

Brief Overview of South Africa GBV Case Study

Gender-based violence – physical, psychological, sexual, economic, socio-cultural – is a conspicuous and widespread violation of human rights in South Africa. This violence pervades the political, economic and social structures of society and is driven by strongly patriarchal social norms and complex and intersectional power inequalities, including gender, race, class and sexuality. The relationship between gender inequality and gender-based violence therefore is well-established - gender inequality legitimates violence and is also further established by the use of such violence. The possibility for intervening in this relationship, however, presents a far more complex challenge.

Scope of the issue

Men, women and people that transit genders in South Africa are impacted by violence in multiple and intersecting ways. South Africa's rate of rape, as a particular form of gender-based violence has been found to be one of the highest in the world ([UNODC South Africa 2002](#)). In a cross-sectional study in three South African districts in the Eastern Cape and Kwa-Zulu Natal, researchers found that 27.6% of all men had raped a woman or girl, of all the men who were interviewed, almost half (42.4%) had been physically violent to an intimate partner ([Jewkes, Sikweyiya, Morrell and Dunkle, 2011](#)). A comparative study of rates of female homicide and intimate partner violence between 1999 and 2009 showed that although rates of female homicide per 100,000 had decreased from 24.7 to 12.9, this figure is still five times the global average, and rates of intimate partner femicide had not significantly decreased; researchers highlighted the urgency of these figures for policy-driven prevention ([Abrahams, Jewkes, Martin, Mathews, Vetten and Lombard, 2013](#)).

Furthermore, longitudinal research in the Eastern Cape, for example, showed a causal link between relationship power inequity and intimate partner violence and an increased risk of HIV infection among young South African women ([Jewkes, Dunkle, Nduna and Shai, 2010](#)). Research in Gauteng province showed the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence against children where girls between 12 – 17 years made up one in four of victims reporting rape crimes (25.2%) and girls aged between 0 – 11 years one in seven (14.6%) ([Vetten, Jewkes, Sigsworth, Christofides, Loots, and Dunseith, 2008](#)). Sexual violence against men and boys is also an important issue; research with adult men found that 9.6% reported having experienced male-on-male sexual violence and 3% reported committing sexual violence against other men ([Dunkle, Jewkes, Murdock, Sikweyiya, & Morrell, 2013](#)).

Violence as a reinforcement of dominant norms of manhood and patriarchal social power has significant implications for all South Africans, irrespective of gender or sexual orientation. The violent punishment of people who transgress heteronormative gender roles and identities is of critical concern in South Africa. For lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) persons this translates into the very real experience of homophobic violence including homicide and rape as a form of persecution ([Lewin, Williams and Thomas, 2013](#); [Wells and Polders, 2006](#)).

Men and boys are affected as survivors and perpetrators of gender-based violence in relation to women and other men, and as parents, children and political actors. The South African case study recognises that structural violence is fueled by inequalities that transect race, class, gender, sexuality and age and calls into focus the importance of engaging with policy processes, alongside political actions at a community level. It is with this complexity in mind that this case study seeks to explore the role of men and boys in interventions to address sexual and gender-based violence.

Case study of effectiveness

This case study will be conducted through a partnership between the Institute of Development Studies, the [Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation](#) (SLF) and [Sonke Gender Justice](#) to explore how collective action contributes to addressing the discriminatory social norms that perpetuate sexual and gender-based violence, and the role of men and boys in enabling transformative change.

The case study will place a particular emphasis on collectivity and alliance-based approaches in working towards social and gender justice. Through the research process, connections will be made between personal stories and the shared narratives of social action. In relation to this the study will look at community responses to sexual and gender-based violence and explore whether or not local democratic activism and community action can help to re-build interpersonal relationships and social networks. In this respect, the study will connect into a nascent field of research which suggests that rather than looking at men and boys as the 'problem' or 'target population' requiring education, it might be more effective to work through systems of local democratic activism to strengthen the capacity of activists to challenge structures in the community that reinforce gender inequality and to address the violence that flows from these inequalities. It will also look at how men can effectively engage in structural and institutional approaches to addressing sexual and gender-based violence, and how constructions of masculinity, hegemonic power inequalities and their negative ramifications for men and women influence these trajectories of change.

These key issues will be explored with diverse actors engaged in the reality of cases of sexual and gender-based violence in the Cape Town Metropole. Using a digital storytelling (DST) approach to enable reflection at both the personal and collective level, participants will learn from their own experiences of working towards change. Through the digital storytelling, research learning will be enabled in relation to the aspirations and motivations for taking action against gender-based

Digital storytelling for transformation

Through this approach the storyteller combines images, sounds and their own narration using digital technology.

The communication of people's own stories in this way opens a personal connection between different people. When these stories concern issues of injustice insights are generated much more powerfully than when presented in the abstract.

The audience can feel the different dimensions of the issue through the perspective of another person, and put themselves in their position. As such this creative form of expression can help illuminate deeper democratic truths.

Joanna Wheeler, SLF

violence, how and why the people involved have engaged with the related risks, and what has enabled and inhibited their action on this challenging issue.

In addition to digital storytelling, the case study will collect and triangulate evidence through key informant interviews, focused participant observation and engagement with a network of stakeholders participating in research and policy processes and various forms of political and social action in the Western Cape, and across South Africa.

By ensuring that the case study is policy-oriented, we aim to mobilise primary and secondary material gathered through the DST workshop, key informant interviews, and power analysis mapping with stakeholders to support the development of the proposed [National Strategic Plan on GBV for South Africa](#).

Sonke Gender Justice

[Sonke Gender Justice](#) works to create the change necessary for men and boys, women, children to enjoy equitable, healthy and happy relationships that contribute to the development of just and democratic societies. Sonke pursues this goal by using a human rights framework. Sonke works across Africa to strengthen government, civil society and citizen capacity to promote gender equality, prevent domestic and sexual violence, and reduce the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS.

[Sonke utilises the 'spectrum of change' model](#), drawing on a broad range of social change strategies which include:

- Partnering with government to promote policy development and effective implementation
- Advocacy, activism and community mobilisation
- Networking and coalition work nationally and internationally
- Capacity building and training with partner organisations
- Innovative communication strategies for social change
- Community education and individual skills building
- Research, impact monitoring and evaluation

Sonke works to shape South African and International legal and policy decisions on gender equality, gender based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights (including HIV and AIDS). Through this project including digital stories, research and engaging a wider network of stakeholders we aim to collectively input and support the development of the National Strategic Plan on GBV for South Africa.

Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation

[SLF is a Cape Town based agency](#) that seeks to contribute towards eliminating poverty through undertaking original research and engaging with marginalised communities. The organisation aims to advance innovative policies and development interventions in order to strengthen livelihoods within the townships and informal settlements of South Africa. SLF recognises that within these settings, the insecurities facing women and girls reflect widespread vulnerabilities that undermine their capacity to engage in economic activity, affect their citizenship and democratic participation, and constrict their active involvement in the public sphere, including leisure activities.

In contributing towards a deeper level of understanding about these vulnerabilities and the socio-economic and political context of gender discrimination in South Africa, SLF has undertaken a series of participatory action research projects. These include: i) researching men and women's experience and fears of violence in Imizamo Yethu through digital stories; ii) understanding the impact of TB and HIV on women and men as patients, care givers and family members - through digital stories and a theatre for development approach; iii) [researching local strategies to address gender based violence](#) and their relationship with building citizenship identity; and iv) understanding the vulnerabilities of women and girls through participatory mapping in Sweet Home Farm. The SLF Project '[SafeShebeens](#)', which seeks to reduce the risks of violence to women in public drinking venues, was recently short-listed for the [OpenIDEO Amplify Challenge](#).

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Further reading:

[Shahrokh, T. & Wheeler, J. \(2014\) *Agency and citizenship in a context of gender-based violence*. IDS Evidence Report, IDS: Brighton, UK](#)

[Gevers, A., Jama-Shai, J. & Sikweyiya, Y. \(2013\) *Gender-based violence and the need for evidence-based primary prevention in South Africa*, *African Safety Promotion Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2013](#)

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