

**Grassroots Empowerment Initiative
(GEMINI)**

Post-election Report



Rebuilding the self-confidence of sexually abused women and girls in the Post-Election period in the North Rift region

OVERVIEW

The post-election period caught everyone by surprise. The violence was swift. The brutality unprecedented. The consequences shocking. The events between December 29 and mid-February remain etched in the minds of many Kenyan women and girls. As the anxiety and tension gave way to sporadic violence following the presidential results announcement, women were caught between salvaging their household belongings and shepherding their children to safety.

But little did they know the fate that awaited them. In their hundreds, women, irregardless of their ethnicity, became targets of marauding men. One by one, they were herded to the nearest bushes and sexually assaulted. Scores were left for dead. Hundreds still carry the shame and indignity of their experiences at the hands of enraged men.

The nightmare had just began.

INTRODUCTION

The Grassroots Empowerment Initiative (GEMINI) is a community-based organization dedicated to building the capacity of marginalized women/girls to enable them make informed and smart decisions.

On December 18, a handful of staff members, volunteers and some colleagues were holed up at a quiet environment, furiously preparing a Life-skills curriculum for a women project that was scheduled to start in January. The pace was furious and before Christmas, we had managed to complete the work, pretest it among some rural group and break for the holidays.

But our holiday was short-lived.

With shops closed, markets deserted and tension rising, GEMINI volunteers took the frontline in identifying high-risk women, girls and children, especially in volatile, residential estates. With minimum communication and increasing danger, we were able to assist in the evacuation of about 128 women from the Kamukunji slums into the safety of the Majengo Catholic Church.



At one time when hundreds of families were scampering for safety from marauding youth armed with bows and arrows, one of our volunteers boldly teamed up with elders from a local church in forming an inter-ethnic committee to liaise with the security forces in reducing tension and restoring peace.

By the end of January, it was evident that women and girls were the biggest casualties. They had been humiliated. Their children were slowly starving to death. Their husbands and sons had been wounded, maimed and killed. They were running short of fundamental supplies. At one of the camps, women desperately asked for discarded newspapers, old towels and tissue papers to be used as sanitary towels. A nurse at a local dispensary informed us that in a period of 12 days after the violence began, they had admitted 7 women who had miscarried. Another 23 were undergoing pregnancy tests. Another hospital had provided vaginal swabs and urinalysis for 17 girls.

We had to do something.

REACHING OUT TO SEXUALLY ABUSED WOMEN/GIRLS

With their numbers steadily rising, survivors of sexual abuse were becoming desperate. With the humanitarian assistance being taken over by the Kenya Red Cross Society, GEMINI began identifying women and girls at high-risk of sexual violation. Our volunteers spread in all the major residential estates and, working with religious leaders, we established village-based networks of volunteers who were on alert to any distress call from women and girls.

We activated our links with health-care providers, encouraging them to inform us of any woman/girl who needed specialized treatment. We developed a tool to



enable them easily identify the survivors. After about two weeks, the phones began ringing.

With volunteers spread out to affected areas, we mobilized counselors and started reaching out. Some of the immediate needs that we addressed included facilitating for the provision of emergency medical services. Some of the laboratory tests were for HIV, pregnancy, STD prophylaxis and Hepatitis B.

In the first few days, we facilitated the provision of emergency contraceptives (EC) for 21 girls at a single clinic. The worst encounter was when we were informed that women and girls from a single residential area had been lured and raped en masse. Unfortunately, the reports reached us after the mandatory 72 hours for EC but we managed to talk to 24 women and 7 girls. They all confirmed our worst fears. They had been gang-raped.

THE GEMINI INTERVENTION

As volunteers combed all areas, reaching out, we realized that internally displaced women/girls also needed a lot of support. Teaming up with local institutions, GEMINI initiated several initiatives based in various camps.

- A) **Trauma counseling:** Using a wide pool of counselors, we offered trauma counseling to over 248 women and 124 girls at the Eldoret Showground IDP camp. We encouraged the formation of support groups for sexually violated women/girls, with each group meeting every week to share experiences and learn new skills on effective communication, stress management and forgiveness.
- B) **Psychological healing:** GEMINI sought to encourage affected families shake out of their cocoons of trauma by engaging them in entertainment activities. Activities in the camp included dancing and singing competition, a cooking competition and a Fashion Show. We also participated in a sports tournament organized by a consortium of local organizations.
- C) **Continuous medical education (CME):** Our volunteers continue to provide periodical medical support for trauma victims. Daily counseling sessions and regular check-ups are conducted at a private clinic once every month.
- D) **Emotional & spiritual healing:** Teaming up with several religious leaders, the project sought to rebuild women's shattered integrity and restore their broken spirits. Weekly prayer sessions are conducted and families are encouraged to embrace forgiveness.
- E) **Peace-Building:** GEMINI has partnered with several other community-based organizations in initiating peace dialogue among affected communities. Activities will include conducting workshops, community outreach and sports.

SUMMARY

Table 1.0 Number of beneficiaries (As of end of March, 2008)

Intervention	Women	Girls
Clinical Management of Post Rape Care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of injuries • Prevention of pregnancy (Emergency Contraception) • STI prevention (STI Prophylaxis) 	122 68 201	87 216 235
Sub-total	391	538
Counselling Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisis prevention/trauma counselling for survivor and family • HIV counselling and testing in the context of trauma • HIV PEP adherence counselling 	2,007 1,356 32	1,878 906 13
Sub-total	3,395	1,797
Psychosocial support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support group formation • Continuous medical education (CME) • Psychological/spiritual healing • Outreach activities 	6 957 2,456 677 2,678	8 708 987 345 3,654
Sub-total	6,768	5,694
Mass Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handbills • Information sheets • Skits & drama 	4,675 1,345 2,450	6,435 2,769 4,870
Sub-total	8,470	14,074