New Strategies to Engage Government in Search of Significant Resources to End Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

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Objectives: While the South African government has developed numerous laws and policies to end gender-based violence (GBV), these efforts have not seen significant reduction in rates of GBV. Thus, a new strategy is needed by civil society to engage government on the issue of resource allocation for GBV.

Government departments develop 5-year Strategic Plans, which directly inform the objectives in their Annual Performance Plans (APP). These objectives are specifically budgeted for, yet very little money is allocated to prevention of GBV and the provision of adequate services. With GBV costing the South African economy between R28.4 billion-R42.4 billion, or 0.9%-1.3% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the year 2012/13, there is an imperative need to invest in the prevention of GBV.

GBV is the Department of Social Development’s (DSD) mandate. This study therefore aims to explore DSD’s Strategic Plan 2015-20 and its Annual Performance Plan (APP) 2015/16 to assess the department’s commitment to GBV prevention through sufficient budget allocation and determine innovative ways in which civil society can engage in government processes in a more productive and collaborative manner to achieve GBV prevention and services.

Methodology: Analysis and comparison of DSD’s Strategic Plan 2015-20 to its APP 2015/16 focusing on GBV.

Findings: The DSD’s Strategic Plan does not mention GBV prevention and services in detail, and the APP is lacking sufficient provision for this. There is, in turn, limited budget allocated for GBV prevention and services. There is a need for civil society to strategically engage in government processes prior to the development of the 5-year Strategic Plan, to ensure the allocation of sufficient budget for the inclusion of GBV prevention in Strategic Plans and APPs.
In order to find evidence based solutions aimed at preventing gender based violence (GBV) in society, research was conducted to understand adolescent gender attitudes and the extent to which they witness and experience GBV. In 2012 a survey was conducted with all 1756 Grade 8 pupils in 24 secondary schools in Gauteng. The results indicated that both boys and girls experienced high levels of GBV with almost a quarter of participants experiencing physical abuse and forced sex. Surprisingly, a significantly higher proportion of boys than girls reported experiencing physical violence and forced sex when considering all nine GBV indicators. High levels of witnessing violence in families were also reported by adolescents – (56% to 62% emotional abuse; 38% to 57% physical violence; and 29 to 38% of adolescents witnessed sexual violence). Witnessing GBV or being a victim is an important predictor of women’s life-time experiences of abuse in South Africa (Jewkes et al., 2002). And the likelihood of men becoming abusers increases if they witnessed their mothers being abused (Abrahams et al., 1999). Hence, developing programmes that are aimed at managing young victims and witnesses of GBV at critical developmental periods is essential for prevention. The findings above are being used to develop a school based social work intervention which will be a quasi - experimental mixed methods research design, specifically a regression discontinuity design (RDD) as it aims to determine whether a program or intervention has the intended effect. This paper will discuss the findings of the study mentioned above and the planned intervention programme. Since it is argued, that failing effective intervention strategies that target the drivers of domestic and sexual violence, these social issues will persist and the vision of a less violent society will be obstructed.

Additional Layers of Violence: The Intersections of Gender and Disability in the Violence Experiences of Women with Physical Disabilities in South Africa

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Background: South Africa has unprecedented levels of violence and many South African women are exposed to violence during their lifetime. This article explores how gender and disability intersect in women’s experiences of violence during their lifetime.

Methods: Repeat in-depth qualitative interviews with 30 physically disabled women in Cape Town reveal that women with physical disabilities are exposed to various forms of violence, and shows how their impairments shape their violence experiences.
Results: This article identifies that women with disabilities are more at risk and experience additional layers of violence than women without disabilities. The most common forms of violence women with disabilities experience are psychological violence, financial abuse, neglect, and deprivation, with disability stigma playing a central role and contributing to how women with disabilities are exploited and dehumanized. Constructions of women as asexual, shape their sexual relationships and experiences of sexual violence.

Conclusions: Urgently, these additional risks and layers of violence need to be recognized and inform interventions to prevent and respond to violence against women with disabilities in the country. Prevention of violence against women with physical disabilities in South Africa needs to address the role of disability stigma that shapes the types of violence they experience, change gender norms, and create accessible and safe environments and economic empowerment opportunities.

Social Representations of Intimate Partner Violence in the Western Cape Media

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South Africa has one of the highest rates of intimate partner violence in the world, with the death of women by the hands of an intimate partner being six times that of the global average. The South African mass media has been recognised as playing an important role in influencing individual cognitions of social issues, including intimate partner violence. However, few studies have investigated how such violence is represented within the South African media. This paper explores how the print media constructs men's perpetrated violence against female partners, attending in particular to how and to what effect extreme acts of violence are represented in data from three newspapers that attract the highest readership in the Western Cape. Guided by social representations theory, an inductive thematic analysis was conducted to identify social representations of intimate partner violence as evident in 17 articles reporting on men's perpetration of violence against intimate female partners. The analysis suggested that this form of violence was predominantly represented in terms of extreme acts of physical violence. This representation functioned to reduce violence against women to a simplistic binary of male perpetration and female victimhood, undermining the complexities of this social phenomenon in South Africa. In a similar manner, extreme acts of physical violence were also constructed as a continuous cycle of violence that requires of the female partner to enter and exit the abusive relationship and perform traditional feminine roles. Finally, the emphasis placed upon gruesome details of violence functioned to undermine the seriousness of other forms of intimate partner violence. The article highlights the importance of representing intimate partner violence in a more comprehensive manner.