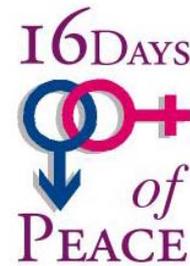


## Speaking Out



### Overview

**One in two women is likely to be raped in their lifetime.  
One in three women experience violence at  
the hands of their intimate partners**

With these startling statistics in mind, it is imperative that survivors of gender based violence are empowered and supported to speak out against all types of violence that they may endure.

### Background

In 1993, the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women offered the first official definition of gender-based violence:

*Article 1: Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.*

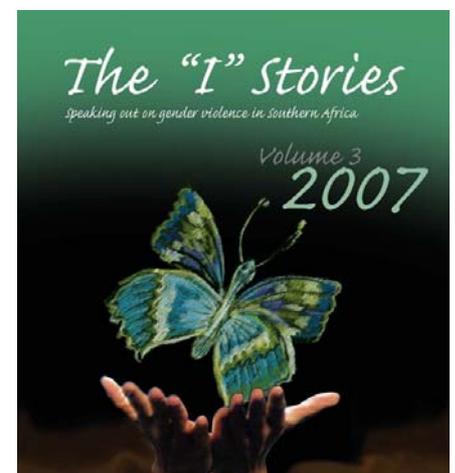
*Article 2 of the Declaration states that the definition should encompass, but not be limited to, acts of physical, sexual, and psychological violence in the family, community, or perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs. These acts include: spousal battery; sexual abuse, including of female children; dowry-related violence; rape, including marital rape; female genital cutting and other traditional practices harmful to women; non-spousal violence; sexual violence related to exploitation; sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in school and elsewhere; trafficking in women; and forced prostitution.*

### Key challenges

Many survivors of violence feel that they are unable to speak about their experiences for negative consequences. This includes the fear of being ostracized and judged by their families and communities; the fear of retaliation through more violence; of not being believed; or of having to relive their trauma. Despite progressive legislation and law reform, women's experience of the criminal justice system and the response by society as a result of cultural and social norms do not create the conditions in which survivors of violence feel safe enough to speak out.

The media – the “reflection of society” – hardly reflects what women experience. The Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS) conducted by Gender Links and MISA in 2003 found that:

- Women constitute only 19% of news sources.
- Gender violence makes up only 1% of total coverage.
- More men than women are quoted on gender violence.
- Gender violence coverage is often sensational and insensitive.
- The majority of coverage on gender violence emanates from the courts which often present a very skew picture of women's experiences.



Things are progressing, but too slowly. The launch of the 'I' Stories in 2004 provided a positive outlet for first hand accounts and an alternative source of information and reporting on this issue that affects our entire community. For the writers, the 'I' stories are empowering – telling their story often forms the transition from victim into survivor.

Gender Links, in collaboration CSVR and GEMSA, invite participants who want to tell their story to a workshop co-facilitated with counselors. The women share their individual stories in small groups. Afterwards, the participants go away and make first drafts of their stories, which are typed out and edited for them. In the second session, the survivors come together to read their own edited story. Once editing is agreed upon, the women decide if they would like to use their own name in the by-line, if they want their photo taken, and whether or not they would like to participate in other types of media, for example, personal appearances, radio or television interviews.

### **Next steps**

Although there is no empirical data to say that the 'I' Stories project prevents gender-based violence, there is evidence that the stories create awareness and generate discussion, which, in turn, can inform how, we as a society, hinder or support efforts to halve gender based violence by 2015.

### **Key contacts**

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### **Websites**

NISAA Institute for Women's Development  
[www.nisaa.org.za](http://www.nisaa.org.za)  
 Center for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation  
[www.csvr.org.za](http://www.csvr.org.za)  
 Women's Net [www.womensnet.org.za](http://www.womensnet.org.za)  
 Rape Crisis [www.rapecrisis.org.za](http://www.rapecrisis.org.za)  
 People Opposing Women Abuse [www.powa.co.za](http://www.powa.co.za)  
 Agianang Domestic Violence and Abuse Prevention and Training  
 (ADAPT) [www.adapt.org.za](http://www.adapt.org.za)  
 Life Line [www.lifeline.co.za](http://www.lifeline.co.za)  
 Stop women abuse helpline [www.stopwomenabusehelpline.org.za](http://www.stopwomenabusehelpline.org.za)  
 Treatment Action Campaign [www.tac.org.za](http://www.tac.org.za)  
 International Organisation for Migration [www.iom.int](http://www.iom.int)  
 Reproductive Health Research Unit [www.rhru.co.za](http://www.rhru.co.za)  
 Gender Links [www.generlinks.org.za](http://www.generlinks.org.za)

