

'Once the hitting stops' Myths about batterer intervention programs.

By **Marcel P. Londt** (University of the Western Cape) & **Sean Olivier** (Famsa, Western Cape)
mlondt@uwc.ac.za

Several authors confirm that domestic violence is the recognition of destructive behaviour intended to control women, which repeatedly punishes or victimizes her. Russell (1982:5) argues that it is a myth that men treat women with kid gloves, but that the violence is used by some men to maintain, advance or protest a setback in their power relations regarding women and that society allows these men to get away with their violent behaviour towards women. This targeted behaviour inevitably results in harm for the victim and escalates both in frequency and intensity. Domestic violence forms a progression from minor to major lethality and includes physical, economic, sexual, emotional and social abuse (Edleson & Tolman, 1992:6).

A study by Matthews, Abrahams, Martin, Vetten, Van de Merwe & Jewkes (2004) confirmed that 8.8 per 100 000 females of 14 years and over are killed in South Africa and that this is the highest rate of femicide reported in research anywhere in the world.

We are therefore confronted with the dilemma of our own ignorance when dealing with perpetrators of domestic violence. Except for the very obvious, often we do not know how to assess perpetrators of domestic violence. It becomes difficult to establish whether the unacceptable responses towards the spouse are merely once off situations, or whether there are other indicators that alert one to more entrenched histories of violence, with a higher risk of continued violence against the partner.

The writers are of the opinion that several programmes for such men have been developed over the last few years and as a result victims assume that the problem will cease

Limited resources have forced practitioners in South Africa to become innovative in their efforts to intervene in the main problems of our society. Unfortunately, many of the programmes appear to be derived from some of the myths that continue to exist.

This paper will interrogate some of the dangerous misconceptions and myths about batterer intervention programming and the implications for their partners. This paper is based on a study that was undertaken with known perpetrators or domestic violence and a sample of participants in a batterer intervention program in the Western Cape.

14. Reflections from NGOs and CBOs Working in Rural Communities on Implementation of the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 – Findings from workshops

Author: Naomi Webster



the doj & cd

Department:
Justice and Constitutional Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Gender Directorate

When was the first time you heard the word “domestic violence?” If you were government and had limited funds to spend on domestic violence programme, what would you prioritize?”

Two introductory questions that opened the first session of a series of workshops conducted in rural communities provided an opportunity for Non-governmental, community and faith based organizations, to self reflect. Deliberating posing questions that allow for self reflection provides a different approach to traditional workshops convened by government departments on domestic violence. The first aims to explore the extend to which information about domestic violence has reached communities. The second aims to demonstrate the difficulty of dealing with an issue that is not one-dimensional.

The Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 (DVA) has been in operation for the past ten years. Appropriately, a ten year review will determine the extend to which the legislation has achieved its overall objective. In order to inform the review, a series of workshops were planned, with NGOs, CBOs and FBOs working in rural communities. The focus on rural communities was based on the profusion of research conducted in urban settings. The presentation will focus on findings from three workshops held in Kwa Zulu Natal.

The workshops, with a maximum of thirty participants, represented different interest groups; traditional leaders, Home-based care group, Disability, Children etc. Co-hosted with an established NGO in the community, workshop programme were developed by the Department of Justice and the NGO. The overall aim of the workshop was to create forum for discussion and debate on some of the negative and positive experiences of organizations supporting women to access the DVA. Critically, the workshop addressed ‘best practises’ which could be learnt among NGOs on how they are using the legislation to provide a solution to the complex problem of domestic violence. In addition, the workshop asked, ‘ what are challenges of implementation of the DVA?’

Interestingly, the workshop also asked “what are myths still associated with domestic violence?” Clearly from similar responses across provinces, a great deal of effort is still required by government departments and NGOs.

From a feminist research perspective we also asked questions about the value of legislation to social problem (change numbers) – from **13084 applications received in 2007 comparing with 2006**. We need to keep addressing this question so as to ensure we make a difference.