

Gender-based violence, femicide and Covid19 combination in South Africa. Women's worst ordeal



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GBVF problem in South Africa



- South Africa has the highest reported incidents of rape in the world.
- A women been raped has a one in four chance that her attacker is HIV+
- The danger from rape and sexual assault is compounded because of HIV prevalence in SA.
- Most perpetrators are known to survivors
- Statistics from security companies show that 55% of panic activations in homes are due to domestic violence.



SOUTH AFRICA

1 in every 4 women is a victim of domestic violence

A woman is killed every 6 hours by an intimate partner

Women's worst ordeal



Impact of Covid19 on GBV service delivery



- GBV survivors were forgotten during lockdown level 4&5
- Women and children were locked in the same homes as their perpetrators which increased incest cases
- Only DOH, SAPS and LifeLine worked to support the victims
- No public transport available → no access to services
- The issue of permits
- Schools closure → incest/ abuse were not reported
- Loss of income increased anxiety and aggression
- Shortage of PPE's which led to health worker's protests
- The country was not ready for both pandemics

Lockdown- opportunity for perpetrators



- An 87 yr old granny and two young women gang raped by people in “SA defence force uniform, granny died during the “act”
- 17yr old girl repeatedly raped by the uncle, took her life after the family failed to support her
- 34yr old women stabbed 13 times by her partner in front of their children
- Five children sexually abused by their father- 3 got infected with HIV
- 29yr old women beaten by her partner and chopped her left ear as it “failed to do its function”
- 11 yr old girl repeatedly raped by the uncle while a 5yr old brother was instructed to record the act.

Challenges faced by the survivors

GBV STATS (March 20-April 21)

- 49 072 New GBV cases reported in KwaZulu-Natal
- This is 36% increase compared to 2019
- 87% of the GBV survivors screened positive for depression
- Only 22% accessed Post Exposure Prophylactics
- No. of South Africans screened positive for depression increased from 24% to 29% between July and December 2020

Suffered double trauma

- GBV, Covid19 combination resulted in:
 - Unwanted pregnancies
 - Sexually transmitted infections including HIV
 - Defaulted on ART's and other chronic medication
 - Defaulted on contraceptives
 - No trauma containment led to
 - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Suffered mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, some had suicidal thoughts.

Challenges around mental health in SA



- Stigma associated with facilities and treatment
- 41% of pregnant women in KZN are depressed
- In many communities mental issues are ignored
- Mental issue vs traditional rituals or calling to become a Sangoma or a Satanist
- Social isolation and restrictions increased the risk of emotional fallout.
- Lack of support

Risked Covid19 infection to protect GBV survivors and improve their mental health



Support provided by LifeLine



- In person counselling
- Telephonic counselling
- Family counselling sessions
- Removal from abusive homes to white door shelters
- Door to door screening
- Referral for medical services
- Bulk SMS's with message of support
- Assisted them to access Protection Orders
- Raise awareness through media, pamphlets, social media and LifeLine Facebook page

What needs to be done differently?



- As a country we need to be proactive in addressing mental health issues.
 - Programmes that will change social thinking/ stigma
 - Advocate for the budget increase for mental issues and resources
 - Educate traditional healers on mental health issues and symptoms
 - Educate families to have open & honest discussion on mental health
 - Awareness around mental health issues early (primary school level)
 - Create platforms where people can have open and honest discussion on sensitive issues like mental health (online support groups)
 - Increase coping skills/ mechanism
 - Ensure easily accessible services in deep rural communities
 - Find appropriate local language for the mental health issues

Men and mental health



- Men in general don't like visiting doctor's rooms
- More women are treated for mental health issues than men
- Social norms and socialisation contributed to this
- Boys from early ages need to be encouraged to seek mental health services and embrace mental health
- Educational programmes on Emotional Awareness (mainly for men)



Mental health is the foundation of stable families, communities and societies. It should be given the priority it deserves.



If mental health is promoted and embraced by everybody, we will have less GBVF issues in our societies and citizens will be emotionally and mentally well.



Thank you!!!