



The Forgotten Victims: Addressing the Revictimisation of Female Victims of Gender-based Crimes in Mali



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'A Victim Centred Approach to Prosecuting Crimes Against Humanity and Sexual Violence in Mali' is the subject of an AFLA initiated project aimed to inter alia curb the victimisation and revictimisation of women.

Since 2012, Mali has been in a state of profound political and security crisis. The situation has been particularly devastating for women and girls who have been victims of persistent acts of violence and abuse, including gender-based violence, sexual assault, and kidnapping.

According to the National Institute of Statistics' Demographic and Health survey of 2018, two out of five Malian women aged 15 to 49 had suffered acts of physical or sexual violence. Yet, only 19% sought help to stop the violence, while 12% did not seek help but told someone.

Victims of sexual violence experience severe social repercussions and tend to abandon medical and legal assistance to avoid humiliation and marginalisation by their families and communities.

Lack of trust in medical and legal institutions, prejudices that frequently hover over victims of sexual violence, shame, social stigma, and fear of a path with no apparent way out prevent the vast majority of victims and survivors from coming forward.

Too often, victims experience revictimisation. Again and again, they are forced to retell their painful stories to verify their credibility and morality; and, if after some time, they do not remember the facts in detail, the previously given statements may be censored and the charges against the accused dropped.

The Trust Fund for Victims (TFV) of the International Criminal Court (ICC) has announced that it will provide long-term reintegration and rehabilitation programs including medical treatment, psychological counselling, livelihood support, as well as working with communities to avoid stigmatisation of victims and survivors of sexual violence.

Additional initiatives are needed to address the harms suffered by victims. What will it take to uproot the social stigma around sexual violence? What will it take to prevent the revictimisation of women and girls in Mali?

AFLA’s ‘Victim Centred Approach to Prosecuting Crimes Against Humanity and Sexual Violence in Mali’ examines these questions and explores victims’ perception of justice, lessons from the Hissène Habré trial, and develops victims’ perspectives on investigating sexual violence.



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