

Sonke Gender Justice Network's Progress Report to the 57th UN CSW: A Review of A Review of Action taken by South African Government Departments to Involve Men and Boys in Preventing Gender Based Violence



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2013

Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Overview	5
Rationale for Gender Equality Work with Men and Boys	5
Sonke Overview	6
Report Purpose and Methodology	6
International Instruments	7
The South African Government's Responsibility and Obligations	7
Key Findings	8
Key findings on government progress against commitments to engage men and boys in preventing gender based violence	9
Checklist of Action by Government Departments to Engage Men and Boys in Preventing VAWG	10
Recommendations	11

* The full report includes a detailed analysis of the action by relevant South African government departments and provides specific recommendations to encourage their fulfillment of legal obligations to engage men and boys in violence prevention initiatives and work towards gender equality.

Acknowledgements

This summary was compiled from a report written for Sonke Gender Justice Network by Cherith Sanger, Nomonde Nyembe, Hanna Jansson, Lilian Fuchs, Gillian Makota, Rachel Okun-Kozlowicki, Tabitha Paine. Dean Peacock coordinated the overall project and contributed to the writing and editing. Vaun Cornell edited and finetuned. Bafana Khumalo brokered important relationships with Government that allowed Sonke to present an earlier draft to government gender focal points. The full report provides a detailed analysis of the action taken by relevant South African government departments and contains specific recommendations to encourage their fulfillment of legal obligations to engage men and boys in violence prevention initiatives and work towards gender equality.

Sonke acknowledges and thanks the many government representatives who graciously found time to provide the information contained in this report, and to Lebotle Trading for designing it.

Sonke is also grateful for the support of the numerous donors and partners who make our work possible, especially Sida, the Ford Foundation, MAC AIDS, Irish Aid, OSF South Africa, and the South Africa Development Fund who generously support our policy and advocacy efforts. We are especially grateful to UNFPA for supporting the development of this CSW progress report. Both UNFPA and UN Women also generously supported participation of Sonke staff at the 57th UN CSW.

Overview

In South Africa, like elsewhere, men's violence against women is a devastating social problem that dramatically compromises women's access to their fundamental human right to health, safety and dignity. Indeed, South Africa has amongst the highest rates of sexual and domestic violence of any country in the world. The first few weeks of 2013 have thrown this reality into stark relief. On a daily basis print, radio and television media have reported gruesome incidents of men's violence against women – of a woman raped, murdered and disembowelled in a rural area, of a woman shot repeatedly in a wealthy security estate, a woman raped by police in a police station whilst trying to file a domestic violence stay away order, a woman held hostage in a township shack and raped repeatedly by fifteen men. In each case the perpetrators are men and often groups of men. Following each case the response is shock and outrage – voiced by both women and men.

Since the establishment of a democratic dispensation in 1994, South Africa has begun to prioritise achieving gender equality, preventing gender based violence (GBV) and reducing the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS. Government has signed and ratified many international instruments and developed comprehensive domestic policies to guide its work in these areas. Some laws – and many policies – include commitments to engage men and boys in advancing women's rights and in achieving gender equality for all.



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Rationale for Gender Equality Work with Men and Boys

Men in South Africa subject women and children to some of the highest levels of domestic and sexual violence in the world.¹ The power inequalities that allow and entrench men's violence and oppression of women dramatically compromise women's health and access to rights, and increases their vulnerability to HIV and AIDS, amongst many other health problems. Men who use violence do so because they live in a world that all too often equates manhood with aggression, dominance over women and sexual conquest.

While women in South Africa bear the brunt of domestic and sexual violence, a deeper analysis reveals that along with privileges bestowed on men by patriarchy, men are also negatively affected by harmful gender norms of masculinity. Helping men to see the ways in which current gender norms are bad for them too can decrease men's resistance to change and increase their support for gender equality. The same gender roles that contribute to men's violence against women and against men also increase men's vulnerability to violence, HIV infection and a range of other health problems.

Gender transformation work with men and boys has the potential to produce a range of public benefits including a reduction in prevalence of alcohol and drug abuse, violence against women and girls (VAWG) and other forms of violence.

There is now solid evidence showing that well designed interventions can bring about quite rapid changes in men's gender related attitudes and practices, including decreasing their use of violence against women and increasing their support for gender equality.² When it comes to developing policies and programmes to engage men and boys in achieving gender equality, the need is clear and the evidence that it is effective well established. Government must now act on its obligations to implement this vital gender equality strategy.

Sonke Overview

Sonke Gender Justice Network (Sonke) is a South African non-governmental organisation (NGO) working 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. In this way, Sonke contributes to developing just and democratic societies in which all men, women, youth and children can enjoy equitable, healthy and happy relationships. Sonke's work has been recognised nationally and internationally for its innovation and impact. The 'One Man Can Campaign' has been featured as an example of best practice by the WHO, UNAIDS and UNFPA, translated into nearly a dozen languages and implemented across Africa. Sonke's work includes a strong focus on engaging men and boys to challenge norms of manhood that contribute to men's violence against women, whilst also supporting the growing number of men and boys to act on their conviction that violence against women is wrong and must be stopped.

Report Purpose and Methodology

This report was compiled by Sonke for the 57th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which has as its key theme, "the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls". The report aims to:

- Describe the nature and extent of men's violence against women and girls in South Africa;
- Provide a rationale for engaging men and boys in responding to and preventing violence against women and in promoting gender equality;
- Outline Government's international and domestic commitments to working with men and boys towards gender equality;
- Review progress against commitments;
- Identify key gaps and ongoing challenges;
- Provide recommendations for how the South African Government can scale up work with men and boys for gender equality.

The report focuses on the period 2010 to 2012, and builds on a similar report prepared for the 54th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 2010, in which Sonke reviewed progress by the South African Government against the many commitments it had made since the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action to involve men and boys in achieving gender equality.

While the focus of this report is on Government efforts to engage men and boys in ending gender based violence, Sonke recognises that this is only one of many strategies needed to respond to and prevent VAWG. As such, Sonke recognises that work to challenge violent and inequitable norms of manhood and encourage men to become active proponents of gender equality should always complement and support other efforts to empower women and advance women's human rights.



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International Instruments

Policy makers in South Africa and elsewhere have a compelling mandate to develop, implement and evaluate policy approaches to working with men for gender equality. Many countries have ratified a commitment to work with men for gender equality through international commitments including the International Conference on Population and Development (1994),³ the Programme of Action of the World Summit on Social Development (1995) and its review held in 2000,⁴ the Beijing Platform for Action (1995),⁵ the 26th special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS (2001),⁶ the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) (2004 and 2009), and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Action Framework on Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV (2009), and the UNAIDS Operational Plan for Action Framework (2009).

The South African Government's Responsibility and Obligations

Since the establishment of a democratic dispensation in 1994, South Africa's Constitution, laws and policies have made achieving equality, including gender equality, an explicit priority. South Africa has among the world's most progressive constitutions and its laws and policies on GBV are considered some of the best in the world. The Constitution, which is supreme law in South Africa, prohibits unfair discrimination on a number of grounds explicitly including sex, gender and sexual orientation, and vests women and girls, among others, with the rights to equality, human dignity and freedom from all forms of violence and bodily integrity. In addition, laws and policies such as the 1998 Domestic Violence Act and the 2007 Sexual Offences Act aim to protect women and girls against violence and provide them with avenues for redress when acts of violence are perpetrated against them.


Policy makers in South Africa and elsewhere have a compelling mandate to develop, implement and evaluate policy approaches to working with men for gender equality


The South African Government has also signed and ratified many international and regional instruments, including CEDAW and the SADC Gender Declaration, and developed comprehensive domestic policies to guide its work in these areas. South Africa has the resources necessary to implement the laws, policies, plans and programmes it has developed to address VAWG and it is entirely reasonable that its citizens, as taxpayers and holders of constitutional rights, should expect its government to deliver on these obligations and commitments. Appropriately, most of the gender related international, regional and domestic treaties, declarations, laws and policies that have come into effect have focused on creating a normative framework aimed at empowering women, and ensuring that the state protects women from violence. However, beginning with the Cairo and Beijing Platforms for Action in 1994 and 1995, the South African Government has also made specific commitments to advance gender equality and women’s rights by challenging inequitable and violent norms of masculinity and by engaging men and boys in their efforts to prevent GBV.

Despite this extensive legal framework to eliminate and prevent VAWG, no laws exist in South Africa that place specific obligations on government departments to work with men and boys in this regard. All of the relevant domestic laws are responsive rather than preventative, barring the Domestic Violence Act, which to some extent allows police to arrest a person who has previously committed an act of domestic violence where harm is imminent.

Key Findings

Despite Government’s constitutional obligations to eliminate violence against women and girls, and it’s national and international commitments to engage men and boys in efforts to do so, our research shows that Government has made little real progress in either reducing violence against women or engaging men and boys in efforts to accomplish this.⁷ Overall, government departments in South Africa have, for the most part, failed to fulfil their existing policy obligations and honour regional and international commitments. This lack of implementation mirrors an alarming lack of implementation generally of laws and policies to ensure and protect the human rights of women and girls. This undermines the very values of human dignity, equality and freedom which underpin our new democracy and constitutional supremacy.

Key findings of our research include that very few government departments are developing such policies and programmes, and where government departments are doing so, these are conceptualised and implemented on a limited scale, implemented at specific sites or directed to address only very particular issues. Most of the activities implemented by government departments are linked to campaigns, such as the annual 16 Days of Activism campaign, which, while important, cannot bring about sufficient impact to create the societal change and impact required.

Moreover, none of the government departments surveyed have developed legislation to create binding legal obligations for work engaging men and boys. It appears that most government departments lack the dedicated budget, staff,

strategies and work plans, and monitoring and evaluation plans required for implementation of work engaging men and boys to prevent and end violence against women and girls (VAWG). No department surveyed has focused on this work as a priority theme for 2013, while most departments do not even consider or allow such work to be conducted in pursuance of other themes prioritised.

Key findings on government progress against commitments to engage men and boys in preventing gender based violence:

- Inconsistent performance across departments;
- A lack of integrated and inter-governmental approaches that could result in higher impact and reach of broad interventions across South Africa;
- A lack of understanding of the value of this work as a key prevention tool by several government departments, resulting in no attempt to engage men and boys;
- Where male involvement strategies are used, government departments are not locating these within broader gender equality or transformation programmes, or attending to the root causes of gender inequality underlying VAWG;
- Some of the strategies adopted by government department have little or narrow impact, which could be improved by adopting a combined intervention approach that includes group education and service provision to shift attitudes and behaviours;
- Capacity building, training, and community mobilisation strategies are needed to improve the uptake and impact of male involvement programmes and strategies;
- Very few departments have budgets or budget allocations dedicated to this work, limiting the potential for engagement with men and boys. Some departments indicated a lack of general funding, and others reported a lack of funding for work to end violence against women and engage men and boys. While this may be due to budgetary constraints, it could also be due to a failure to prioritise such work. Increased funding allocations could facilitate the appointment of staff dedicated to improve the reach and impact of work with men and boys;
- Government departments lack monitoring and evaluation plans in general, and specifically for work with men and boys, essential for improving long-term impact of interventions.

The table below provides a checklist of findings and rating for each department surveyed. Detailed information on their relevant mandate and obligations and specific recommendations to improve their performance are contained in the full research report. Ratings are provided on a scale of 1 to 7 with 1 interpreted as the government department having performed extremely poorly, 4 as the government department having performed minimally with room for improvement and 7 interpreted as government departments having performed excellently. Points are attributed to a department if they have taken action in line with the key areas for action that Sonke has identified and has framed as questions which have been put to departments.

Checklist of Action by Government Departments to Engage Men and Boys in Preventing VAWG: 2010– 2012								
Government Department	Departmental Score	Developed laws, policies or programmes	Implemented activities consistent with mandate	Developed work plan or strategy	Dedicated staff	Budget Developed	M&E plan to measure impact	Provides support to NGO's
Basic Education:	✓ 2 out of 7			X	X	X	X	X
Communications:	✓ 2 out of 7			X	X	X	X	X
Cooperative Governance & Traditional Affairs:	1 out of 7	X		X	X	X	X	X
Correctional Services:	✓ 2 out of 7		X	X	X	X	X	
Defence:	1 out of 7	X		X	X	X	X	X
Health:	✓ 2½ out of 7	✓ ½		X	X	X	X	
Justice & Constitutional Development:	✓ 4 out of 7			✓ ½	✓ ½	✓ ½	X	✓ ½
Police:	✓ 2 out of 7			X	X	X	X	X
Rural Development & Land Reform:	0 out of 7	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Social Development:	✓ 4½ out of 7			✓ ½	✓ ½	✓ ½	✓ ½	
Transport:	1 out of 7	X		X	X	X	X	X
Women, Children and People with Disabilities:	2½ out of 7	1	1	✓ ½	X	X	X	X
National Prosecuting Authority:	✓ 4 out of 7				X	X	X	

Recommendations

Sonke calls on the South African Government to urgently implement the recommendations detailed in this report to address the epidemic of GBV that threatens to undermine our hard-won freedom and democracy.

Establish a National Commission of Inquiry: As an emergency response to the current crisis, Sonke calls for the immediate establishment of a Commission on Gender Based Violence, appointed by the President of South Africa. The Commission should convene national hearings – with representatives from state agencies, government departments, research institutions and civil society – and community consultations so that the voices and experiences of ordinary South Africans can be heard in response to three core questions:

- What explains the high levels of men’s violence against women?
- Why are many laws, policies, plans and institutions established to address GBV failing?
- What can and must be done to scale up attempts to prevent, stop and respond to gender-based violence?

We propose that the Commission be provided with the necessary funding and resources to facilitate proper public participation, convening both national consultations and multiple community hearings in each province. Its recommendations should be reviewed by the President and tabled in Parliament expeditiously, and resources should be made available to give effect to its recommendations. Furthermore, the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on the Status and Quality of Women’s Lives must conduct a review of action taken against recommendations after six months, again at 12 months and then annually thereafter for the next five years. This review must be shared publicly.

Establish a special fund to provide necessary resources: In recognition of the fact that many groups providing critical prevention and support services to women and girls have closed in the last decade, a multi-stakeholder Fund to Prevent Gender Based Violence must be established, mobilizing R10 billion, to encourage innovation and partnerships between and amongst private, public and civil society actors and to provide support to the many community-based organizations with a demonstrated track record in combating GBV.

Create enabling legislative environment: Sonke calls on the South African Government to prioritise urgently the passing of legislation that creates legal obligations for work with men and boys, including concrete implementation plans and mechanisms for monitoring and accountability. Sonke further recommends that civil society has an integral part to play in developing this legislation, monitoring performance against obligations and commitments and holding government accountable.

Allocate budgets and improve strategies to end VAWG: Sonke calls on National Treasury to allocate greater funds and dedicated budgets for efforts to prevent GBV, including work with men and boys across relevant government

Most of the activities implemented by government departments are linked to campaigns, such as the annual 16 Days of Activism campaign, which, while important, cannot bring about sufficient impact to create the societal change and impact required

departments in order to improve the fulfilment of existing policy obligations to prevent and eliminate VAWG. In this regard, Sonke further recommends that all relevant government departments:

- Develop and expand prevention strategies, policies and programmes that address the root causes of VAWG;
- Encourage integrated inter-departmental and inter-governmental approaches to engaging men and boys;
- Develop high impact initiatives and programmes to involve men and boys that include capacity building, training, and mobilisation strategies;
- Develop and provide compulsory training programmes (at least once annually) for departmental staff and officials addressing gender, masculinities, human rights, VAWG prevention and the importance and impact of working with men and boys;
- Develop dedicated budgets and monitoring and evaluation plans for all the above initiatives and programmes to engage men and boys.

Develop inter-departmental work plans for integrated, extensive and long-term prevention: Government should develop inter-departmental work plans for integrated, extensive and long-term prevention based programmes that targets men and boys across South Africa to address men’s use of violence against women. These programmes must be costed and budgeted with accompanying implementation and monitoring and evaluation strategies to assess the impact of initiatives and programmes targeting men and boys with the view to eliminating and preventing men’s VAWG.

Implement evidence-based best practice GBV prevention strategies: Government must implement policies and programmes to address what research shows drives violence against women: 1) norms of manhood that grant men the expectation of authority and dominance and a sense of entitlement to women’s bodies and an expectation of impunity when they violate women’s rights, 2) children’s exposure to violence in the home, 3) high levels of alcohol consumption, 4) easy access to guns. Government must implement laws that sanction and therefore deter men’s violence against women. Government must also ensure that every school and community has trained social workers and school psychologists who can help children recover from exposure to domestic violence at home. Government must roll-out mass and community media campaigns that provide alternative gender norms and offer models of manhood that valorise non-violence and gender equality. Government must decrease binge drinking by banning alcohol advertising and by reducing access to alcohol. Government must dramatically decrease access to guns.

Provide leadership: Sonke calls on the South African government to take the lead in addressing the epidemic of gender-based violence that threatens to undermine our hard-won freedom and democracy.

References

¹ “A study by Interpol, the international police agency, has revealed that South Africa leads the world in rapes” Rape Survivor Journey Rape Statistics - South Africa & Worldwide (2010) available at http://www.rape.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=875:rape-statistics-south-africa-a-worldwide-2010&catid=65:resources&Itemid=137.

² Engaging men and boys in changing gender-based inequity in health: evidence from programme interventions. Geneva, World Health Organisation, 2007; For more examples, see P.Welsh, Men aren’t from Mars: Unlearning Machismo in Nicaragua, Catholic Institute for International Relations, (2001), pp.38–48;

³ See paragraphs 4.11, 4.24, 4.25, 4.26, 4.27, 4.28, 4.29, 5.4, 7.8, 7.37, 7.41, 8.22, 11.16, 12.10, 12.13 and 12.14 of the *Cairo Programme of Action agreed at the UN International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), Cairo, 5–13 September 1994*, and paragraphs 47, 50, 52 and 62 of *The outcome of the twenty-first special session of the General Assembly on population and development, New York, 30 June—2 July 1999*.

⁴ See paragraphs 7, 47 and 56 of the *Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development*, Copenhagen, March 1995 (A/conf.166/9), and paragraphs 15, 49, 56 and 80 of *The outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the UN General Assembly on further initiatives for social development, Geneva, 26 June–1 July 2000*.

⁵ See paragraphs 1, 3, 40, 72, 83b, 107c, 108e, 120 and 179 of the *Beijing Platform for Action, 1995*.

⁶ See paragraph 47 of the *Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS: “Global Crisis – Global Action” adopted by the UN General Assembly special session on HIV/AIDS, New York, 25–27 June 2001*.

⁷ The methodology used for gathering information comprised questionnaires, interviews with representatives from government departments, desktop research, and incorporating feedback from officials on the draft report. The government departments surveyed were: Department of Basic Education (DBE); Department of Communications (DoC); Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA); Department of Correctional Services (DCS); Department of Defence (DoD); Department of Health (DoH); Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DoJ); Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR); Department of Social Development (DSD); Department of Transport (DoT); Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities (DWCPD); National Prosecuting Authority (NPA); and the South African Police Service (SAPS). Where departments did not respond, we relied on desktop research of various sources, including departmental strategic plans; annual performance plans; annual reports; reports to Parliament; department websites; concept notes, bills, policies and applicable national policy frameworks.



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