

CHAPTER 7

Support

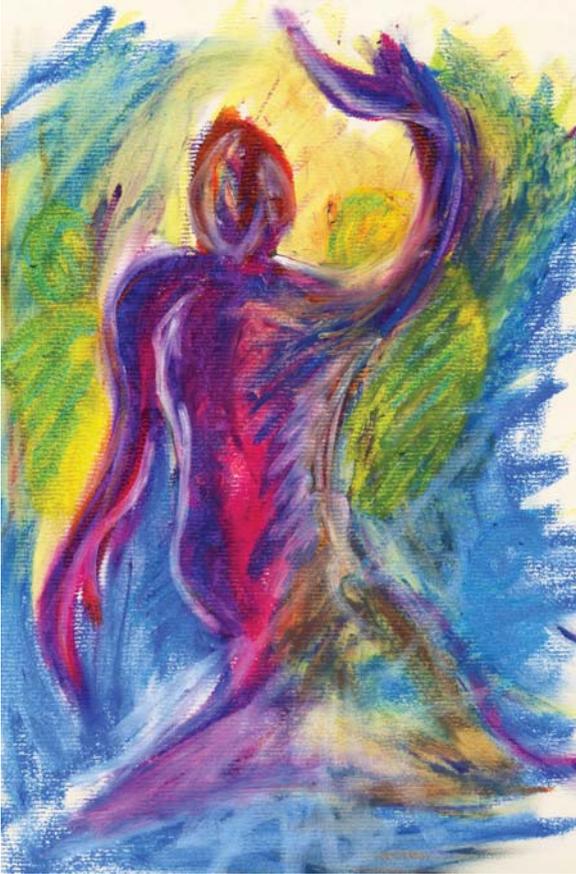


Through GL's "I" Stories project women have been able to speak out. Most have found the process therapeutic.

Photo: Gender Links

Key facts

- ✓ There are 21 shelters registered in Gauteng and 19 are managed by civil society.
- ✓ 1692 GBV survivors used shelters from 2009-2010.
- ✓ 1113 GBV survivors have participated in at least one programme at civil society shelters.
- ✓ Civil society shelters have conducted 3767 counselling sessions.
- ✓ Government-run VEP centres have conducted 1535 counselling sessions.
- ✓ Gauteng province accounted for 41% of calls to the Stop Gender Violence Helpline (SGVH) during the period April 2009 to March 2010.
- ✓ SGVH answered 69% of all calls; 54% called about emotional abuse; 9% called about physical abuse; 4% called to report a rape.
- ✓ Speaking out about abuse is empowering to the survivor.



I (Kedibone Sithole) was born in a rural village called Ganyesa in South Africa's North West province 37 years ago. My family did not have much money when we were growing up. When I was about 20 years old, I set out to get a job and found myself in Lenasia, Johannesburg. I had one child by then who was one year old. I needed money to raise her since I did not live with the father. Because I had not completed my studies, it was difficult to get an office job so I began working as a domestic worker.

Not long after, I met the man of my dreams who promised me the world. He paid lobola after I got pregnant with our second child. After that, everything began to turn bitter. To start with he stopped me from working so I could not earn an income and solely relied on him. This began the violent lifestyle that would characterise my life. I should have left then but at that time, I did not realise that this was economic violence. In any case, I hoped things would become better.

He started abusing me in every possible way - economically, emotionally, physically and so on. I was even isolated from my family, friends and the rest of the community. He did not allow me to go to church because he believed I would have affairs with men from the congregation and the priest. Whenever I wanted to go out of the house, I had to inform him. The few times my family members or friends came to visit, he would accuse them of finishing his children's food, or worse saying they had come to bewitch his home.

As if that was not enough, my husband did not support my children. Instead, he preferred to provide for his parents and siblings, including their children, yet they have their own homes. I could not raise concerns with him about this because that caused fights. On the contrary, my children and I never got the same attention from him. For instance, we only got a plate of food a day and little money to buy clothes once a year in December.

I tried to talk to him many times about how his behaviour made me feel inadequate and unhappy but that always caused a fight between us. He

⁶⁵ Not her real name.

would even point his gun at me. Many violent times followed. Each time I reported these to the local police station, I got no joy. They would tell me that I had no physical evidence such as a "blue-eye." They told me it was a private matter and we should resolve it ourselves. Most of them were my husband's friends. In fact they even asked me to think about who would take care of my children if I got my husband arrested. It made me feel guilty and I often ended up withdrawing the charges.

The violence continued for a long time until in 2005 when for the first time I tried to apply for a Protection Order against him. I had had enough. On that day, he had threatened to kill the kids, himself and me. Thank God, it did not work out. I spent many months running from pillar to post between the magistrate court, the police station and my house whenever he was violent but got no help.

One weekend I got him arrested and he spent the rest of it in jail. Predictably, the case never went to court because at the time of the arrest he had more than R6 000 in his pocket. Instead, the detective who opened the docket threatened to put me in jail. The night he came from jail, he wanted to kill us, and reported the matter to the police. They confiscated the gun and went to drop me at my sister's place, but left without a written statement.

I decided to go and seek help before it was too late. I went to NISAA Institute for Women Development where they organised a shelter for my children and me. He traced me, begged for my forgiveness, and promised to change. He even booked for counselling. He promised to buy a wedding ring. Since the police had confiscated his gun, he begged me to go and sign out his gun.

Barely two weeks after taking me back, it was business as usual. He accused me of cheating on him, that I was a witch and a black cat. The next morning he started scolding me for refusing to close the door for him while he was standing near the door and became violent shattering glass all over the floor. I managed to escape through the window because he had locked the door.

I found the People Against Women Abuse (POWA) phone number and called them. They organised shelter for me at the NISAA Institute for Women's Development. Officers from NISAA spoke to the police officer in charge at Lenasia who once again made us go round in circles in between different police stations. Unfortunately, I fell in the hands of an officer who is my husband's friend. He took me to my house in order to collect my children and clothes. I could not collect my children or clothes as my husband refused. In the end, they went and dropped me by the roadside and I had to go and put up at my sister's house.

I just want to warn young sisters and brothers that education is the only key to success and self-empowerment and that marriage is good but also tough. Women need to unite to break the cycle of violence and this begins with breaking the silence.

Sithole's case is typical of that of many women who seek shelter. Their abusive partners often seek them out. They go back into abusive relationships. They often do not have the economic means to sustain an independent existence. Children are often a major consideration.

Beyond the occurrence of abuse it is critical for survivors of GBV to get support which facilitates

rehabilitation, recovery and empowerment. This chapter explores the adequacy, accessibility and effectiveness of GBV support services from an institutional and a survivor perspective. The aim is to evaluate support mechanisms in place to assist survivors. This evaluation makes use of data from the prevalence and attitudes survey and administrative data provided by various GBV support organisations. Focus group discussion were also conducted with women who had previously stayed at places of safety, also called shelters.

Places of safety

A place of safety, or shelter, is a residential facility that provides short-term accommodation for survivors of domestic violence in a crisis situation. People admitted at the centre can stay for variable periods of time, depending on their circumstances. There are more than 89 shelters in South Africa and 21 registered shelters in Gauteng province, 19 of which are managed by civil society. GL was able to get detailed information from 16 shelters.

Table 7.1: List of shelters in Gauteng

Name	Capacity	Who uses the shelter
Ikhaya Lethemba	140	Women and children
Bethany Shelter	53	Women and children
Eldorado Park Women's Forum - Women Against Women's Abuse	10	Women, 20 children
Frieda Hartly Shelter for women	12	Women
Jewish Community Services - Shalom Bayit	2	Women, four children
Nisaa Institute for Women's Development	20	Women, children allowed
POWA	6	15 children
Peniel Shelter	30	Women
Lufunoni Shelter	No data available	
Manger Care Centre	107	Women and children
Beth Shan	8	Seven children
People Against Human Abuse Shelter	16	Women, children allowed
The Potters House (Under Pretoria Community Ministries)	12	Women, six children
Suid Afrikaanse Vrou Federasie	5	Women
Lifeline Vaal Triangle	12	People
Bethesda shelter	12	Women, six children
Total	445	

Source: Act Against Abuse Victim Empowerment Resource Directory, 2010.

Table 7.1 shows that 16 shelters have a total of 445 beds available, or $(445 \times 365) = 162\,424$ bed nights in the year. In the period under review, the registered shelters serviced 1592

people, compared to the 12 093 who reported domestic violence (13% of the total). This does not include those who did not report such violence. Dividing the number of bed nights by

those serviced, the statistics also show that each woman spent an average of just 95 days in the shelter, or approximately three months.

Very few shelters provide second stage (or longer-term) shelter to abused women.

Government-run shelters provide emergency shelter to address immediate needs of women who have just left abusive relationships, with

the exception of Ikhaya Lethemba, which provides secondary shelter for up to six months.

Shelters run by civil society

The Gauteng provincial government through the Gauteng Department of Health and Social Development (GDHSD) funds 21 civil society organisations that deliver services for survivor empowerment.

Table 7.2: Civil society-run GBV services and use by survivors 2009-2010

Indicator	Statistic
Number of shelters for domestic violence managed by Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs)	19
Number of persons in registered shelters for survivors of domestic violence managed by NPOs	1 143
Number of survivors participating in at least one programme within shelter for survivors of domestic violence managed by NPOs	1 113
Number of individual counselling sessions conducted in VEP centres managed by NPOs	3 767
Number of counsellors working in shelters for domestic violence managed by NPOs	44

Table 7.2 provides detailed information on the gender-based violence services are run by Civil Society Organisations with some government funding.

Client satisfaction survey of civil society-run shelters

Evaluations explored women's experiences and perceptions around using places of safety after they had experienced GBV. Women were asked about their experiences as clients and what they thought of the services provided.

Women surveyed had accessed Bienvenue, POWA and Beit Shalom; as well as Zimeleni

Shelter for the Disabled: all receive some government funding.

Women were asked how they had found out about the shelter they chose. Most had been told about shelters through a friend, relative or neighbour that they had confided in. Most women chose to go to a shelter because they had no other choice. One said: "I did not know anyone else I could go to."

On the other hand, some women had alternative places to seek refuge and safety, but they chose not to. One woman noted that it was likely her abusive husband would have gone to look for her at her parent's home and then follow-

through with previous threats to harm them. Another woman explained that she needed a place where she could go for “self-introspection” because she did not want anybody to tell her what to do. Others wanted to avoid conflict or misunderstanding.

The women also mentioned a mixture of programmes. While one shelter may provide maximum counselling another shelter could be giving very little despite a need amongst women there.

One woman mentioned that while she was at Beit Shalom, she only received one counselling session and there was not much activity. However, this contrasts with her description about housemother training and the creative skills she learned while at this shelter. It is possible that since this woman is now actively involved in running a shelter as a housemother; she was comparing her current job with her time at Beit Shalom.

Discussions also pointed to other challenges, for example places of safety not accommodating the children of abused women, making it difficult for them to choose shelter over their children. Moving to these places was also costly for women who had to leave valuables and, in some cases, their employment.

Very few shelters provide second stage shelter to abused women. Government-run shelters provide emergency shelter to address the immediate needs of women who have left abusive relationships, with the exception of Ikhaya Lethemba, which provides secondary shelter for up to six months.

Ikhaya Lethemba (IKLT)

IKLT is a state-run, one-stop-centre that provides necessary sanctuary to survivors of gender violence and their families (including children), for healing and empowerment, as well as prevention of secondary victimisation. This is done with the view that the survivors will be able to re-enter society and sustain themselves in future. The Centre provides 24-hour counselling and emotional support service, trauma debriefing, legal education, court preparation programmes, life skills and skill development programmes, police assistance and temporary accommodation. The model of support reflects an integrated approach involving several organisations and departments. Within IKLT is a shelter run by the



Recreational facilities at IKLT.

Photo: Gender Links

Gauteng Department of Community Safety (GDCS), court preparation and legal education conducted by NPA staff, the FCS of the South African Police services, Lifeline social workers and Ithemba crisis offering counselling services. The NGOs within this model conduct programmes funded by the GDHSD.

A GDCS baseline Victim Satisfaction and Empowerment study⁶⁶, conducted from December 2009 to April 2010 among all survivors that had stayed at IKLT since 2006, used both qualitative and quantitative research methodology. The aim of the study was to determine satisfaction levels of survivors.

The findings revealed that a total 1986 women had stayed at IKLT from 2006 to the time of the study.

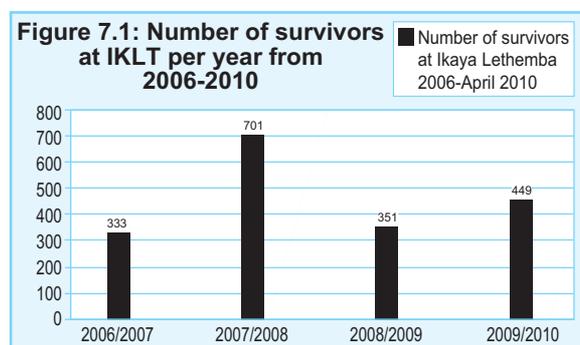


Figure 7.1 shows the number of survivors staying at the facility by year peaking between 2007 and 2008. Thereafter the shelter witnessed a decline back to 2006-7 levels. Compared to police statistics and results from the survey, it would appear that only a very small proportion of

abused women access IKLT, but it is impossible to establish demand from this data.

The survivors accessing services from 2006 to 2010 included women between the ages of 19 and 56, mostly speaking Zulu, English, Tsonga or Ndebele. Most were Black African, Coloured or Indian with relatively moderate levels of education, unemployed and living in formal housing structures. More than half of the women accessing shelter services had experienced physical violence, with others having experienced emotional and sexual violence.

Victim Empowerment Centres (VECs)

Apart from IKLT, regional Victim Empowerment Centres (VECs) and “green door” centres have been established at 122 police stations and other areas around the province. A “green door” is a safe space, marked by an actual green door, where a woman can seek shelter for up to a 24-hour period. The main function of these centres is to support and refer survivors, if necessary, to IKLT or other service providers. Three Regional Victims Offices (RVOs) have also been established. These offer various survivor support and empowerment services, including social workers. Information shows that 1535 counselling sessions have been conducted in government-run VECs.

The majority of survivors accessing these centres knew their perpetrators while less than half still have contact with them. To a large extent, survivors were prepared to recommend these VECs/RVOs to other women in their local

⁶⁶ GDCS Baseline Survivor Satisfaction and Empowerment study.

communities, saying if necessary they would make use of them again. VECs were commended for the referrals they made to hospitals, courts, shelters and IKLT. It was noted that staff were supportive, caring, and attentive to survivors' problems.

The views of the survivors were supported by VEC/RVO staff members who provided a mix of opinions about survivor satisfaction. There was positive feedback around good referral systems and planning; professionalism; counselling and follow-up; centre and police reception and allocation of female staff to provide support; and problem solving on behalf of survivors. Some negative perceptions included staff ridiculing or undermining survivors and the work of volunteers; poor training; long waiting times during initial consultation; unavailability of service providers; poor infrastructure; and lack of confidentiality amongst staff.

Like survivors, staff felt more could be done to increase client satisfaction levels and improve quality of services. Recommendations from staff included:

- Hiring more and qualified staff;
- Improving communication between VECs/RVOs and IKLT;
- Improving physical resources at VECs/RVOs,

- such as trauma rooms, furniture, food, transport, telephones, bedding and linen;
- Improving organisational functioning through better functional structures, streamlined referrals, survivor safety, and staff motivation;
- Ensuring professional trauma support for survivors at VECs/RVOs on a round the clock basis; and
- Focusing on avoiding secondary victimisation.

Stop Gender Violence Helpline (SGVH)

SGVH is a call service currently managed by Lifeline Southern Africa. The helpline provides an empowering counselling environment to GBV survivors through an anonymous, confidential and accessible service. The gender line however, only operates five days a week and is closed on weekends. Callers are given accurate GBV information to facilitate a continuum of care by providing referrals.



The centre received a total of 84 437 calls, and responded to 57 968 (69%). The majority (41%) of answered calls were from Gauteng province.

Figure 7.2: Call flow to the helpline by month

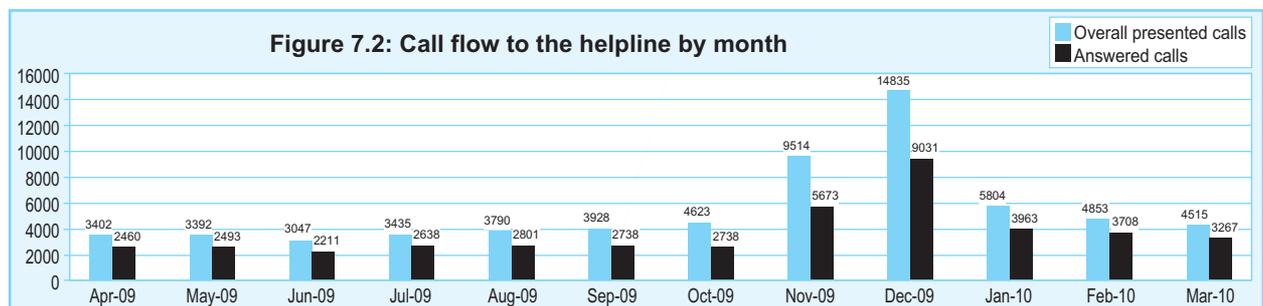


Figure 7.2 shows the number of calls made and answered by month. The centre received the greatest number of calls between November and December 2009. This time corresponds to the Sixteen Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women and Children Campaign. During this time GBV is high on the political agenda and widely covered in the media. There is also a high level of dissemination of material to raise awareness of support structures in place. The high level of awareness-raising during these months is one possible reason for the increase in calls during in the period.

Callers to the helpline had various reasons for calling, including emotional, physical and sexual abuse.

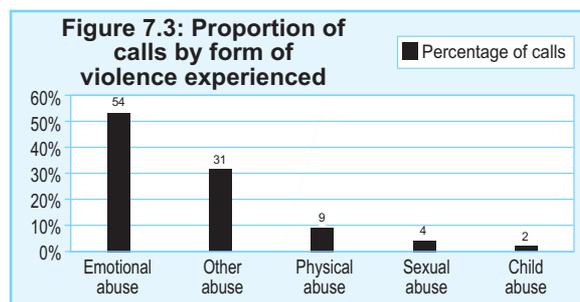
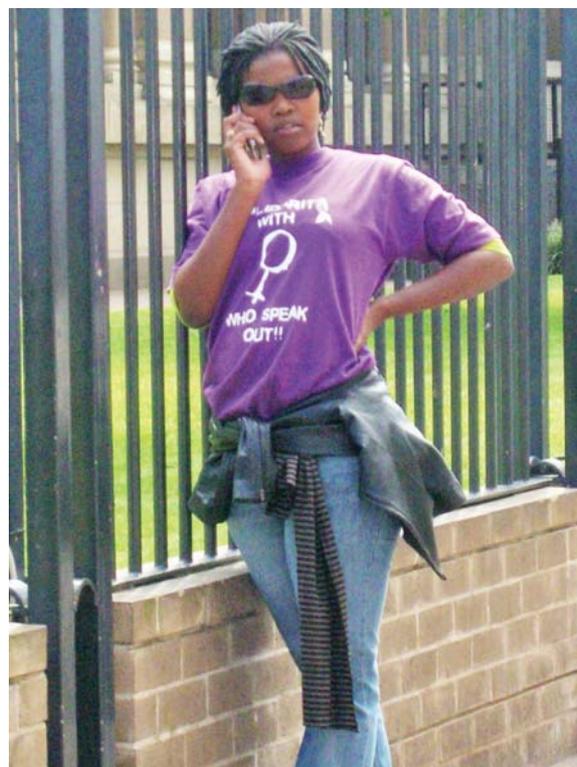


Figure 7.3 shows that the majority of callers (54%) phoned because they were experiencing emotional abuse. This finding corresponds to the high prevalence of emotional abuse reported in the household survey. This may also reflect the fact that many women find it harder to get support and discuss this form of abuse with family and friends as they fear it will not be looked upon as seriously as physical or sexual abuse. Meanwhile, 9% of callers reported physical abuse while 4% reported sexual abuse. Divorce, maintenance, stalking, economic abuse and

sexual harassment constituted an overall 31% of answered calls in the “other” category. Findings from the household survey show that 44.7% of women had heard about the Stop Gender Violence Helpline and 7.2% of men had called the helpline prior to the interview. Only 11.5% of women had called the helpline.

The power of speaking out

In November 2009 GL brought together 25 of the 55 South African GBV survivors who had previously worked on their personal testimonies or “I” Stories. The workshop aimed to determine how speaking out about abuse had impacted their lives. The women discussed how empowering speaking out had been for them.



Speaking out can set you free.

Photo: Janine Morna

Speaking out can set you free

What do you think of when you see a butterfly?
Beautiful colours! Freedom after the struggle
to break out of a cocoon! The sky is the limit!
Reaching up; reaching out!

These were just a few of the answers given by survivors of gender violence who over the last five years have come out to tell their stories at a workshop convened by Gender Links (GL) ahead of the Sixteen Days of Activism on Gender Violence from 25 November (International Day of No Violence Against Women) to 10 December (Human Rights Day).

The butterfly is the symbol of the “I” Stories brand that these women have created as well as a profound metaphor for their lives. As facilitator Mmatshilo Motsei (herself a survivor of gender violence) sketched out the life cycle of a butterfly lights went on in the eyes of the 25 women gathered at a location near Johannesburg to take stock of their journey.

“The caterpillar is a victim whose hopelessness is compounded when it closes up in a cocoon,” Motsei said. “The butterfly that emerges is a survivor with new found freedom and possibilities. That does not mean your flight will always be a smooth one. Sometimes the most profound lessons are learned from taking the wrong turn. We think of healing as a destination but it is a journey, with several land marks along the way. Talking is the beginning of that journey.”

When GL, working closely with NGOs that offer counseling first started the “healing through

writing project” in 2004, it was fraught with risks.

What if women who came out to tell their stories especially through the media suffered even more violence at the hands of abusive partners? What would happen after the near celebrity status accorded by the Sixteen Days came to an end? How would we respond to expectations raised for jobs and security?

The programme consists of putting out a call to anyone wishing to share their story; workshops in which survivors first tell each other their stories, go off and write them and then review the final product with a team of editors before the stories are sent to the mainstream media. The stories are widely disseminated; get picked up in newspapers and online; and generate requests for interviews by the electronic media. The survivors are also often asked to speak at public events, lead marches and get involved in gender violence campaigns.

The stories of the 55 survivors that GL has worked with in South Africa, chronicled in four “butterfly” books that include stories from other Southern African countries, cover every race and age group. They range from a woman who had her jail sentence lifted after murdering a sadistic partner following years of physical and emotional torture to another forced to watch her husband having sex with his girlfriend in the same bed.

In 2009, even as equally gruesome “I” Stories started to pour in ahead of the Sixteen Days, GL decided to follow up on past participants to

get some idea of what effect speaking out has had on their lives. Some could not be traced. At least one had died. Others preferred not to continue to be associated with gender violence related work.

But the half who responded to the alumni call and spent a weekend writing follow up "I" stories shared uplifting stories of what breaking out of the cocoon has meant for them. At least three have become counselors at the shelters where they once took refuge. Rehana, an HIV positive Muslim woman, and participant in the very first "I" Story workshop, is now a well known advocate of disclosing one's HIV status.

Rose Thamae's three generation story of enlisting her daughter and granddaughter to the cause after a gang rape that left her HIV positive has inspired hundreds here and abroad. She leads Let Us Grow, a vibrant community-based HIV and AIDS care network in Orange Farm with branches in Lesotho. Thamae has spoken on global stages from India to the UN in New York. Her granddaughter Kgomotso says: "Even though I am sometimes stigmatised because of my grandmother's experiences, I would much rather have them out in the open than the subject of rumours and gossip. Mothers should be honest with their daughters. The truth will set you free."



Kgomotso, Mpho and Rose Thamae.

Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna

Marco Ndlovu, a lesbian who has suffered untold pain at the hands of her family and a community determined to "fix her" has written Zulu poems and become a gay rights activist, marching recently to the Uganda embassy to demand the repealing of a bill to stamp out homosexuality in the East African nation.

Participants at the weekend workshop pointed out that putting painful experiences to paper helps you to think through, understand, and come to terms with what has happened. Noting that "a story told is a burden shared" one participant said that reading other stories helped her realise that things could have been worse. Two participants said that documenting their experiences helped their perpetrators to see the light. In one case, in-laws, previously unaware of their son's conduct, came to apologise.

When Sweetness Gwebu first participated in the "I" Story project in 2007 after 37 years of living in an abusive relationship she did not

want her name used. The following year, she wrote the foreword to the "I" Stories book. Now she is writing a book that probes deeper into the causes of gender violence. "What I have found not even a psychiatrist would know," she said.



Grace Maleka (left) with Kubi Rama at the Take Back the Night march, 2009.
Photo: Colleen Lowe Morna

Grace Maleka who became disabled as a result of the violence she experienced recounts how after her story aired on ETV she received several calls from community members saying she had lied. Written story in hand, she stood her ground and has gone on to give dozens of media interviews, especially with local community radio stations. The experience of participating in cyber dialogues, and having her story posted on Women 24 where it received many comments has opened her eyes to the potential power of IT in the campaign for women's rights.

Maleka compares herself to a driver who looks in the right mirror, the left mirror, and the rear view mirror before overtaking a car on the highway. "When you have done all that, there is only one way to go and that is forward," she said. "For me, there is no turning back."

- Excerpt from an article for the GL Opinion and Commentary Service by GL CEO Colleen Lowe Morna

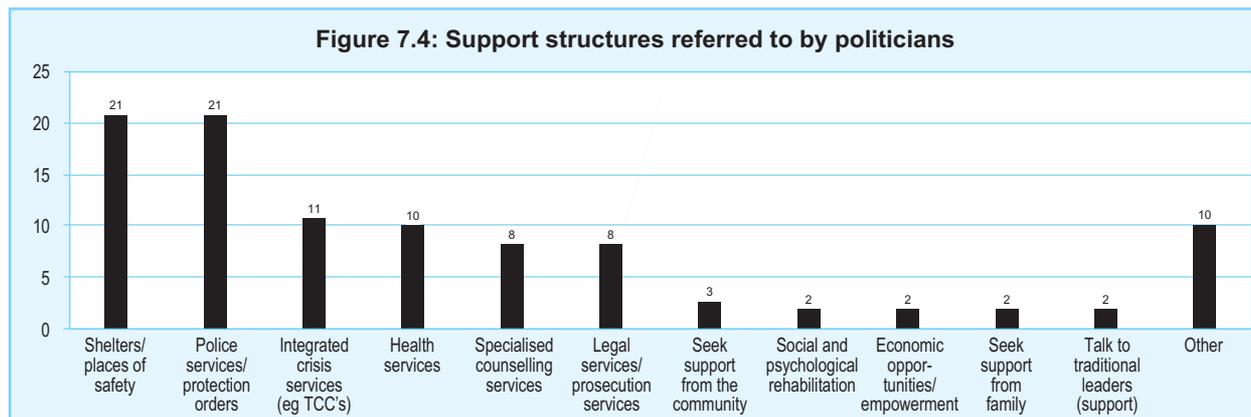
"GL helped me because before I was afraid to speak in public about my situation (abuse). The moment I wrote my story, and heard other people's story, I felt healed."
- Grace Maleka.

"When I was participating in the workshops at GL and told my story for the first time to others, it was then that I realised how much I was hurt. I started breaking down and crying in front of others, something I had never done before. It all came out. The interesting part of it was that when I read my own story, I asked myself 'how did I manage to stand all this nonsense for so long?' It shocked me to read my own story, especially because I started feeling guilty towards my children: That I had allowed them to undergo all of this and didn't pull out of it long ago. At the time I stayed because I wanted my children to have a father, because I had never known mine, but after reading my own story I felt responsible for their suffering."
- Sweetness Gwabe

These findings show that speaking out about abuse is empowering to the survivor. Including survivors in GBV events so they can tell their stories has also been a powerful tool for advocacy against GBV.

The "I" Stories provide a powerful approach that includes those most affected by GBV and allows them to use their voices to inform and educate others, provoke discussion, and influence media.

Support services referred to by politicians



The political discourse analysis analysed the kind of support structures that politicians referred to in their speeches. Figure 7.4 shows that politicians referred most to shelters, police services and protection orders. The speeches did not, however, refer to the major challenges faced by abused women with regard to accessing places of safety. Leaders put minimal focus on support from traditional leaders, community or family, social and psychological rehabilitation, and economic empowerment.

This underscores the need for a drive by political leaders to mobilise for family and community support, given that survey findings show that most abused women do not usually report to established support structures, but instead turn to their families. The survey found that families and communities were not providing the best support to abused women and many women actually feel victimised by their communities.

Conclusions

The capacity of available services is disproportionate to the need as shown by the high prevalence of GBV reported to police and in the survey. Support services only cater for 13% of reported cases. Not every reported case requires shelter services, but considering that most cases are not reported, it is clear that demand outstrips supply. The facilities are also temporary in nature: they do not provide systemic or sustained solutions.

In virtually every instance - SOCs, one-stop centres, the Victim Empowerment Programme, places of safety or legal aid centres - there does not appear to be an audit of needs against existing facilities and resources to determine targets, timeframes and indicators for ensuring a fully comprehensive set of services is made available to survivors of gender violence.



Available data suggests that one-stop centres and special sexual offences courts service less than 10% of the need and these are unevenly distributed across the country. Such specialised facilities are unlikely to reach all parts of the country anytime soon. Yet alternative strategies - like making existing facilities more responsive to the needs or forging closer links between

government and NGOs - do not appear to have been fully explored.

It was difficult to access information on the number of women using services and budgetary allocations for support services. Crucial links on websites often do not work. Very little information is available in simplified form, in different languages, and in formats easily accessible to the public.

There is a heavy reliance on donor funding to sustain GBV services. Although some civil society organisations receive subsidies from government this is not often sufficient to finance effective services. Due to the global economic recession, foreign funding has dwindled. This impacts on service delivery and underscores the need for more government financing of support services.