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Call for Contributions: Issue 9

PROTECTIVE SKILLS: FIELDS, EXPERIENCES AND PRACTICES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST GBV IN AFRICA

Issue 9 of the *Global Africa journal* aims to provide an original contribution on the issue of gender-based violence (GBV) in Africa, from a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary perspective. It intends to:

- ✓ Enrich the debate on GBV, by providing new and relevant data on the realities, causes, consequences, and solutions to fight against GBV in Africa.
- ✓ Enhance skills acquired from the experiences and practices of local actors in their engagement against GBV.
- ✓ Showcase evidence-based solutions and discuss the benefits, challenges, scientific as and practical perspectives.
- ✓ Reflect on "protective skills," particularly in the fight against GBV.

1. Rationale

Gender-based violence (GBV) constitutes a complex and multifaceted social phenomenon that affects a significant and diverse female population in Africa. These forms of violence, ranging from child marriages to female genital mutilation, including rape, domestic violence, and economic violence, violate the human rights and dignity of the victims/survivors. Additionally, they have harmful effects on health, education, safety, and personal and community development.

Despite the significant efforts made by governments, international organizations, local associations, and communities (a large part of which is due to their alignment with the SDGs, particularly SDG 5.2 and its various targets), GBV remains prevalent and hinders human and social development. In response to this challenge, it is important to identify, enhance, and disseminate the experiences, practices, breakthroughs, and skills (both practical and soft skills) that result from the concrete and successful initiatives of actors actively engaged in the fight against GBV.

In most local fields in Africa, these experiences, practices, and skills produce remarkable impacts and breakthroughs in addressing GBV victims/survivors' care as well as improving the sexual and reproductive health services they may need. This set of measures is what we refer to as "**protective skills**". They, therefore, serve as sources and resources for innovation and action that can substantially contribute to strengthening violence prevention, victims/survivors' care, and their assistance towards recovery and resilience. Rooted in different aspects of societal life (social, legal, cultural, medical, psychosocial, educational,

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economic, political, and religious, etc.), these initiatives are carried out by a diverse range of actors, including community workers, religious leaders, traditional authorities, NGOs, researchers, academics, activists, and others.

How can we document and identify these effective initiatives in the fight against GBV in the context of African research? What role should protective skills play in academia, public policies, and GBV programs in the field? For example, how can we operationalize the integration of these initiatives into curricula and public policies? In this perspective, how can we benefit from the experiences of experts and practitioners in this field? What are the epistemological, operational, symbolic, philosophical, anthropological, and other challenges posed by the theorization, generalization, and institutionalization of effective experiences, practices, and skills? These are a few of the central questions we aim to explore in this special issue of the Global Africa journal.

This issue arises within a context where GBV represents a major societal challenge in Africa, where social contexts are mostly structured by patriarchal norms that perpetuate domination, combined with generally intense socio-economic pressures and multifaceted dynamics of vulnerability. This may explain why, despite the existence of legal frameworks, institutions, and protection measures against these forms of violence, their prevalence remains high across the continent. The influx of resources and contributors has not seemed to have had significant effects on this situation. Additionally, there is a certain ignorance and lack of comprehensive understanding of the ins and outs of the phenomenon, which largely encourages persistence of GBV. Few social categories are spared: lack of awareness of human rights, especially those of women and girls; ignorance of existing laws and protections; cultural and social norms that "legitimize" violence; and underestimation of the serious consequences of GBV. This gap in knowledge and understanding hampers efforts to prevent and eliminate GBV, highlighting the urgent need for education and awareness-raising.

Furthermore, the fight against these forms of violence is often characterized by compartmentalization of approaches, which restricts the sharing of knowledge and experiences among the various actors involved. On one hand, there is fieldwork carried out by different actors, but the lessons learned are not sufficiently shared. On the other hand, many academic and institutional efforts on GBV in Africa still fail to inform field initiatives. It is therefore necessary to establish a link between fieldwork and academic and institutional skills to facilitate the conservation and dissemination of skills on GBV.

This reflection is based on the hypothesis that protective skills are innovation and social change sources that can contribute to strengthening the prevention, care, and resilience of GBV victims and survivors. It thus advocates for the analysis of these protective skills through different axes: prevention, care, resilience, and skills production/dissemination. It is also about evaluating these protective skills according to several criteria: relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, transferability, appropriation, etc.

Overall, this collaborative effort presents a valuable opportunity to put in the spotlight "what works" and "what does not or no longer works" in the fight against GBV in Africa. It involves

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to deeply analyze the underlying causes and gaps in current interventions to stimulate a critical re-appropriation and strengthen the impact of ongoing actions. Additionally, it seeks to highlight protective skills as levers for social transformation, capable of challenging unequal power relations between genders and promoting a fairer and more inclusive society.

2. Themes

Contributors are invited to submit original proposals based on field experiences, which can cover the themes and issues identified below:

- **Potentialities and weaknesses of the legal framework**

Proposals should analyze the existing legal framework regarding the fight against GBV. Papers focusing on the breakthroughs, gaps, and contradictions in laws, conventions, and protocols related to GBV are particularly welcome. We are equally interested in the assessment of the degrees of implementation, compliance, and enforcement of these legal standards. What are the challenges and opportunities for enhancing the effectiveness and enforcement of the law in the fight against GBV? Who are the actors involved in the development, dissemination, and enforcement of the law? What are the interactions between formal law and customary law in the regulation of GBV?

- **Diversified and integrated care measures**

This topic explores the variety and integration of GBV care measures in Africa. It aims to evaluate the effectiveness of emergency hotlines, support centers, counseling services, psychosocial support programs, as well as referral mechanisms between institutions. The objective is to analyze the operational conditions of these measures, their interactions, as well as the challenges they face, whether technical, logistical, organizational, or human. It also involves understanding the needs and expectations of the users of these services, with an emphasis on accessibility, responsiveness, and personalized care. Best practices will be highlighted to identify areas for improvement that could enhance the effectiveness of these measures, promoting a holistic and coordinated approach to the fight against GBV. This theme encourages reflection on how these measures can work together to provide a comprehensive and suitable response to the survivors' needs.

- **Best practices: issues and challenges in replicating (social) innovations**

The purpose of this theme is to explore the possibility and relevance of transferring or adapting identified best practices from one field to another. It involves understanding the factors that facilitate or hamper the transfer or adaptation of protective skills between different countries, regions, or communities. It is also about discussing the advantages and drawbacks of this approach. What are the criteria that define a "best practice"? What conditions are necessary to ensure the quality, consistency, and sustainability of the transfer or adaptation? What are the risks or opportunities associated with this approach?

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- **Competition or complementary among the NGOs involved**

The purpose of this theme is to analyze the role, position, and relationships of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in the fight against GBV in Africa. It involves examining the operating mode, scope of action, funding, legitimacy, and impact of local, national, or international NGOs engaged in this field. It is also about assessing the degree of collaboration, coordination, or competition among these NGOs, as well as with other actors (governmental, institutional, community-based, etc.). What are the strengths and limitations of NGOs in the fight against GBV? What are the modalities and benefits of enhanced cooperation between NGOs and other actors?

- **Timeline of projects**

The purpose of this topic is to examine the impact of project duration in the fight against GBV in Africa. It involves exploring the advantages and drawbacks of short-, medium-, or long-term projects. It is also about reflecting on the criteria that determine the optimal duration of a project in terms of its objectives, activities, resources, and field. What are the effects of project duration on the quality, relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of the interventions and measures implemented? What are the best practices for adapting project duration to meet the needs and realities of the field?

- **Consolidation and reversibility of outcomes**

The purpose of this topic is to study the risk of reversibility to outcomes achieved in the fight against GBV in Africa. It involves identifying factors that may compromise or challenge progress made in this field. It is also about proposing solutions to prevent or mitigate this risk. What are the elements that may undermine or threaten the outcomes achieved in the fight against GBV? What strategies can be employed to consolidate and sustain these outcomes? What lessons have been learned from past or current experiences?

- **Community ownership and sustainable social change**

This theme invites contributors to explore how a community's ownership of protective skills can catalyze sustainable social and behavioral change in the fight against GBV. Authors are encouraged to analyze the processes, modalities, and mechanisms that facilitate or hamper this ownership, as well as the factors that influence attitudes and behaviors related to GBV. Key questions to address include: What are the elements that enable or mitigate the adoption of protective skills by communities? How can these skills be integrated into daily practices to induce positive change? What are the obstacles and levers for social and behavioral change in the fight against GBV? Contributors should propose innovative approaches and methods to identify and grasp ongoing social transformations, their scope, and their sustainability, with an emphasis on the importance of education, awareness, and community engagement. The objective is to provide practical and theoretical perspectives to overcome challenges and maximize the impact of interventions against GBV.

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- **Holistic Housing Centers**

The purpose of this topic is to analyze the contribution of holistic housing centers in the fight against GBV in Africa. It involves examining the experiences, best practices, challenges, and perspectives of these facilities as they offer integrated and personalized care to GBV victims. It also engages with the modalities of collaboration and coordination between holistic housing centers and other actors involved in the fight against GBV (authorities, social services, civil society organizations, etc.). What are the advantages and constraints of holistic housing centers in GBV victims' care? What are the quality and effectiveness criteria for these facilities? What are the conditions for sustaining and duplicating these facilities?

3. Submission guidelines and timeline

Proposals must strictly comply with Global Africa's instructions to authors, available here: <https://www.globalafricasciences.org/submission>

The indicative timeline for the editorial process is as follows:

- **Call for papers and receipt of complete articles: September 01 – October 28, 2024**
- **Notification of acceptance: November 4, 2024**
- **Publication of the issue: March 20, 2025**

For any questions or additional information, please write to us at: redaction@globalafricasciences.org