

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is a pervasive form of violent oppression that is both a human rights violation and a major health risk factor. This broad category of crimes is defined by sexual contact or attempted sexual contact without meaningful consent. These crimes include rape, trafficking into commercial sexual exploitation and other forms of sexual abuse or exploitation.

In countries with weak public justice systems, victims of sexual violence often face major structural obstacles to justice, including lack of medical forensic capacity to document proof of abuse. Additionally, victims of sexual violence frequently face cultural or social stigmas that can discourage them from reporting the crime. Although anyone can be the victim of sexual violence, women and girls are particularly vulnerable to these forms of abuse.

THE FACTS

- In some countries, up to one third of adolescent girls report that their first sexual experience was forced. (World Health Organization)
- At least one out of every three women in the world has been raped, beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise violently abused in her lifetime. (U.N. Development Fund for Women)
- An estimated one in five women will be a victim of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime. (U.N. Millennium Project)

IJM'S RESPONSE

IJM conducts casework on behalf of child victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence, and on behalf of women and children victimized by sex trafficking. IJM staff investigate case referrals and collaborate with local officials to secure evidence, rescue victims from situations of ongoing abuse and prosecute perpetrators. IJM ensures that victims of these crimes have access to aftercare services, which provide emotional and physical support for victims and their families.

IJM also works to transform justice systems to prevent vulnerable people from future victimization by providing training, modeling and direct assistance to local police, prosecutors and other public justice professionals to build capacity within local systems to respond to these crimes. IJM has also hosted forensics trainings for medical professionals, enabling these “first-responders,” to care for victims with sensitivity and professional excellence.

ABOUT INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION

International Justice Mission is a human rights agency that secures justice for victims of slavery, sexual exploitation and other forms of violent oppression. IJM lawyers, investigators and aftercare professionals work with local officials to ensure immediate victim rescue and aftercare, to prosecute perpetrators and to promote functioning public justice systems.

* In order to protect this IJM client, a pseudonym has been used and the photograph has been obscured. Real name and casework documentation are on file with IJM.



GERALDINE'S STORY - KENYA

Six-year-old Geraldine* was walking along a familiar trail to her mother's grocery stand when a neighbor from her village grabbed her and sexually assaulted her. In the aftermath of the abuse, the perpetrator threatened to kill Geraldine's mother when she confronted him. When she reported the crime to police, they suggested she simply take some money from the man.

But IJM's team of legal professionals committed to fight alongside Geraldine's family, and Geraldine's rapist was sentenced to 12 years in prison. The village held a celebration for the successful perpetrator accountability, during which one of the village elders told IJM staff, *"I see now that we have expected too little for ourselves. We did not think justice was possible. We will not make that mistake again."*

