

**Proven
Solution**

Ending Gender-Based Violence



HeForShe

Kenyatta University Eliminating sexual and gender-based violence with a mobile app and response service



Global Context

Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) is the most prevalent form of gender inequality (World Bank, 2013), mainly manifested as Violence Against Women and Girls, a fundamental global human rights violation. One in three women in relationships experiences a form of violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime (WHO, 2013). Such violence extends beyond the individual survivors, affecting households, communities and spanning many generations (NGEC, 2016). SGBV has devastating, long-term effects on survivors, their families and communities, and impedes meaningful development progress.

Universities are not immune. Sexual violence in particular, including murder, rape, and physical and emotional assault is prevalent – especially of female students by their boyfriends, other male acquaintances and, most unfortunately, faculty.

In Kenyan universities, interventions are compromised by weak structures, poor accountability and ineffective reporting mechanisms. Vital evidence is destroyed, distorted or unreported, allowing perpetrators to evade the law. With uncompleted cases, the vice continues as a norm. To change this, we decided to reinvigorate our structures and processes to enhance

prompt reporting. We did this by using a powerful, ubiquitous device: the mobile phone. Confident that cases will be pursued to conclusion, students and staff are encouraged to use our app to address SGBV.

“Acknowledging that SGBV is a barrier to the educational scholarly and research purposes of the university, Kenyatta University will continue working towards eliminating it in all its forms. Moving with the challenges of the 21st century, we turned to technology through the use of a mobile app that anonymously, efficiently and securely helps survivors to report SGBV cases.

Timely reporting is crucial as we can only eradicate SGBV if everyone reports cases whether they are directly or indirectly affected. I appeal to all staff and students to help the university achieve this goal by reporting any case of the vice which they have witnessed or experienced. I invite other institutions around the world to learn from our work and build on it.”

**Paul K. Wainaina, Vice Chancellor,
Kenyatta University**



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Key Stages of Implementation

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Step 1 Recognizing the need for systemic change

Our existing systems for preventing and responding to SGBV include sections in Student Affairs, Security, Disability Services, Wellness and Rehabilitation Services, Health and the Centre for Gender Equity and Empowerment (CGEE). Survivors can also seek support from their academic or administrative heads and deans of schools. This creates a fragmented, unclear and sometimes bureaucratic process. SGBV revolves around a gender power game, where most perpetrators are males. The

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structures also show male dominance at decision-making levels, as well as limited knowledge of gender issues. The situation leaves survivors, who are mainly women, helpless and not keen to report and pursue cases.

Key takeaway: Recognizing the inadequacy and loopholes of this system was the first step in creating a more gender responsive approach, where trust and confidence in handling SGBV can be rebuilt.

Step 2 Using familiar technology to support survivors and pursue cases

SGBV at universities in Kenya often leaves female students with internal wounds beneath the “happy faces” seen on graduation day. As the vice is typically camouflaged by a culture of intimidation and silence, addressing it becomes a challenge. When it comes to confidentiality, the protection of survivors and their dignity, and the dissemination of appropriate information, poor university responses and systems can leave already traumatized survivors in limbo.

The use of mobile phone technology has reached unprecedented levels, with almost all university students owning one. The majority of students have been using their smartphones for about three years and for approximately five hours a day (Hatun and Berkan, 2019). We realized that because these devices are personal and private,

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they could offer confidential access to an improved support service in handling SGBV.

With the help of a grant of £1,000 from the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), we contracted an IT expert to design a new app that would be easy to use, give survivors immediate and long-term support, progress cases against perpetrators and help to make the university environment progressively safer.

The app facilitates anonymous, efficient and timely reporting of SGBV cases, helps to analyze data, and provides reports on submitted cases for further investigation. Launched in October 2020, it also sensitizes the university community to gender issues, in particular safe spaces on campus. The app was designed for the Android

platform and is compatible with a wide range of phones. The app categorizes data into gender, type, location, details of the incident, contact and image, all of which are collected and stored securely, ready for retrieval during disciplinary processes. It also breaks down cases into specific categories such as gender discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault/abuse, sexual exploitation, defilement and indecent acts.

The app provides general safety information and contact details for emergencies, but most importantly, due to its privacy, it targets stigma, intimidation and victimization scenarios, especially in cases where the culprit is from senior management.

Key takeaway: Mobile phones are powerful and ubiquitous – they are a great tool for addressing SGBV when used sensitively and with confidence.

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Step 3 Linking users with live, central services

The app links users to a central one-stop shop for seeking help. It enables reporting of assaults together with location, photos and other materials that can be used in evidence. It is available to the entire university community living both within and outside the university. The process involves capturing data by a SGBV survivor, immediately a threat or incident occurs. Data-secure in audio or video, it is then relayed live to a central hub at the CGEE, where immediate relief is given along with quick referrals to relevant offices. Reported cases are subsequently scheduled for further investigation.

The app's Counseling section contains curated guidance for survivors who might not have the courage to seek help immediately. Tips on how to stay safe on campus and avoid abuse are included along with security and emergency numbers. A web dashboard enables the university's Gender Centre to manage content and monitor reports.



Key takeaway: It's important that a service like this has real, trained people dedicated to responding to incoming events as they happen. Logging incidents isn't enough: we must intervene in the moment and commit to supporting the survivor in the future.



Step 4 Empowering the community to reform

The App raises awareness of SGBV and acts as a focal point for the efforts of individuals, teams and agencies involved in running the university.

The CGEE continues to run sensitization seminars to popularize the app within the university community. By launching the app in a forum attended by representatives from other universities in Kenya, we highlighted the existence of SGBV in our institutions

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and society. As beacons of knowledge, universities are uniquely placed to play a decisive role in responding to, preventing and eliminating SGBV.

Key takeaway: Tools like these give agency back to the people and send a strong message that those who commit SGBV will be pursued with all the energy of a combined community.

Resources

Resources needed to have the app operational included:

- Development fee
- Training service provider
- Training one staff member at the CGEE to manage the app
- Domain and hosting fees
- App publishing fee (Google Play Store)
- Ongoing system maintenance and upgrading as needed.

The app and its services need a continuous support team which varies in relation to the size of an organization and its existing resources. Besides the ACU grant, we used university facilities like office space, computers and staff time.

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