



MEN'S DIALOGUE HELD AS PART OF THE JOKO/POWA #ENDDOMESTICSILENCE INITIATIVE

20 March 2022 - On 18 March 2022, People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) held one of its biggest-ever Men's Dialogues at the Rabasotho Civic Centre in Tembisa, which has been declared a gender-based violence (GBV) hotspot. The event, which aimed to engage men and boys on issues of GBV and encourage them to speak out if they are experiencing problems, was attended by members of the community as well as various stakeholders, including the Community Policing Forum, the South African Police Service, Tembisa Local Taxi Association, NICRO and Tembisa Child & Family Welfare Society.

On the panel of speakers at the dialogue were Mbuyiselo Botha of the South African Men's Forum, Piet Tshabalala of the Tembisa Local Taxi Association, Tebogo Mokhotho from NACWA, Victor Kopotsa of the Tembisa Men's Forum, Bishop Kubheka, Given Ndlela of the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) and Captain Mabelebele of the South African Police Service.

Facilitating the event was Sidwell Sehoana of Agisanang Domestic Abuse Prevention and Training (ADAPT), which provides counselling to men who abuse and men who have been abused.

This Men's Dialogue was part of the #EndDomesticSilence initiative being run by Unilever tea brand, JOKO in partnership with POWA. Launched in 2019, the initiative aims to end the silence around domestic violence and increase the speaking out, reporting of, awareness and education around domestic violence.

Jeanette Sera, POWA's Acting Executive Director, says: "Through the dialogue, we were asking men to challenge patriarchy and socialisation that puts them in a position of privilege that comprises women and fuels GBV."

A range of interesting points came out of the discussion, including, but not limited to, the need to cut the root causes of GBV, that violence can be learned and unlearned, that low self-esteem fuels violence, how girls must be raised to provide for themselves so they can leave abusive partners because they aren't financially dependent on them and the importance of confronting issues bothering you.

There was also discussion on what it means to be a good man and some described it as being accountable and taking responsibility for your family and community. In addition, those in attendance spoke of the importance of looking at how we raise boys, highlighting that it is unhealthy to tell them that they shouldn't cry because they then learn to internalise their frustrations, which can lead to them lashing out by being violent towards women and children.

It was also mentioned that cultural issues stating that men are the head of the household can fuel GBV because it can lead to men believing they hold all power and can treat women however they want.

Speaking about the event, Given said it was sensitive and important because men are often not given the chance to speak about how they feel, adding that events like these should happen more regularly.

Bishop Kubheka, who is also a marriage counsellor and officer, said: "I'm glad the participation at the event was high and that people paid serious attention to what was being said. Issues being discussed had to be discussed. However, it would have been good for those who attended to describe their personal experiences of GBV."

He added that the high levels of inequality in our country and our violent past are fuelling GBV in our communities.

Jabulani Mojapelo of the Community Policing Forum said: "This was a fruitful, eye-opening event that will help to change the mindsets of men by educating us on how to be proper men."

At the event, those in attendance mentioned that the event assisted them to know the importance of using the services of various stakeholders in the community including SADAG and the need to speak out when facing problems.

They also said it's important to spread the knowledge they learned at the dialogue to others. It was also highlighted that more people in the community should be trained on various aspects of GBV and become foot soldiers in addressing it. The need for stakeholders to bring all their strengths together to better tackle GBV was also addressed.

Patricia Naha, POWA's Project Assistant, who was an organiser of the event, is happy that it created a safe space for men to talk freely about issues concerning them. "We need to have more events like this to enable men to break the silence around domestic violence and educate them about GBV because some don't believe their behaviour is abusive," she says. "We have to provide them with training on various aspects of GBV, so they can teach young men and the broader community the right way to treat women."

The next dialogue should include what steps/initiatives they have taken, now that they gained knowledge in this dialogue session.

The Men's Dialogue was broadcast live on Facebook. To view it for further content, visit the POWA Facebook page.

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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, sheltering and legal 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.