



ORGANISATIONS IN THE FREE STATE EMPOWERED TO BETTER ADDRESS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE THROUGH THE JOKO/POWA #ENDDOMESTICSILENCE INITIATIVE

23 November 2021 - With violence against women rampant across South Africa, Unilever tea brand, Joko has partnered with People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) to run the #EndDomesticSilence initiative. Launched in 2019, #EndDomesticSilence aims to support victims of domestic violence in ending their silence with information, tools and the provision of more safe spaces.

A substantial part of the #EndDomesticSilence initiative involves training non-governmental organisations, corporate entities and public sectors across the country on numerous aspects of domestic violence.

Developed by POWA, and funded by Joko, the training empowers organisations to better respond to domestic violence, providing knowledge on its many forms and signs, its contributing factors and effects, legal and practical steps to leave domestic violence and various resources to address it among a range of other valuable information.

The #EndDomesticSilence initiative also involves having Tea Talks, which are community dialogues where communities engage in open, honest conversations over Joko tea about domestic violence and ways to better address it. Another programme forming part of the initiative are Healing Days where domestic violence survivors discuss their experiences of abuse, support and learn from each other and talk about their healing journeys. In this way, they gain strength, comfort and knowledge from one another.

Kate Mocheki, Head of Projects at POWA, says a major objective of the #EndDomesticSilence programmes is to fortify the active voice and agency of local communities in ending the silence on domestic violence, alongside other critical role players in government and civil society. “The training, Tea Talks and Healing Days aim to build the capacity of community-based organisations to better respond to domestic violence, while assisting them to offer women a safe space that is non-judgmental and supportive, where they can speak out and share their experiences while receiving the support they need to end their abuse,” she explains. “By talking about their abuse at Healing Days, GBV survivors heal themselves as they heal others and are empowered in the knowledge that they are not alone. It is hoped that they keep telling their stories within their broader community to inspire others to end the silence around domestic violence.”

POWA, in partnership with Joko, has so far ran trainings, Tea Talks and Healing Days with organisations throughout South Africa, including the Vee Van Heerden Foundation in Kroonstad in the Free State. Batho Ba Lerato (People of Love in Sesotho) Advice Centre, an organisation in Thaba Nchu in the Free State has also benefited from trainings and discussions through the #EndDomesticSilence initiative.

The Vee Van Heerden Foundation runs various programmes to address domestic violence including confronting abuse within the church. They also held the weekly virtual Walk for Change Against Domestic Violence and Abuse, which ran from Mandela Day right up until the end of September. During the walk, participants held posters with anti-GBV messages and the #EndDomesticSilence hashtag to raise awareness of GBV. Additionally, the foundation runs the Hope for Change programme where teenage boys are encouraged to change negative attitudes towards women and treat them with respect.

Vee Van Heerden, the founder of the Vee Van Heerden Foundation, is passionate about promoting the rights of women with disabilities as she was raised by a deaf mother. Her foundation's programmes include doing sign language interpretation at police stations to assist GBV survivors to take statements. "Deaf and blind women are more vulnerable to abuse because they are less able to protect themselves," says Vee. "They face numerous challenges including difficulties in identifying perpetrators and receiving counselling because many counsellors don't know sign language."

Fuelled by a burning passion to encourage women to end the silence surrounding domestic violence, Vee ran a Tea Talk at the Vaal Marina Guesthouse in May 2021. Over Joko tea, women spoke openly about suffering and triumphing over abuse. They also had the chance to find out about numerous business opportunities in various sectors like property, pageantry and catering. With options in life, women are empowered to generate an income, so are more likely to leave abusers.

The first-ever #EndDomesticSilence Healing Day recently happened at the Piatto Lodge in Villiers in the Free State. In attendance were POWA staff, men and women from different religious groups and GBV survivors, including those who are deaf and blind, connecting and drawing strength from each other. As part of the day, there was a candle lighting ceremony in honour of women who were murdered by their partners. Survivors also wrote about their experiences of abuse and any issues troubling them on small pieces of paper, which were then burnt to symbolise forever letting go of them. The event also included beautiful Sesotho hymns to heal the souls of abused women.

"The Healing Days are so important because they encourage survivors to support each other in their healing process and speak about their experiences of abuse," says Vee. "This enables them to come out stronger and more powerful and start their lives anew."

Batho Ba Lerato Advice Centre is another organisation in the Free State benefiting from the #EndDomesticSilence initiative. It provides services for residents of Thaba Nchu and its surrounding communities. Their valuable interventions include having support groups for caregivers of people with mental and physical disabilities. They also negotiate with the Chief and housing office in the area to allocate sites for orphaned and vulnerable children and their caregivers and then fundraise

to build houses for them. Giving GBV survivors legal advice on issues like applying for divorce is one of their other programmes.

Lerato Moeng, the founder of Batho Ba Lerato Advice Centre, enjoyed participating in an intriguing roundtable discussion as part of the #EndDomesticSilence initiative. Addressing numerous legal and psycho-social aspects of domestic violence, it provided a range of useful insights. “I really like how the initiative is growing a culture of women speaking about domestic violence because so many are uncomfortable to,” she says. “It’s promoting an attitude that says it’s OK to talk about abuse, which will empower women to break out of abuse.”

Having recently signed an MOU with POWA, Lerato is looking forward to the Healing Days, trainings, Tea Talks and educational material she will receive as part of the #EndDomesticSilence initiative funded by Joko.

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ABOUT POWA

POWA is a feminist, non-profit organisation that was established in 1979. Its vision is a safe and equal society intolerant of all forms of violence against women and girls in all our diversity, where we are treated with respect and dignity and our rights are promoted.

POWA provides advocacy, skills development opportunities, counselling, legal advice, sheltering and court support services to gender-based violence survivors.

Our work is rooted in the belief that change can only be effective when women’s lives are directly improved through our interventions. POWA also believes that there is no single route to change, and so constantly seek new and creative approaches in our programming to achieve the change we seek.

ABOUT JOKO AND #ENDDOMESTICSILENCE

With the scourge of domestic violence against women in South Africa, JOKO has decided to play its part in helping women of strength in these abusive relationships by helping create safe spaces for women to be heard. #EndDomesticSilence is an initiative in partnership with POWA (People Opposing

Women Abuse) to make a significant impact towards ending the silence surrounding domestic violence because tea and conversations go together.

JOKO's social mission is to leverage the strength of JOKO tea to harness the power of conversations to help reduce domestic violence and the stigma faced by survivors. It aims to do this through the #EndDomesticSilence initiative by harnessing both the strength of South African women and the immense power of humble conversations in which women facing domestic violence are listened to, believed and supported.

- JOKO is using newly branded red and purple packs to drive awareness around the need for women in abusive relationships to end their silence.
- JOKO is donating R1 from every JOKO 100's pack sold to POWA to create more safe spaces in which women can feel secure enough to end their silence.
- A JOKO website dedicated to the purpose gives women essential information around domestic violence and advises them on how to either get or give help. Visit www.joko.co.za.
- JOKO is engaging with prominent SA women to champion #EndDomesticSilence in their own ways.

Together, with the help of all its consumers, JOKO aims to make a real difference to fight domestic violence against women in South Africa.