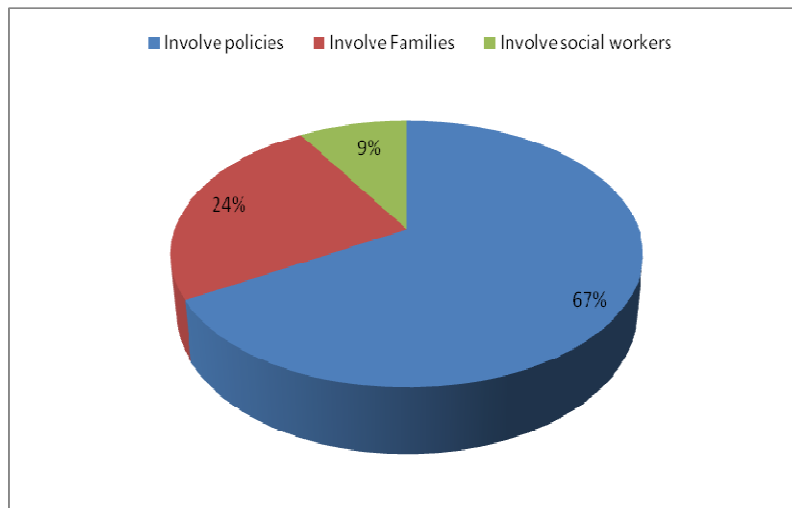
The respondents were asked whether there was any violence in the family between their mother and father. Thirty-five per cent stated that this happened occasionally, 20% said it happened often, 18% did not know whether there was any violence, while 27% said there was no violence (Fig. 4.6).



**Figure 4.6 – Parental Violence**

#### 4.2.6 Curbing Violence against Women

The respondents were asked how best they think gender based violence should be curbed. Sixty-seven per cent stated that policies should be applied to eradicate or reduce the violence, while 24% said that families of both the man and woman should be involved because they are the ones who know the couple well and should therefore be able to solve the couple's problems. On the other hand, 9% of the respondents preferred social workers stating that they are neutral and do not take sides when there is a fight or problem in a household, they will therefore advise the couple accordingly.



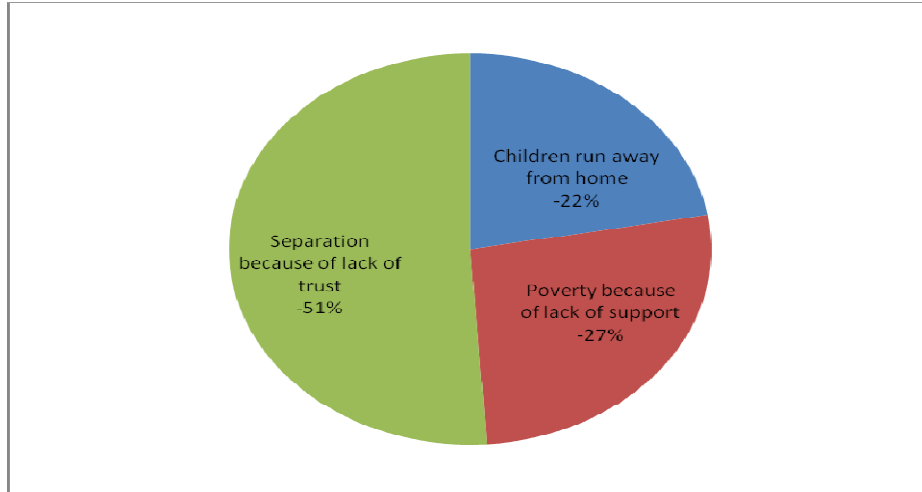
**Figure 4.7: Curbing Gender Based Violence**

#### 4.2.7 Challenges Resulting from Violence Against Women

The respondents were asked to state the challenges that result from violence against women. Fifty-one per cent of them said that the women separate from their spouses during and after the violence because they no longer trust them. On the other hand, 22% of the respondents said that children also run away from home and seek shelter in the streets or with other family members. Finally, 27% stated that women who are

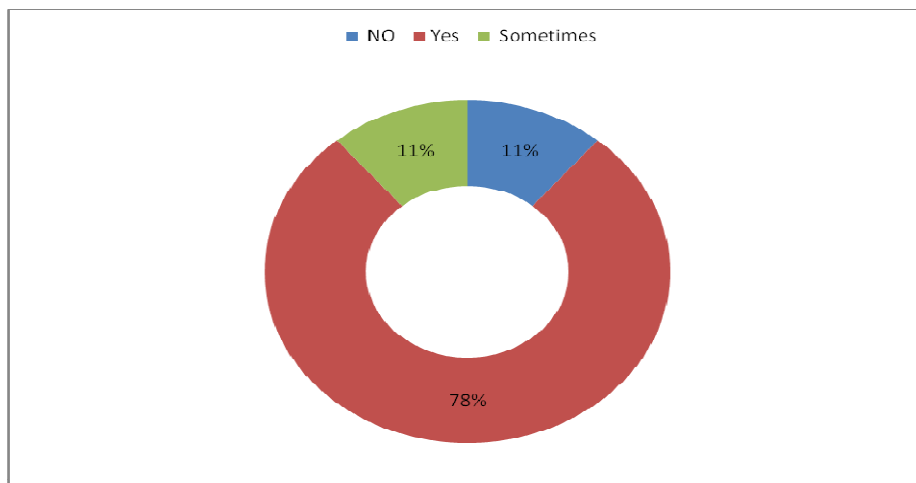
victims of violence experience poverty because of lack of support from their partners.

These findings are summarized in Fig. 4.8.



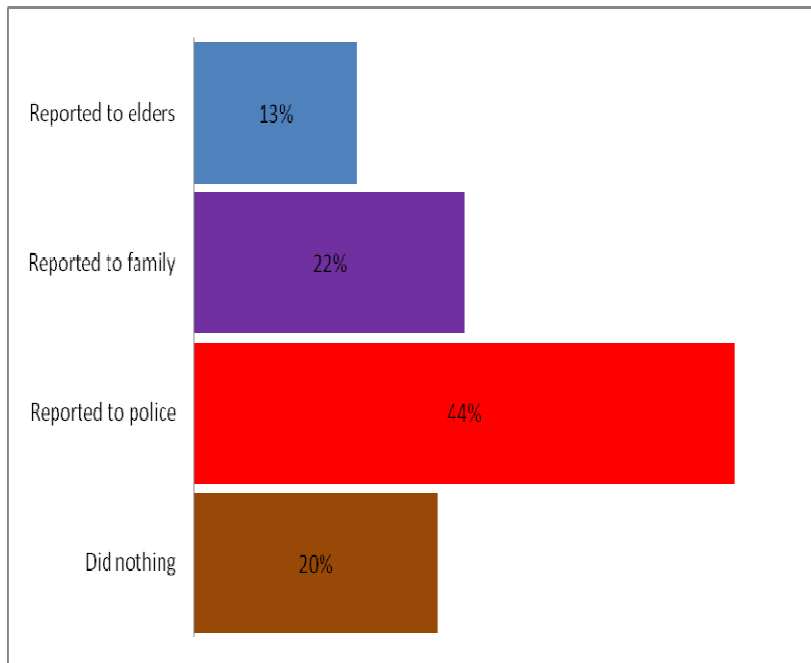
**Figure 4.8: Challenges resulting from Violence against Women**

Figure 4.9 shows the findings on respondents who report violence against them. The findings indicate a majority (78%) of the victims usually report the violence. On the other hand, 11% do not report the violence while another 11% said that they do not report the violence.



**Figure 4.9: Reporting on Violence Cases**

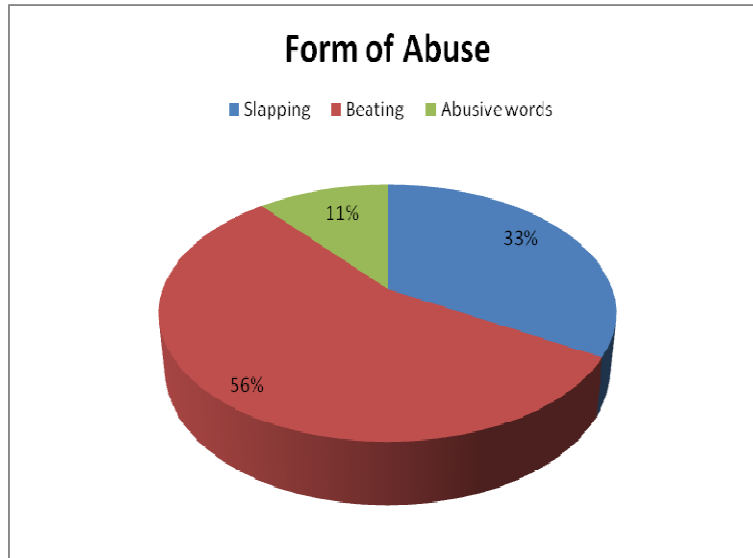
Figure 4.10 shows that 13% of the victims had reported to their elders about the violence, 22% had reported to the family 44% reported to the police and 20% of the victims had not reported to an authority or person. It can be observed from these findings that the majority of the respondents had reported the violence to the Police instead of the family or elders. Most of them gave the reason of fearing close people to know what happens in their homes. Others feared further abuse or death if their spouses found out that they had spoken to their relatives about the violence.



**Figure 4.10: Person to whom violence was reported.**

#### **4.2.8 Forms of Abuse**

The survey results indicate the existence of physical violence against women to a great extent as shown in figure 4.11. above. This figure shows that the commonest form of abuse in the research is physical violence. Beating tops with 56%, slapping 33% of the respondents. In addition to the physical violence, 11% of the respondents reported that some men used abusive words against their partners.



**Figure 4.11: Forms of Abuse**

### **4.3 Why Battered Women Stay**

The focus group discussion revealed that most women stay in abusive relations because they have no alternative but to stay. Their reasons included sympathy or need for their spouses, fear, no safe place to go, children or financial constraints. These findings support those of Ondicho (1993).

Women Laini Saba live in poverty, and their income is meager. The houses are built of wattle and mud and iron sheets. From the focus group discussions, it was evident that a code name, 'Alshabaab' is used in reference to the men who beat their women in the area. One of the respondents remarked that the highest number of women who lived in this area were women who have been physically molested by their husbands through beating. In the discussions it came out clearly that socialization influences the economic violence experienced by women in this community. The discussants were of the opinion that when people live in extreme poverty, this usually leads to violence against women.

#### **4.3.1 Respondents' understanding of the meaning of violence**

The respondents referred to violence as the beating of women by their husbands, refusal to support women economically and using abusive language against women. Some also thought violence includes undermining women when they are trying to do any type of business, even on a small scale, to be able to support themselves financially. The respondents thought that this was due to the cultural belief that it is men who are supposed to provide for the family, and not the other way round. The respondents also noted that violence was mainly meted out against women. This assertion was also supported by the male key informants.

Based on the respondents, violence occurred when men failed to solve issues using the law. They referred to this as “taking the law into their own hands.” Some respondents thought that men beat their wives because they are more empowered than women both financially and physically. This means that the empowerment of men is the bane for women and suggests that men use their financial and physical power to abuse women through violence.

The respondents agreed that most single, separated, divorced and even married women have suffered domestic violence at one point or another. One of the respondents confessed that some of her fingers had been chopped off during violence. The form of violence was either verbal or physical as narrated by the respondents. While the male key informants were very categorical that they have never beaten their wives, some of them who were bachelors agreed that they would not do it even when they got were married.

#### **4.3.2 Women in positions of power in the area**

The respondents agreed that in as much as women are many in this area, the few men here are the ones who control the area. The Chief and his assistant are men. The elders are also men. Most women are in social work such as community development projects. The respondents also said that men occupy the political and administrative positions in the area. On the other hand, women occupy assistants' positions and most of them work for NGOs.

The element of the socialization of woman is clear in that whereas there are more women than men, it is men who take leadership positions in the area. The cultural and social structures have placed men above women in leadership positions in the area. As already stated, men occupy political and administrative positions, a good example being the chief and his assistant. Ironically, these men are supposed to arbitrate on the issues of violence meted against women.

#### **4.3.3 Report of assault cases to the area of chief**

The Key Informant who is the area chief indicated that at least cases of violence against women were constantly reported in his office. He said that his office had often offered support to those survivors of the violence. The respondents further stated that the majority are single women who have children. Most of the women come to stay in this village after separating from their husbands whom they claim had mistreated them through beating and other types of assaults. The informant stated that girls who had witnessed their mothers being abused were more likely to grow up hating men and so end up being victims of abusive husbands. He went on to provide further evidence thus:

“This area has a high rate of poverty and that is why there are many community based development projects. Most of the cases of violence that we get result from beating and abuses because of money and other resources in the family...So we can say that poverty somehow affects the level of violence that women suffer from.”

“...me as the chief of this area can say that our office based statistics show that at least women every week come to my office to report that they have been beaten by their husbands”

“In any case, the way in which the women and girls in this area have been brought up affects the way they view their men and also violence. Sometimes, when they bring their cases to me the woman ends up defending or forgiving the man even when there is a clear case of violence that is actionable by the law”

Based on the chief’s estimated statistics, it is clear that violence is prevalent in the study area. Women and children also seem to be the most affected by the violence. The high level of separated women who come to stay in the area where there is poverty is an indication of the effects of violence on the victims.

The Chief also said that due to the varied cultural practices in the area, it was hard to determine if the cultural processes affected the violence that women faced in the area. He however stated that a majority of the women who came forward to complain in his office did not particularly like the beating that they received and stated that even if it was a result of cultural orientation, they did not approve of it.

#### **4.3.4 Social Worker**

The social worker who acted as a key informant and works with an NGO dealing with neglected children (street children), said that most of the children in the home are from broken homes because of violence. Their mothers are single and are not able to



support them. This suggests that some of the children have equally suffered from the violence just as their parents. She went on to state thus:

“Children suffer a lot when their mothers are beaten and this is clear from some of the testimonies that we get from the survivors when they come to our children’s home. Violence negatively affects children’s growth and concentration in school and other areas of life...we cannot say that girls are the most affected as boys are also affected”

“The way our cultures is that men are given priority and preference in the society. This makes men even today to think that they are superior and can treat their women the way they like. This includes beating and disciplining their women and using any method that they choose....unfortunately sometimes the women are beaten and abused so badly. Some are hospitalized as a result.”

“Poverty makes women dependent on men. Men then treat women the way they like including beating them and abusing them. If you hear the stories from the children you realize that some of the quarrels are from family disagreements about money and the question is who should provide for the family”

The social worker further indicated that cultural issue affect the way women are viewed in the society and this determines how they are treated. According to her, violence is an element of cultural orientation which has been passed down from the past. Culturally, women were abused and beaten as a form of administering discipline. This has however been abused and therefore most men beat their wives on the slightest confrontation and for the flimsiest of reasons.

The social worker also indicated that poverty makes women dependent on men and makes them vulnerable and susceptible to manipulations and abuse by the men. In her opinion, violence against women is both a cause and a consequence of poverty. Violence keeps women poor, and poverty exposes them to violence. Women who suffer from violence lose income and their capacity to earn their own money and this affects their ability to provide for their families.

Another key informant stated that the community based organization she works for deals with the women who are survivors of domestic violence. The organization has its own counselors to walk with the survivors until they recover and come out of this period of depression.

The informant said that community-based organization was a place for women who were feeling abused and mistreated gain back their self-esteem and self-worth and start a new life with dignity. Women she said were free to express their feelings as compared to the men who were also welcome to the organization. She went on thus:

“The women who come here are those who have suffered from violence. Some come with very serious injuries and we treat them and take care of them. But apart from that we offer counseling and assistance to the victims of abuse until they are able to recover fully and they can continue with their lives”

“One thing that you can observe about the women who come to this organization is that the majority are poor, and are dependent on their men for basic needs. Some say that they are abused because their husbands know they cannot go anywhere even if they are beaten.... We however in this organization, help women deal with povert...one of the things we do to encourage women is to empower them by loaning them money to enable them do small scale business, e.g selling vegetables or second hand clothes.

Yes, I believe that in some culture the way girls are socialized affects the way they respond to violence and abuses. For example, some of the women who come here claim that it was right for them to be beaten.... it is very hard to help them to deal with the violence because you deal with difficult cultural issues...some of them confess that when they return home to their parents, they are returned because culture has taught women to be patient in marriage even if it is abusive”.

From this key informant’s discussion, it is clear that women still suffer violence because of the social orientation that they encounter when they are young. The informant gave the example of some of the women who visit the community based organization and think that that it was right for them to be beaten. According to her, it

becomes hard to help such women to deal with the violence because you are dealing with a difficult cultural issue.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the research findings and draws conclusions from those findings. The chapter also makes recommendations on the basis of the conclusions.

#### **5.2 Discussions**

##### **5.2.1 Why most women in Laini Saba face Violence from Men**

The first specific objective of this study was to determine the cultural challenges faced by women in Laini Saba which increase their chances of being battered by husbands or lovers. The findings suggest that culture influences the way women are viewed in the society and this determines how they are treated. Culturally women were abused and beaten as a form of administering discipline. Therefore husbands beat their spouses on the slightest provocation and for the flimsiest of reasons. Our culture has given men priority and preference over women.

Women and children also seem to be the most affected by the violence. The high level of separated women who come to stay in the area where there is poverty is an indication of the effects of violence on victims.

The second specific objective of this study was to determine how the poverty faced by women in Laini Saba predisposes them to violence. Almost all the respondents said that poverty was the biggest problem in their marriages. They accepted that they depended on their husbands/men for financial resources and other basic needs.

Poverty makes women dependent on men. Men, therefore, treat women the way they like including beating them and abusing them in other ways.

The NGOs and women groups in this area encourage women to join table banking to be empowered economically. Women are encouraged to engage in small-scale businesses since there is no farming here. Table banking help them to borrow money with low interest unlike the banks. The money in table banking is shared amongst the women equally and nothing remains on the table. They meet once per month and each month they bring back the interest and some little savings which they then share again. With this, women are economically empowered. The majority of respondents have no or very little education and this has a bearing on their incomes; therefore they do not get well paid jobs due to lack of knowledge and technical skills.

Thirdly, the study sought to determine the extent to which socialization was responsible for the physical violence experienced by women in this community. The findings suggest that the way girls have been brought up, affects them when they are women and how they view the men and the violence meted on them. Thus, they sometimes tend not to report to anyone when they are battered and end up forgiving and depending the man

The respondents observed that men go out to socialize in bars and other drinking places while women stay at home to take care of their families; therefore boys grow up knowing that men drink while women do odd jobs. Most respondents reported of their spouses being violent when under the influence of alcohol. The many alcohol brewing sites within the area have encouraged alcohol consumption

### **5.3 Conclusions**

The researcher concluded that many women in Kibra's Laini Saba have been seriously affected by this act of violence. This has impaired their ability to carry on with small-scale businesses and also has increased expenses on medication. Women have to visit the hospital for treatment of their wounds and injuries incurred during episodes of violence.

While many traditional practices are slowly dying with the modern ways of life, wife beating seems to have defied the order. In the past, tradition encouraged wife beating since culturally, it was perceived as being normal. Some cultures believed that by beating your wife it was a sign that you love her. It is said that even some women agitate their husbands to beat them so as to prove their love for them.

Unlike today when girls are encouraged to go to school, in the old days parents preferred taking boys to school, and encouraged early marriages for the girls. Thus, in this study it came out clearly that most of the respondents were only primary school dropouts, with only a few being secondary and colleges graduates.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

From the research findings, the following recommendations can be made:

1. Since most victims report the violence to the police, the police should take these cases seriously and apprehend and prosecute the culprits instead of encouraging the victims to go and sort out of court.

2. Civil society organizations working in this area should encourage women to venture into income-generating activities so that they can empower themselves economically. This will enable the women to fend for themselves and so reduce conflicts with their partners.
3. The Kenya Federation of Women Lawyers should assist victims of the violence to prosecute their tormentors should the police not take action.

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**APPENDICES**

**Appendix 1**

**Survey questionnaire**

My name is Grace Obwanda. I am a postgraduate student in gender and development studies at the University of Nairobi. At present, I am doing a project on Violence against Women in Kibera, Laini Saba, and Nairobi County. I am therefore requesting you to share with me your experiences on domestic violence in this area.

**INSTRUCTIONS**

- 1) Answer all questions accurately
- 2) Be as sincere as possible
- 3) The information given will be treated confidentially

**SECTION A: PERSONAL DATA**

Name (optional) .....

Age .....

**Marital Status**

- i. Married ( )
- ii. Separated ( )
- iii. Divorced ( )
- iv. Widowed ( )

v. Single ( )

**SECTION B**

4. What level of education have you attained?

i. None ( )

ii. Primary ( )

iii. Secondary ( )

iv Tertiary ( )

(a) Why did you not pursue further level of education?

.....  
.....

(b) Do you think your level of education affects your chances of employment ?

i. Yes ( )

ii. No ( )

What have you done to improve your level of education?

.....  
.....

**SECTION C**

5. What type of occupation do you conduct?

.....  
.....

(a) How much do you earn per month?

i. Less than 1000 ( )

ii. 1001 – 5000 ( )

iii. 5001 – 10000 ( )

iv Above ( )

(b) How many children do you have?

.....  
.....

(c) Do they go to school ?

i. Yes ( )

ii No ( )

(d) If Yes, what level of education are they in ?

.....  
.....

(e) Who facilitates their learning ?

.....  
.....

**SECTION D**

6. The man who battered/beat or physically abused you is your:

i. Husband Yes ( ) No ( )

ii Ex-husband Yes ( ) No ( )

iii. Lover Yes ( ) No ( )

iv. Ex-lover Yes ( ) No ( )

7. When was the first time you saw him behave violently?

i. Approximate date .....

ii What did he do?.....

.....  
.....

iii. What did you do about it?

.....  
.....

iv. Do you face threat out of family?

a) Yes ( )

b) No ( )

v. Do you normally report the violence cases?

.....  
.....

8. What are some of the challenges the families face as a result of violence?

.....  
.....

9. What recommendations would you give to curb domestic violence?

.....  
.....

10. How many were you in the family when you were growing p up?

.....  
.....

i. Did both of your parents live together Yes ( ) No ( )

ii. Was there physical violence between your parents

(a) Never ( )

(b) Occasionally ( )

(b) Often ( )

(c) Do not Know ( )

**Appendix 2:**

**Focus Group Discussions (FGD)**

My name is Grace Obwanda. I am a postgraduate student in gender and development studies at the University of Nairobi. At present, I am doing a project on Violence Against Women in Kibra's Laini Saba, Nairobi County. I am therefore requesting you to share with me your experience on this in this area.

1. Which type of people live in this community?

.....  
.....

2. What do you understand by the term violence against women?

.....  
.....

3. Do you know any women in this area who have not suffered domestic violence?

.....  
.....

4. Do women and men have control of this area?

.....  
.....

### Appendix 3

#### Key Informants Interview Guide

1. What is the general size of this area ?

.....  
.....

2. Would you consider this area heavily populated by women?

.....  
.....

3. What organization do you operate in this region and how does it help the domestic violence survivors here?

.....  
.....

4. How many households do you know in this area who are victims or survivors of domestic violence?

.....