



# ASSOCIATION OF GYNAECOLOGISTS AND OBSTETRICIANS OF TANZANIA

(Affiliate of International Federation of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians FIGO)

Release date: 25<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2020

## Statement on Gender-based Violence

### Background of the problem:

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that, globally, 35% of women have experienced physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives.<sup>1</sup> In Tanzania, Gender-based Violence (GBV) is a serious public health, human rights and development issue and at least 20% of women are reported to have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, children under the age of eighteen, 28% of girls, and 13% of boys, are reported to have experienced sexual violence.<sup>4</sup>

Despite increasing acknowledgment that sexual violence is a violation of human rights and a major threat to public health, the evidence shows that violence against women is a pervasive problem in almost every society<sup>1</sup>. The statement below is just one indicator of how sexual violence in sub-Saharan Africa impacts lives in such negative and persistent ways:

*"To be honest with you, people – even women – don't take rape seriously [in Sierra Leone]. To them, it is a way of life but they don't know how it is affecting them. Even when the victims try to speak out they don't get justice. If they go to the police station, the rapist will go and pay money to police and the victims will remain suffering. So some resort to silence but suffer from trauma forever".*

*Marie Jalloh, a Parliament member in Sierra Leone.<sup>2</sup>*

Two important development goals for the WHO and Tanzania's poverty reduction initiative are the elimination of sexual violence and improved health, well-being, and survival of children, women, and vulnerable groups. In this regard, the Association of Gynecologists and Obstetricians of Tanzania (AGOTA) carries the responsibility of promoting the attainment of quality sexual and reproductive health rights of women, newborns, children and adolescents in Tanzania through education, research, advocacy, and partnership.

1. World Health Organization/London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, South African Medical Research Council (WHO/LSHTM/MRC). Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-Partner Sexual Violence. Geneva: WHO, 2013. [accessed January 2015]. Available from: [http://www.who.int/reproductive\\_health/publications/violence/9789241564625/en/](http://www.who.int/reproductive_health/publications/violence/9789241564625/en/)
2. Wambi M. Against Sexual Violence: Solidarity Among African Women <http://www.ipsnews.net/2009/05/rights-against-sexual-violence-solidarity-among-african-women/>
3. National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). Tanzania Demographic and Health Survey 2010. Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: National Bureau of Statistics; 2011.
4. United Nations Children's Fund, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences. Violence Against Children in Tanzania: Findings from National Survey 2009. Dar es Salaam: Government of Tanzania, 2011.

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## Statement:

AGOTA will address gender-based violence (GBV) by raising awareness and pursuing positive change in community attitudes and practices related to GBV. In this regard, we commit ourselves to:

**Ensure** educational ministries include GBV in the pre-service curricula of all health care providers, in the specialist training and in continuing education programmes for health providers.

**Ensure** all our professional associations include GBV as a regular item of their national conference, with involvement of policy makers and other relevant stakeholders.

**Engage** in community awareness creation campaign to aid in reducing the occurrence of and tolerance for GBV.

**Support** our patients experiencing violence, including through active referrals for psychosocial support and legal services.

## Call to Action:

In accordance with this statement, AGOTA calls on the Government of Tanzania to implement the legislation against GBV, provide adequate resources for initiatives against GBV both at the governmental and civil society level, and enable access to the justice system for victims of gender based violence.

AGOTA calls to all healthcare providers, midwives, and obstetricians/Gynaecologists to:

- **Consistently screen** patients for GBV
- **Familiarize** themselves with the resources available in their communities for victims of GBV, and referral practices
- **Advocate** for improved policies, practices and resources against GBV
- **Engage** in educational activities that increase awareness about GBV and promote tolerance and wellbeing.
- **Engage** in research focused on monitoring of GBV in Tanzania, as well as development and evaluation of effective interventions to address it.

Signatures

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