



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

6 December 2021 - The #EndDomesticSilence initiative being run by Unilever tea brand, Joko, in partnership with People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA), is operating in cities, towns and villages all across South Africa.

Started in 2019, #EndDomesticSilence aims to support victims of domestic violence in ending their silence with information, tools and the provision of more safe spaces.

As part of the #EndDomesticSilence initiative are various programmes, including sector strengthening, which involves training non-governmental organisations, corporate entities and public sectors throughout South Africa on numerous aspects of domestic violence so they can better support women to end their abuse.

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

Tea Talks, which are dialogues where communities engage in honest conversations over Joko tea about domestic violence and how to better address it are also part of the #EndDomesticSilence initiative. Additionally, it involves Healing Days where GBV survivors share their experiences of abuse and how they triumphed over it.

Kate Mocheki, Head of Projects at POWA, says the #EndDomesticSilence programmes are geared at fortifying 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 share their experiences while receiving the support they need to end their abuse,” she explains. “By talking about their abuse at Healing Days, survivors heal themselves as they heal others and know that they aren’t alone. They also encourage other women to speak out about their experiences of abuse.”

POWA, in partnership with Joko, has so far partnered with organisations countrywide to implement the #EndDomesticSilence initiative, including Nhlaysi Community Health and Counselling Centre in Nkowankowa, a township in Tzaneen and the KG Maluleke Memorial Disability Integration Organisation in Polokwane, Limpopo. MOUs have been signed to regulate the partnership, highlighting various matters, including the programmes, support and educational material POWA will provide and reporting obligations.

Working in the Phalaborwa, Moruleng and Tzaneen municipalities, the Nhlaysi Community Health and Counselling Centre has numerous services including, but not limited to, GBV campaigns, counselling and support groups for GBV survivors as well as dialogues on issues affecting communities. Additionally, they run programmes with parents of 9 to 18-year-olds where they facilitate the importance of talking to their children about sexuality issues and talk about how to address challenges they face with their kids. They also run programmes with men and boys highlighting the importance of treating women with respect and talking about their feelings because bottling up one's emotions increases the chances of lashing out with violence. In addition, Nhlaysi runs empowering programmes for young people that build their confidence and provide knowledge on healthy and unhealthy relationships among other interventions.

Their work extends to having a drop-in centre where youth can benefit from assistance with homework and participate in different activities like dancing and reading, which reduces the likelihood of them engaging in drinking and other risky behaviours. To maintain the high quality of services in communities, Nhlaysi conducts dialogues on one's rights when accessing services at different departments. They also provide HIV testing and adherence clubs to people who are living with HIV.

Basani Ngobeni, a social worker at Nhlaysi, says the training she received on domestic violence through the #EndDomesticSilence initiative was very insightful. "I found the information on the cycle of abuse, where an abuser is both kind and abusive, very eye-opening," she says. "I want to spread this information to women so they become aware of how abuse works and reclaim their power."

A Healing Day was recently held together with Nhlaysi at the AGM of South Africa Church in Nkowankowa, Tzaneen. The event was attended by GBV survivors, various NGOs and women from Nkowankowa and its surrounding communities. "During the event, GBV survivors spoke of their experiences of abuse and how they triumphed over them," says Basani. "Abused women sometimes bottle up their feelings because they think they'll be stigmatised. The #EndDomesticSilence initiative is encouraging them to talk about their experiences, so they find healing."

At the Healing Day event, women openly spoke about their experiences of abuse. Women also wrote about issues troubling them on small pieces of paper, which were then burnt to symbolise throwing them away. "Many told me the Healing Day made them feel like they were releasing burdens from their shoulders, that it healed their souls and lifted their spirits," says Basani. "Partnering with POWA through the #EndDomesticSilence initiative has motivated us to strengthen our GBV programmes."

POWA has also partnered with KG Maluleke Memorial Disability Integration Organization in Polokwane as part of the initiative. It offers various services including advocating for building ramps in mainstream schools and identifying learners with disabilities in special primary and high schools who can be integrated into these schools. They also mentor learners with disabilities placed in mainstream institutions, so they are better able to adjust to their new environment. Their work also involves facilitating their entry into tertiary institutions by assisting them to access bursaries. In addition, the organisation runs workshops on bullying in schools, highlighting its negative impact.

"Our main objective is to integrate disabled learners into mainstream education," explains Ambrose Matsheta, the Board Chairperson of the KG Maluleke Memorial Disability Integration Organization. "By learning in mainstream schools, they gain a greater sense of independence in various ways such as by pushing their own wheelchairs. Being accepted by able-bodied children also builds their self-esteem."

The training on domestic violence provided to the organisation through the #EndDomesticSilence initiative has been highly beneficial. “We are now able to impart knowledge on domestic violence to various stakeholders confidently and comprehensively,” explains Ambrose. “We now increasingly highlight that disabled women suffering abuse face increased vulnerability because they aren’t able to fight back and find it harder to escape a perpetrator or get to their phone to call for help.

“Joko and POWA aim to encourage abused women to speak out through the #EndDomesticSilence initiative. Perpetrators are often stronger and older than victims, so it’s hard for them to fight back physically, but they can fight back by telling their neighbour, teacher, friend or church leader that they are being abused. Therein lies their power and part of the resolve.”

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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.