



# FOL Newsletter

Fountain of Life

## VISUAL ART AND POETRY EXHIBITION

In October, 2013, UN Women together with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare called for entries from artists and poets who wanted to show case their work at the United Nations Visual Art and Poetry Exhibition with the theme **“Freedom from violence against women and girls”** in relation to the 16 days against Gender based Violence. Their aim was to create a united effort, through images and words, to raise public awareness about forms of violence against women and girls, and inspire them to break the silence, contributing to the fight against gender based violence.

It was a chance for activists to share messages for raising awareness about violence against women and girls. Artists, writers, poets, survivors of violence, students, activists, the general public and organizations that are working to end gender based violence were invited to submit work for the exhibition which was held in Lilongwe at various venues from December 2013 to January 2014.

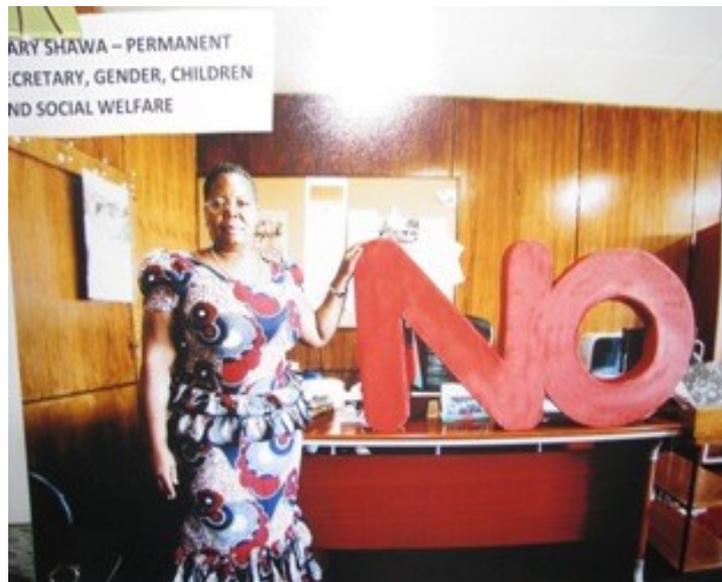
Visual artists were to use any medium: paint, drawing, caricature/cartoon, digital/graphic art, photography, mixed media, crafts and sculpture such as stone, glass, wood, metal or other mixed materials. An assembly of jurors



One of the paintings at the exhibition

who were visual artists, members of civil society, government and people from different backgrounds and geographical locations curate the exhibition. The most compelling art work and

the most inspiring poem/writings would be used in the ongoing UNITE and future campaigns.



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### Did You Know?

- There are more rape and sexual assault cases being reported each day, over 15 per day and growing.
- The One Stop Centre in Blantyre is the only OSC fully operational in the whole country.

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## Tamanda's Story

She was born in a family of three, when her parents divorced, she lived with her mother only who died five years later and she never got to know her father's whereabouts. She then went to the village to live with the grandmother from the mother's side, who died two years later. Her uncle who was not married at that time took her in to live with him in Lilongwe.

When the uncle got married, the wife (aunt) started to mistreat her and abuse her, like not giving her food. When the aunt had a baby, she went to her home village leaving behind the uncle and Tamanda alone. One day, he came home drunk and raped her after which he told her never to tell anyone or he will chase her from his house. Since she had nowhere else to go, she did not tell anyone about

the rape. A couple of months later she discovered that she was pregnant and when she told her uncle about it, he chased her away from his house. A certain lady who lived nearby worked at a Human Rights organization heard her story and found her a place at a Rehabilitation Centre. A few months later she gave birth to a baby but was never given a chance to see her child, she was just told that the baby had died.

She started going to school and after primary leaving examinations she was selected to go to one of the best schools in the city to do her secondary education. She found sponsorship and later in 2010 she went into foster care. It was the guardian who observed that her behavior towards men and boys was strange; her attitude towards school and her

foster family was also strange that's what made him reach out to Fountain of Life to get Tamanda some help.

She came to FOL offices in Lilongwe to meet with one of the counselors. She was skeptical at first but after explaining to her what FOL does, she opened up and got help. She even insisted that she should come in for a second session.

*"The wounds that never heal  
can only be mourned alone."  
- James Frey*

## Victim Support Unit Training

In November 2013, FOL was involved in a workshop for Police Officers from 4 different Victim Support Units (VSU) around Lilongwe. The objective was to provide basic trauma counselling skills so when a victim of sexual assault came in, they would be received in a positive way.

The Police Officers shared that there are more rape and sexual assault cases being reported each day - over 15 per day and growing. Given the high numbers, the participants shared that they feel

overwhelmed and would revert to what they do best and what they were primarily trained for - police officers whose primary goal is to find and punish the perpetrator. Unfortunately, this means the victims are left without receiving proper counselling. The police officers do what they can but in most cases, they mediate and resolve conflicts and provide solutions without going deeper into proper trauma counselling. This once again highlights the need for what Fountain of Life was established for -

focusing on how to improve and increase support for victims of rape.



## Their Views...

The police station is usually the first place where a rape or sexual assault victim goes to get help, along with many others suffering from other kinds of violence and trauma. As a result, the VSU is always congested and there are never enough resources.

The environment of the police station itself makes it difficult for victims to get counselling, as such, a lot of the victims opt to just give a statement and leave the station. VSU's play an absolutely critical role as an entry point for those seeking help after sexual assault but a victim needs much more. FOL

is working to complement the VSU's in ways that will result in places wrapped in an environment that makes it easier for victims to get appropriate and proper long term counselling. This will allow the Police to concentrate on their primary goal of going after the perpetrator.

*"VSU's play an absolutely critical  
role as an entry point for those  
seeking help after sexual assault but  
a victim needs much more"*



## One Stop Centre Story!!!!!!

A mother brought her 12 year old to the One Stop Centre, who was raped when the mother went away for two weeks to visit her husband (the father) who is working outside the city. She was away for two weeks and is usually away to the village where they farm.

The mother asked a neighbour if her teen daughters can be staying with her daughter while they were away. The girls had an argument and they moved out. The daughter brought in another friend who one night opened the door to an older boy into the house.

The mother was very furious with her daughter when she heard that the boy raped her. She said it was her fault. The child took it upon herself to go

Though her daughter will not be able to attend more sessions as the mother is taking her to the village so she cannot stay alone at home, the mother's change of attitude and willingness to support her daughter will be helpful for the healing process for her daughter.

Through counselling the mother went from being angry, afraid, confused and resenting her daughter to accepting, understanding and beginning to heal together with her daughter as a family. This shows

and report to the police and to go to the hospital said in the counselling session that the most painful part is how her mother is looking at her, and shouting at her all the time even waking her up in the middle of the night and beating her.

The mother in the session said her daughter's future is doomed and that all the plans she had for her will never be fulfilled and that she loved her daughter until the incident of rape which she called upon herself by inviting a friend who the mother didn't recommend! She said she even doubted that it was a rape it could have been arranged.

The session with the mom took almost 75 minutes with almost 50 minutes of it dealing with her on issues, fears, confusion, pain and anger.

how counselling is important not only to the victim but also for the family members.

Only after her issues were dealt with and we focused on her daughter did she sighed and went

**"This place is like a church, where your eyes are opened, I even believe that what happened to my daughter happened for a reason, so my attitude can change, My daughter needs my support, tonight she will sleep back in her bed, since I came back I told her to get out of her bedroom and she was sleeping on the mat in the sitting room"**

As she walked out she told the lady at the reception

**"this place is amazing, deals with all your concerns".**

**"this place is amazing, deals with all your concerns"**

## One Stop Centre Training

There was a training of One Stop Centre teams from Mzuzu, Nkhata-Bay, Zomba and Mulanje from the 9<sup>th</sup>- 13<sup>th</sup> December 2013 in Blantyre supported by UNICEF and UNFPA.

The training is for 10 participants from each site comprising of nurses, social workers, police officers, magistrates and counselors. The four sites either have a One Stop Centre that is being built or have identified a room that can be renovated into a One Stop Centre.

It was an intense training whereby the participants were given a background of the One Stop Centers, step by step process of how survivors are cared for, policies and procedures of how the police are involved in the cases, clarifications on the differences between different crimes – i.e. Sexual abuse vs. sexual assault vs. defilement, and a tour of the One Stop Centre in Blantyre among other things. Tandu Zimba, one of the FOL directors gave a presentation on Psychosocial Support for Families.

**"The One Stop Centre in Blantyre is the only OSC fully operational in the whole country."**



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### FOL Mission:

Fountain of Life restores self-esteem, returns smiles and revitalizes a vision for the future in the lives of innocent children, women and men who have been victims of rape.

These young women and girls need to be **CARED** for. To heal. To make sure this horrible act does not destroy or define the rest of their lives.

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**This is Fountain of Life's first issue, any comments, feedback and suggestions will be greatly appreciated...**

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### **MALAWI'S ANSWER TO THOSE SUFFERING FROM SEXUAL ASSAULT**

## NGOGCN Petition March

On 17<sup>th</sup> December, 2013, the NGO Gender Coordination Network (NGOGCN) organized regional marches to hand petitions to the high court regarding the rising incidences of sexual violence that go with lenient punishments as well as delayed justice delivery.

The NGOGCN is a coalition of 51 NGOs that seek to promote gender equality and equity in Malawi. It is also committed to ensuring that no woman or the child is subjected to any form of violence.

In Malawi incidences of rape and defilement are increasing and the majority of the perpetrators are either given sentences that do not fit the crimes committed or completely go away with impunity due to lack of investigation and evidence. It is because of some of these reasons that the NGOGCN with its partners decided to come up with a petition that was handed to the chief justice.

All regions (North, Central and South) in Malawi



**One of the protestants carrying a plank that says "Courts should use PVDA + GENDER EQUALITY LAW + CHILD JUSTICE ACT when handling cases"**

carried out their own marches and in the central region it was carried out in Lilongwe from Cross-roads to High court. Some of the concerns men-

tioned in the petition are the ineffective application of gender based violence related laws, trivialization of cases of defilement and rape by some quarters of the judiciary, corruption contributing to delays and non-conclusion of rape and defilement cases, missing of rape and defilement case files and that there is no standard and harmonized approach to handling rape and defilement cases in the country.

Some of the solutions to these concerns are that rape and defilement cases should be given the necessary attention and be concluded fairly and timely without unnecessary delays, the courts should competently interpret the gender related sanctions against perpetrators accordingly, the consistent reports of missing GBV files at some magistrates' courts should be put to a stop and corruption by some judicial officers must be checked and completely discouraged.

