



Trans Nzoia Creates a Safe Haven for GBV Survivors and Strengthens the Path to Justice

For Jane*, a 19-year-old mother from Trans Nzoia County, the trauma of sexual violence had been difficult to escape. After being sexually assaulted by a neighbour, she gave birth to a daughter who later became a victim of defilement. She subsequently survived another attempted assault but continued living in the same community as those who had harmed her. Speaking during the launch of the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) safe house, Jane said, “I have struggled to heal because I have nowhere else to go. Every day I fear meeting the people who hurt me.” Her experience reflects the difficult reality faced by survivors who must seek justice while also trying to find safety and rebuild their lives.

Among many survivors in Trans Nzoia, accessing justice is further complicated by the County’s location along the Kenya-Uganda border. Cross-border movement can make it difficult to trace suspects and bring cases to conclusion. Judiciary data recorded 1,016 SGBV cases in 2025, up from 991 in 2024. Of these, 704 were concluded through the Courts, compared with 339 cases in 2024. Speaking during the launch, Oscar Wanjala, County Coordinator, Directorate of Children’s Services, noted that the County was handling two active defilement cases in which alleged perpetrators had fled to Uganda. “Tracing and returning suspects requires cooperation between authorities in both countries, which often delays justice,” he explained.

The complexity of these cases highlighted a need to strengthen survivor support alongside the pursuit of justice. In response, the County Government of Trans Nzoia took the lead in establishing a 50-bed GBV safe house in partnership with Shining Hope for Communities (SHOFCO). The partnership was formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in early 2025. The County provided space for construction of the facility and continues to work closely with SHOFCO to address the needs of survivors. Its Gender Department, comprising 10 staff, plays a key role in coordinating the County’s response and working with partners and other stakeholders.

The facility has enabled the County to provide survivors with more than temporary shelter. Those accommodated at the safe house can access counselling, nursing care, legal support and economic empowerment opportunities in a secure environment. This is helping address a gap that had previously affected survivors’ ability to participate in the justice process. Benjamin Kelwon, Principal Prosecution Counsel in Trans Nzoia County, noted during the launch that some survivors had been reluctant to return to the scene of the crime or remain in communities where their alleged perpetrators lived because of fear and emotional trauma. SHOFCO case worker Vilma Owino similarly observed that some survivors struggled to continue attending court when they had to return to the same communities as their alleged perpetrators.

For Jane, the support provided through the partnership has had a direct impact. SHOFCO supported her through the court process relating to her daughter’s case, which resulted in the perpetrator being convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment. She now hopes to



undertake vocational training through the safe house and gain skills that will support her financial independence. Her experience demonstrates the importance of combining access to justice with protection, psychosocial support, healthcare and opportunities for economic recovery.

The County is building on this progress by strengthening the systems that connect survivors to essential services. Referral pathways between the safe house, police, health facilities, the Judiciary and children's services are being strengthened, while collaboration with Ugandan authorities is being deepened to improve information sharing and the tracing of suspects involved in cross-border crimes. The County is also prioritizing community sensitization to address stigma and harmful practices and encourage survivors to seek support. As SHOFCEO CEO Kennedy Odede observed during the launch, "Survivors should never be forced to choose between their safety and pursuing justice."

Through strong county leadership, strategic partnership and coordinated services, Trans Nzoia is demonstrating a more survivor-centred approach to addressing GBV. The safe house is not simply a place of refuge. It is part of a broader County-led response that is helping survivors access justice safely, begin the process of healing and rebuild their lives with dignity and greater independence.

Further reading;

1. <https://citizen.digital/article/shofco-sets-up-first-safe-house-in-trans-nzoia-as-cross-border-cases-threaten-fight-against-sgbv-n387978>
2. <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2026-08-09-shofco-sets-up-first-safe-house-in-trans-nzoia>
3. <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/rift-valley/article/2001554763/trans-nzoia-gets-safe-house-amid-rising-gender-violence-cases>

When GBV survivors face fear, trauma and the added challenge of perpetrators crossing the border, what bold step does your County take to create a safe space, strengthen access to justice and help survivors rebuild their lives? We would love to hear your story.

Visit <https://maarifa.cog.go.ke/> to learn more about the successful initiatives on service delivery our Counties are undertaking.

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*Name has been changed to protect the privacy of the individual.