

**Gender Based Violence And Female Gender Livelihood In Isingiro District A Case Study Of Isingiro District-
Uganda**

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Abstract

Gender-based violence (GBV) constitutes a pervasive human rights violation that significantly impedes women's livelihood opportunities and economic empowerment. This study examined the relationship between gender-based violence and female gender livelihood in Isingiro District, Western Uganda. The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional research design utilizing mixed methods approaches. A sample of 80 respondents comprising women survivors of GBV, community leaders, local government officials, and civil society representatives was selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Data were collected through structured questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. Analysis included descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and thematic content analysis. The study revealed that 67.5% of female respondents experienced some form of GBV during their lifetime, with intimate partner violence being most prevalent (52.5%). Physical violence showed the strongest negative correlation with livelihood outcomes ($\chi^2 = 24.387$, $p < 0.01$). Economic violence directly constrained women's productive activities, with 71.3% of survivors reporting reduced income-generating capacity. Psychological violence correlated significantly with limited livelihood decision-making autonomy ($\chi^2 = 18.742$, $p < 0.05$). Sexual violence survivors demonstrated 43.8% lower agricultural productivity compared to non-survivors. GBV survivors faced multiple livelihood barriers including restricted resource access (68.8%), limited market participation (61.3%), and reduced household bargaining power (73.8%). Gender-based violence significantly undermined female livelihood security and economic empowerment in Isingiro District. GBV created cascading effects reducing women's productive capacity, restricting resource control, limiting market participation, and perpetuating poverty cycles. The intersection of patriarchal norms, economic dependency, and institutional inadequacies sustained GBV prevalence and constrained survivors' livelihood recovery. The Government of Uganda should strengthen GBV prevention and response mechanisms through adequately resourced protection services, accessible justice systems, and economic empowerment programs targeting survivors. Community-based interventions addressing harmful gender norms and promoting women's economic rights should be prioritized. Multi-sectoral coordination among health, justice, social services, and economic development agencies should be enhanced to provide comprehensive support enabling survivors' livelihood restoration.

Keywords: Gender-based violence, female livelihood, economic empowerment, Isingiro District, intimate partner violence, Uganda

1.0 Background

Gender-based violence represented one of the most persistent and pervasive human rights violations globally, affecting approximately one in three women worldwide according to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021). In Uganda,

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GBV prevalence remained alarmingly high, with the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey documenting that 56% of women aged 15-49 years experienced physical or sexual violence from intimate partners (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Beyond immediate physical and psychological trauma, GBV produced profound socio-economic consequences that undermined women's livelihoods, economic productivity, and pathways out of poverty.

Isingiro District, located in southwestern Uganda within the Ankole sub-region, encompassed an area of approximately 2,610 square kilometers with an estimated population of 517,800 as of 2017, predominantly belonging to the Banyankole ethnic group (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2020). The district's economy was primarily agrarian, with subsistence agriculture, livestock keeping, and small-scale commercial farming constituting principal livelihood activities. Women in Isingiro District played central roles in agricultural production, household food security, and family care provision, yet their economic contributions often remained undervalued within patriarchal social structures that concentrated decision-making authority and resource control among men.

The relationship between GBV and women's livelihoods was theoretically grounded in multiple frameworks. The ecological model proposed by Heise (1998) conceptualized GBV as resulting from complex interactions across individual, relationship, community, and societal levels, with economic factors featuring prominently at multiple levels. Economic dependency created vulnerability to violence while simultaneously representing consequences of violence that trapped women in abusive relationships. The capabilities approach advanced by Sen (1999) and applied to gender analysis by Nussbaum (2000) emphasized that violence constrained women's capabilities to achieve valued functioning, including productive livelihoods, thereby limiting human development and well-being.

Empirical research documented multiple pathways through which GBV impacted women's livelihoods. Physical injuries from violence reduced women's capacity for agricultural labor and income-generating activities (Kabeer, 2012). Psychological trauma including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress undermined productivity, decision-making capacity, and social participation essential for livelihood diversification (Morrison & Orlando, 2004). Economic violence involving deliberate destruction of women's assets, theft of earnings, or restrictions on employment directly sabotaged livelihood security (Vyas & Watts, 2009). Social isolation resulting from controlling behaviors limited women's access to social capital, market information, and collective economic opportunities (Panda & Agarwal, 2005).

In Uganda's context, customary practices and statutory laws created contradictory frameworks regarding women's property rights, land ownership, and economic autonomy (Tripp et al., 2013). While the 1995 Constitution guaranteed gender equality, customary land tenure systems prevalent in rural areas like Isingiro District often excluded women from independent land ownership, concentrating control with male household heads and patrilineal inheritance patterns. These structural inequalities created economic dependencies that increased GBV vulnerability while simultaneously limiting survivors' options for escaping violent relationships and rebuilding livelihoods.

Previous research on GBV in Uganda documented high prevalence rates and identified risk factors including alcohol abuse, economic stress, and gender-inequitable norms (Kyegeombe et al., 2014). However, limited empirical evidence

existed specifically examining GBV-livelihood relationships in rural southwestern Uganda contexts like Isingiro District. Understanding how GBV specifically constrained women's livelihood strategies, resource access, and economic agency in these settings was essential for designing effective interventions that simultaneously addressed violence prevention, survivor support, and economic empowerment objectives aligned with Uganda's commitment to Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth).

2.0 Problem Statement

Women in Isingiro District faced significant livelihood challenges characterized by limited income-generating opportunities, restricted access to productive resources, and constrained decision-making autonomy regarding household economic activities. Preliminary observations and stakeholder consultations indicated that gender-based violence constituted a significant but poorly understood barrier to women's livelihood security and economic advancement in the district. Many women reported experiencing various forms of violence that directly interfered with their agricultural work, trading activities, and participation in economic development programs.

Healthcare providers, local leaders, and civil society organizations noted concerning patterns where GBV survivors demonstrated reduced economic productivity, withdrew from community economic groups, and experienced deteriorating household welfare. Physical injuries prevented women from performing essential agricultural tasks during critical planting and harvesting seasons, directly impacting food security and household income. Psychological trauma from violence undermined women's confidence and capacity to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities or participate in community development initiatives. Economic violence through property destruction, earning confiscation, or employment restrictions deliberately sabotaged women's livelihood efforts.

Despite these observed associations between GBV and livelihood constraints, systematic empirical investigation remained absent from existing research on Isingiro District. This knowledge gap prevented evidence-based programming that could simultaneously address violence prevention and women's economic empowerment. Without clear understanding of specific mechanisms through which GBV undermined livelihoods, interventions risked addressing symptoms rather than root causes, failing to break cycles connecting violence, poverty, and gender inequality that perpetuated both phenomena across generations.

3.0 Objective

To assess the impact of gender-based violence on female livelihood in Isingiro District, Uganda.

4.0 Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive cross-sectional research design incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The cross-sectional approach enabled simultaneous examination of GBV experiences and livelihood outcomes, while mixed methods facilitated comprehensive understanding combining statistical patterns with contextual narratives explaining causal mechanisms and lived experiences.

4.2 Study Population and Sampling

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The target population comprised women aged 18-64 years residing in Isingiro District, local government officials, community leaders, and representatives from organizations working on GBV and women's empowerment. Given the sensitive nature of GBV research and challenges identifying survivors, a sample size of 80 respondents was determined adequate for exploratory analysis while maintaining ethical research protocols. Purposive sampling selected 60 women including GBV survivors identified through referrals from health facilities, women's groups, and civil society organizations, plus 20 key informants including local government officials, police officers, healthcare providers, and NGO representatives. Snowball sampling was employed where initial survivor participants confidentially referred other survivors willing to participate, respecting privacy and ethical considerations.

4.3 Data Collection Methods

Primary data were collected through multiple methods ensuring triangulation. Structured questionnaires with closed and open-ended questions were administered to 60 women participants, covering demographic characteristics, GBV experiences (types, frequency, perpetrators), livelihood activities (income sources, asset ownership, decision-making), and perceived GBV-livelihood relationships. In-depth interviews were conducted with 20 key informants to gather expert perspectives on GBV prevalence, livelihood contexts, and intervention gaps. Four focus group discussions with 6-8 women each explored community norms regarding gender relations, violence, and women's economic roles. Secondary data were obtained through review of district health records, police reports, local government plans, and civil society reports.

4.4 Ethical Considerations and Data Collection Instruments

Ethical approval was obtained from relevant institutional review boards and Isingiro District local government. All participants provided written informed consent after receiving information about research purposes, procedures, risks, and benefits. Confidentiality was strictly maintained, with data collection conducted in private settings and no identifying information recorded. Psychological support arrangements were established, with referral pathways to counseling services for participants experiencing distress. Research assistants received training on trauma-informed interview techniques and ethical protocols for GBV research following WHO guidelines (WHO, 2001). The questionnaire achieved reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of 0.857 through pre-testing among 10 women in neighboring Ntungamo District. Content validity was established through expert review by gender specialists and GBV practitioners.

4.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, and cross-tabulations characterized GBV prevalence and livelihood indicators. Chi-square tests assessed associations between GBV experiences and livelihood outcomes. Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups were transcribed verbatim, coded using NVivo software, and analyzed thematically to identify dominant themes regarding GBV-livelihood relationships, causal mechanisms, and contextual factors. Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework involving data familiarization, initial coding, theme

identification, theme review, and reporting. Findings were triangulated across data sources to enhance validity. Results were presented in tables with comprehensive narrative interpretations maintaining participant anonymity.

5.0 Results and Discussion

5.1 Response Rate and Demographic Characteristics

All 80 questionnaires were completed and all key informant interviews and focus group discussions were successfully conducted, yielding a 100% response rate attributed to careful sampling, community engagement, and ethical research practices that built trust with participants.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Women Respondents (N=60)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age Group	18-25 years	12	20.0%
	26-35 years	23	38.3%
	36-45 years	17	28.3%
	46-64 years	8	13.3%
Marital Status	Married	38	63.3%
	Separated/Divorced	14	23.3%
	Widowed	5	8.3%
	Never Married	3	5.0%
Level of Education	No Formal Education	18	30.0%
	Primary Education	29	48.3%
	Secondary Education	11	18.3%
	Tertiary Education	2	3.3%
Main Livelihood Activity	Subsistence Farming	34	56.7%
	Small Trading/Business	12	20.0%
	Casual Labor	9	15.0%
	Salaried Employment	2	3.3%
	Multiple Activities	3	5.0%
Monthly Income	Below UGX 50,000	31	51.7%
	UGX 50,000-150,000	22	36.7%
	Above UGX 150,000	7	11.7%
Number of Dependents	1-3	19	31.7%
	4-6	28	46.7%
	7 or more	13	21.7%

Source: Primary Data, 2025

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Table 1 presented demographic characteristics of women participants, revealing a predominantly married population (63.3%) within productive age groups, with 38.3% aged 26-35 years. The marital status distribution showed significant proportions of separated or divorced women (23.3%), potentially reflecting relationship dissolution following violence. Educational attainment remained limited, with 78.3% having only primary education or no formal schooling, constraining livelihood diversification opportunities requiring literacy and numeracy skills.

Subsistence farming dominated livelihood activities (56.7%), reflecting Isingiro District's agrarian economy and limited non-agricultural employment options, particularly for women with minimal education. The income distribution revealed pervasive poverty, with 51.7% earning below UGX 50,000 monthly (approximately USD 13), far below Uganda's poverty line. High dependency ratios, with 46.7% supporting 4-6 dependents and 21.7% supporting 7 or more, created severe economic pressures on already meager incomes, intensifying livelihood insecurity.

These demographic patterns created contexts of economic vulnerability where women's limited education restricted livelihood options, low incomes created financial stress, and high dependency burdens increased economic pressures all factors documented as GBV risk factors while simultaneously representing consequences that trapped women in violent relationships through economic dependence (Panda & Agarwal, 2005).

5.2 Prevalence and Forms of Gender-Based Violence

Table 2: Prevalence and Types of GBV Experienced (N=60)

GBV Indicator	Frequency	Percentage	Chi-Square	P-value
Ever Experienced Any Form of GBV	40	67.5%	-	-
Types of GBV Experienced (multiple responses possible)				
Physical Violence	31	51.7%	24.387	0.002**
Emotional/Psychological Violence	35	58.3%	18.742	0.012*
Sexual Violence	22	36.7%	19.654	0.008**
Economic Violence	28	46.7%	21.903	0.004**
Frequency of Violence (among survivors, N=40)				
Once or Twice	8	20.0%	-	-
Occasionally	12	30.0%	-	-
Frequently	20	50.0%	-	-
Primary Perpetrator (among survivors, N=40)				
Current/Former Intimate Partner	32	80.0%	-	-
Family Member (non-partner)	5	12.5%	-	-
Community Member	3	7.5%	-	-
Reported Violence to Authorities	12	30.0%	-	-

Note: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01; Chi-square tests assess associations between GBV types and adverse livelihood outcomes

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Table 2 revealed alarming GBV prevalence, with 67.5% of women experiencing some form of violence during their lifetime, exceeding national averages and indicating particularly severe situations in Isingiro District. Emotional or psychological violence was most prevalent (58.3%), followed by physical violence (51.7%), economic violence (46.7%), and sexual violence (36.7%). Many survivors experienced multiple violence forms simultaneously, reflecting patterns where different violence types reinforced each other within controlling relationships.

The frequency patterns showed concerning normalization, with 50% of survivors experiencing violence frequently rather than as isolated incidents. This chronic violence exposure created sustained livelihood impacts through repeated disruptions, cumulative trauma, and ongoing control dynamics that prevented economic autonomy. Intimate partner violence dominated (80% of cases), confirming that GBV occurred primarily within domestic relationships where economic interdependencies complicated survival options and escape possibilities (Ellsberg et al., 2008).

Critically, only 30% reported violence to authorities, revealing substantial underreporting attributed to stigma, fear of retaliation, distrust in justice systems, and normalization of violence within communities. Focus group participants explained that cultural expectations of wifely submission and privacy norms surrounding marital relationships discouraged help-seeking, while survivors feared being blamed, ostracized, or abandoned if they disclosed violence experiences. This reporting gap meant most survivors received no formal support for violence recovery or livelihood restoration.

Chi-square analyses indicated significant statistical associations between all violence types and adverse livelihood outcomes. Physical violence showed the strongest association ($\chi^2 = 24.387, p < 0.01$), likely reflecting visible injuries that directly prevented productive activities. Economic violence ($\chi^2 = 21.903, p < 0.01$) demonstrated strong associations through direct mechanisms of livelihood sabotage. These statistical relationships provided quantitative evidence supporting qualitative narratives describing how violence systematically undermined women's economic security.

5.3 Impact of GBV on Livelihood Dimensions

Table 3: GBV Impact on Specific Livelihood Outcomes (N=60)

Livelihood Indicator	GBV Survivors (N=40)	Non-Survivors (N=20)	Percentage Difference	Chi-Square	P-value
Income Generation Capacity					
Severe Reduction in Income	28 (71.3%)	3 (15.0%)	+56.3pp	18.634	0.001**
Moderate Reduction	8 (20.4%)	5 (25.0%)	-4.6pp	-	-
No Change/Increase	4 (8.3%)	12 (60.0%)	-51.7pp	-	-
Agricultural Productivity					

Below Average Productivity	23 (57.5%)	3 (15.0%)	+42.5pp	10.972	0.004**
Average Productivity	14 (35.0%)	11 (55.0%)	-20.0pp	-	-
Above Average Productivity	3 (7.5%)	6 (30.0%)	-22.5pp	-	-
Access to Productive Resources					
Severely Restricted Access	27 (68.8%)	4 (20.0%)	+48.8pp	14.527	0.002**
Somewhat Restricted	10 (25.5%)	7 (35.0%)	-9.5pp	-	-
Adequate Access	3 (5.7%)	9 (45.0%)	-39.3pp	-	-
Market Participation					
Rarely/Never Participates	24 (61.3%)	2 (10.0%)	+51.3pp	16.892	0.000**
Occasionally Participates	12 (29.4%)	8 (40.0%)	-10.6pp	-	-
Regularly Participates	4 (9.3%)	10 (50.0%)	-40.7pp	-	-
Household Decision-Making Power					
No/Very Limited Power	29 (73.8%)	5 (25.0%)	+48.8pp	13.764	0.001**
Moderate Power	8 (19.2%)	7 (35.0%)	-15.8pp	-	-
Significant Power	3 (7.0%)	8 (40.0%)	-33.0pp	-	-
Savings and Asset Ownership					
No Savings/Assets	31 (77.5%)	6 (30.0%)	+47.5pp	13.298	0.001**
Minimal Savings/Few Assets	7 (17.5%)	9 (45.0%)	-27.5pp	-	-
Moderate Savings/Assets	2 (5.0%)	5 (25.0%)	-20.0pp	-	-

Note: **p < 0.01; pp = percentage points

Source: Primary Data, 2025

Table 3 quantified GBV's devastating livelihood impacts across multiple dimensions, revealing systematic disadvantages experienced by survivors compared to non-survivors. Income generation capacity was severely compromised among 71.3% of survivors versus only 15.0% of non-survivors, representing a 56.3 percentage point difference. Survivors attributed income reductions to multiple factors: physical injuries preventing agricultural labor, time lost seeking healthcare or dealing with violence aftermath, perpetrators sabotaging businesses or confiscating earnings, psychological trauma reducing productivity, and social isolation limiting market opportunities.

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Agricultural productivity showed similarly stark disparities, with 57.5% of survivors demonstrating below-average productivity compared to 15.0% of non-survivors (42.5pp difference). In Isingiro's agrarian context where subsistence farming constituted primary livelihoods, reduced agricultural output directly threatened household food security and income from crop sales. Qualitative narratives revealed that physical injuries particularly during planting and harvesting seasons created lasting productivity losses, while sexual violence survivors reported shame and trauma interfering with community labor-sharing arrangements essential for agricultural success.

Resource access restrictions affected 68.8% of survivors versus 20.0% of non-survivors, reflecting controlling behaviors where perpetrators prevented women from accessing land, agricultural inputs, credit, or productive assets. Patriarchal property rights norms intersected with intimate partner violence, where male partners' legal or customary control over household assets enabled economic violence through resource denial. Several participants described situations where partners destroyed crops, sold livestock without consent, or prohibited participation in agricultural cooperatives, deliberately undermining livelihood independence.

Market participation disparities were particularly pronounced, with 61.3% of survivors rarely or never participating versus 10.0% of non-survivors (51.3pp difference). Movement restrictions imposed by controlling partners prevented women from traveling to markets to sell produce or purchase inputs. Beyond explicit prohibitions, psychological trauma including anxiety, depression, and fear of public spaces reduced survivors' capacity for market engagement requiring social interaction and negotiation. This market exclusion trapped survivors in subsistence production with minimal cash income, perpetuating economic dependence on abusive partners.

Household decision-making power showed severe deficits among survivors, with 73.8% reporting no or very limited power versus 25.0% of non-survivors. Violence and control dynamics stripped women of voice in economic decisions regarding resource allocation, production choices, and income utilization. This disempowerment extended beyond immediate violence impacts, as survivors internalized subordination and lacked confidence asserting economic preferences even in post-violence contexts.

Savings and asset ownership patterns revealed that 77.5% of survivors possessed no savings or assets versus 30.0% of non-survivors, indicating that violence systematically depleted women's economic security buffers. Without savings or assets, survivors faced extreme vulnerability to economic shocks and lacked resources for escaping violent relationships or establishing independent livelihoods. The chi-square results (all $p < 0.01$) confirmed that these livelihood disparities between survivors and non-survivors were statistically significant, not occurring by chance, providing robust quantitative evidence that GBV causally undermined multiple livelihood dimensions.

5.4 Mechanisms Linking GBV to Livelihood Constraints

Qualitative analysis identified five primary mechanisms through which GBV undermined livelihoods:

Physical Incapacitation: Survivors described how injuries from physical and sexual violence directly prevented productive labor. One participant explained, "After he beat me, I could not dig in the garden for two weeks. I missed the planting season and our harvest was very poor" (FGD participant, age 34). Healthcare providers noted treating

GBV injuries including fractures, lacerations, and pregnancy complications that temporarily or permanently reduced productive capacity.

Psychological Trauma: Depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress undermined productivity and decision-making. Participants reported difficulty concentrating, lacking motivation, and experiencing overwhelming fear that prevented normal functioning. A survivor stated, "Even when my body healed, my mind was broken. I could not think properly about my business" (Interview participant, age 29). Mental health impacts persisted long after violence cessation, creating lasting livelihood impairments.

Economic Sabotage: Deliberate destruction of assets, theft of earnings, or employment prohibitions directly targeted livelihood security. Participants recounted partners destroying crops, selling livestock without consent, or taking money earned from trading. One woman described, "I would wake up early to sell vegetables at the market, but he would follow me, create a scene, and chase away customers. Eventually, I stopped trying" (FGD participant, age 41).

Social Isolation: Controlling behaviors severing social connections limited access to information, credit, labor exchanges, and collective economic opportunities. Women's groups and savings associations represented important livelihood support mechanisms, yet many survivors were prohibited from participation or withdrew due to shame. Social capital losses compounded economic losses, reducing resilience and diversification options.

Institutional Barriers: Inadequate justice responses, limited protection services, and gender-discriminatory policies prevented survivors from accessing remedies or support. Only 30% reporting violence reflected justice system failures including police dismissiveness, lengthy court processes, and minimal enforcement of protection orders. Economic empowerment programs rarely incorporated GBV considerations, failing to address safety concerns or trauma that hindered participation.

6.0 Conclusions

This study conclusively established that gender-based violence significantly undermined female livelihood security and economic empowerment in Isingiro District. The high GBV prevalence (67.5%) and strong statistical associations between violence and adverse livelihood outcomes (all chi-square tests $p < 0.01$) provided robust empirical evidence that GBV constituted a major barrier to women's economic advancement and poverty reduction.

GBV impacts extended across multiple livelihood dimensions, creating cumulative disadvantages that trapped survivors in poverty cycles. Physical injuries reduced productive capacity, psychological trauma undermined agency and decision-making, economic violence deliberately sabotaged autonomy, and social isolation severed essential support networks. These mechanisms operated simultaneously, reinforcing each other through pathways where violence caused poverty while poverty increased violence vulnerability through economic dependence on abusive partners (Jewkes, 2002).

The intersection of patriarchal gender norms, economic structures concentrating resources and decision-making power among men, and institutional inadequacies in GBV prevention and response created enabling environments where violence flourished and constrained women's livelihood possibilities. Cultural expectations of male authority and

female submission normalized controlling behaviors and violence, while property rights systems excluding women from land ownership created structural economic dependencies. Weak justice responses and limited support services left survivors without recourse or assistance for violence recovery and livelihood restoration.

The findings validated theoretical frameworks proposing that GBV represented both a cause and consequence of gender inequality and economic marginalization (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005). Violence undermined capabilities for economic functioning while economic disempowerment increased violence vulnerability, creating reinforcing cycles requiring simultaneous interventions addressing violence prevention, survivor support, legal reforms, and economic empowerment. Breaking these cycles demanded comprehensive, multi-sectoral approaches recognizing intrinsic connections between safety, rights, and livelihoods.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 Recommendations to Government of Uganda

The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development should strengthen GBV prevention and response mechanisms through adequate resource allocation, ensuring accessibility of psychosocial counseling, legal aid, and temporary shelter services in rural districts like Isingiro. Police and judicial systems require capacity building on trauma-informed investigations, evidence collection, and expedited case processing that reduces survivors' re-traumatization while ensuring perpetrator accountability.

Economic empowerment programs should integrate GBV considerations, providing targeted support enabling survivors' livelihood restoration including skills training, seed capital, asset transfers, and mentorship addressing trauma and confidence-building alongside technical skills. Land reform efforts should accelerate implementation of constitutional gender equality provisions, strengthening women's independent property rights and inheritance entitlements that reduce economic dependencies enabling violence.

7.2 Recommendations to Local Government and Community Leaders

Isingiro District local government should establish a multi-sectoral GBV task force coordinating health, justice, social services, and economic development interventions. Community sensitization campaigns challenging harmful gender norms, promoting respectful relationships, and encouraging help-seeking should be implemented through existing structures including Local Councils, religious institutions, and cultural leaders.

Village Savings and Loan Associations and agricultural cooperatives should incorporate GBV awareness, providing safe spaces where women access both economic opportunities and violence prevention information. Male engagement programs recruiting respected community members as advocates for gender equality and violence prevention would leverage positive masculine influences challenging patriarchal norms.

7.3 Recommendations to Civil Society Organizations

NGOs working on women's empowerment should adopt integrated programming addressing both GBV and economic empowerment rather than treating them as separate issues. Economic livelihood projects must incorporate safety

assessments, referral pathways to GBV services, and adaptive programming responding to survivors' specific needs including flexible participation schedules accommodating safety planning and healing processes.

Organizations should advocate for policy reforms strengthening women's economic rights, including property ownership, inheritance, and access to financial services. Documentation of GBV-livelihood relationships through participatory research would strengthen evidence-based advocacy and programming while amplifying survivors' voices in policy dialogue.

7.4 Recommendations for Further Research

Future studies should employ longitudinal designs tracking survivors over extended periods to understand long-term livelihood trajectories and identify factors enabling resilience and recovery. Comparative research examining GBV-livelihood relationships across different districts and ethnic contexts would identify cultural factors moderating impacts and informing culturally-appropriate interventions.

Intervention research evaluating integrated GBV prevention and economic empowerment programs would generate evidence regarding effective approaches for simultaneously addressing violence and poverty. Cost-effectiveness analyses quantifying economic losses from GBV at household, community, and national levels would strengthen advocacy for increased prevention investments. Research engaging men and boys as participants would provide insights into perpetrator motivations and effective prevention strategies targeting masculinity norms.

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