



## PRESS RELEASE

### POWA WARNS MORE RESOURCES NEEDED TO SUPPORT GBV SURVIVORS

*1100 cases reported between June 2020 and April 2021, brothers rank high as likely perpetrators*

**23 NOVEMBER 2021, SOUTH AFRICA:** Women’s rights NGO, People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) have warned that more resources are needed to support survivors and prevent gender-based violence (GBV) related crimes as the Covid-19 pandemic has shrunk the pool of resources available for this cause. “Thrust into a period of great uncertainty and lost connections, heightened risk of isolation, suicidal thoughts and other ailments have crept into the homes of millions of victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence and other violations,” says POWA Acting Executive Director, Jeanette Sera.

Between June 2020 and April 2021, the South African Police Service (SAPS) reported 1 100 cases of assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm (GBH) in which the victim was assaulted by their boyfriend. Of the murders reported during this period, 22 were perpetrated by boyfriends of victims and 19 by husbands of victims.

From the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, POWA has adjusted its operations in order to reach survivors and provide them with support. “When the police statistics indicated a huge spike in GBV we were alarmed because of the low influx into our GBV shelters. It is then that we realised that needs of survivors had changed and, in many ways, become more urgent because of the isolating effect the pandemic has had on individual households,” says Sera.

Brothers also ranked high in the most likely perpetrators of domestic violence with 397 cases of assault GBH were committed by a brother to the victim. Although research has repeatedly indicated that GBV related crime is severely underreported, it is clear from these trends that patriarchy is heavily embedded into the collective psyche of South African homes. Increased socio-economic pressures over the pandemic have contributed to the continued proliferation of violence against women and children.

#### **Talking about GBV**

We are calling on survivors from across the country to #DonateYourVoice and tell their individual stories of survival, to demystify the faces and voices behind the statistics. POWA, in partnership with JOKO are once again marking the annual 16 Days of Activism against No Violence against Women and Children by tackling the issue at its heart. Together, survivors who use their voice for change, can break the shame cycle of suffering alone and inspire a nation into action that makes a difference.

“It is sometimes difficult for survivors of abuse to come out and try to break the cycle of violence. I think for the people around such women, we need to hear her, we need to remind her that it’s not her fault and above all, we need to believe her,” says Sera.

POWA and Joko are calling on those affected by GBV in any form to #DonateYourVoice by visiting [joko.co.za](http://joko.co.za) “Often, when victims don’t speak out it’s because they don’t think they’ll be believed and we as a society are to blame for that mindset, because often, women are not believed.”

The physical and psychological effects of GBV have been well-documented in South Africa, despite this, access to mental healthcare needed by survivors is scant in the public health system, placing a massive burden on organisations in the NGO sector to who try to fill this gap.

Disturbing trends seen in GBV reporting during the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the intersection between problems in public healthcare, social welfare and GBV.

“We also call on the government to boost resources towards helping this vulnerable group. As the country moves to recover the economy from the perils of the pandemic, we remind our people that economic recovery can’t be sustained in a broken society,” says Sera.

### **Celebrating leaps and bounds in GBV legislation**

The resounding success of last year’s #EndDomesticSilence campaign promoted the introduction of several amendments to the law which will further the cause of fighting GBV in South Africa.

POWA was one of several organisations who supported and made submissions on the Criminal (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Bill (2020). The Bill’s proposed amendments aim to extend the ambit of the offence of incest, to introduce sexual intimidation as a new offense and to regulate the inclusion of the particulars of persons on the National Register for Sex Offenders.

The bill also aims to regulate the reporting duty of people who are aware that sexual offences have been committed against children. This legislation will have an extraordinary impact on victims of domestic and gender- based violence by broadening the definition of what constitutes a sexual offence.

For the past two years, POWA has spearheaded campaigns aimed at lending power to women’s voices. In aid of achieving this, R1 from every Joko pack sold goes towards supporting the organisation and its initiatives.

Last year, Joko led a call for South Africans to “End the Silence” on domestic and gender-based violence, this year we amplify that call by asking for survivors to tell their stories. This year’s 16 Days of Activism campaign aims to hold up a mirror to society, to show that behind the statistics are real people, real stories and real pain that deserves to be acknowledged if society is to be moved to better itself.

The campaign will also include well-loved public figures including celebrities who will be donating their voices to amplify the call to end GBV. The more South Africans hear these stories, the closer we will get to achieving a collective consciousness that can unite all of us against this plague of senseless violence.

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**About POWA**

POWA is a South African NGO established in 1979 which undertakes campaigns, projects and research related to violence against women in Africa. It is a “feminist, women’s rights organisation that provides both services, and engages in advocacy in order to ensure the realisation of women’s rights and thereby improve women’s quality of life”.

### **About JOKO & #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 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 abuse (remove abuse) and advises them on how to either get or to give help. Visit [www.joko.co.za](http://www.joko.co.za).

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

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Issued on behalf of:

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