



POWA AND JOKO RUN HEALING DAY IN KHAYELITSHA THROUGH THE #ENDDOMESTICSILENCE INITIATIVE

8 July 2022 - Healing Days are a programme that is part of the #EndDomesticSilence initiative being run by Unilever tea brand, JOKO and People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA). Happening in all nine provinces of South Africa, Healing Days involve domestic violence survivors speaking about their experiences of abuse and their healing journeys. This way, they heal themselves as they heal others and gain strength and encouragement through knowing that they are not alone.

A Healing Day recently happened at the Baptist Church in Khayelitsha in the Western Cape. It was attended by POWA staff, church members, the South African Police Service, Neighbourhood Watch, staff of Philisa Abafazi Bethu (Xhosa for Healing Our Women), an NGO based in Lavender Hill as well as staff and gender-based violence (GBV) survivors supported by Mpho Ya Basadi (meaning Women's Gift in Sesotho) based in Zwelethemba, Worcester.

Philisa Abafazi Bethu and Mpho Ya Basadi are two of 14 NGOs, working in GBV hotspots nationwide, that POWA has partnered with through the #EndDomesticSilence initiative. This partnership has involved training them on numerous aspects of domestic violence, assisting them to improve their governance structures and hosting Healing Days.

POWA Communications Manager, Thandiwe McCloy, says Healing Days give GBV survivors the opportunity to share their stories in a safe space that is non-judgmental and supportive. "It's very beneficial for survivors to share their stories to assist them to let go of their traumatic experiences and gain strength, comfort, support and learn from each other," she says.

At the Healing Day in Khayelitsha, women spoke openly about their experiences of abuse. The event also included them writing down their troubling issues on small pieces of paper, which were then burnt to symbolise forever releasing them from their lives. In addition, there was a candle lighting ceremony in remembrance of women killed by their partners.

The importance of the Healing Day in Khayelitsha cannot be overemphasised. Khayelitsha, which is among the country's 30 GBV hotspots, has been plagued with rape, domestic violence and murder of women in recent years.

During the Healing Day, GBV survivors from Khayelitsha and its surrounding areas talked of various forms of abuse they had suffered. One 44-year-old survivor spoke of how her ex-partner would insult and beat her if she ever left the house without telling him where she was going. "He sometimes locked me in the house, left with our child and came back much later," she added.

He told her he was the only man she could talk to and beat her if she spoke to other men, accusing her of cheating on him. Once a woman saw him clapping her for talking to another man and encouraged her to leave him and seek counselling at Mpho Ya Basadi.

“I’m really benefiting from the counselling and support groups they provide in a nice, calm and confidential environment,” she says. “Healing Days being run through the JOKO and POWA #EndDomesticSilence initiative are important because through talking about our abuse, the pain and memories leave us and we heal. By sharing our problems together, we help each other sort them out as we travel on our healing journeys.”

Another survivor (68) who was in a 30-year abusive marriage, spoke of her ex-husband preventing her from speaking to friends and family, raping her and hitting her ear so hard that she couldn’t hear from it for three weeks. “What has helped me is breaking the silence,” she says. “I always tell women to break the silence of their abuse and not keep it inside – just as we were encouraged to do at the Healing Day.”

Sylvia Mpinana, the founder and CEO of Mpho Ya Basadi, who describes the Healing Day as good, warm, healing, well organised and well attended, reiterates their importance in assisting abused women to heal themselves by ending their silence. “It was a powerful day for the survivors, which took a load off their shoulders, healed them emotionally and highlighted that it’s OK to cry and talk about your abusive experiences,” she says.

In addition to giving women the platform to share their experiences of abuse, the Healing Day also gave men the platform to talk about the impact of GBV on their lives. One man spoke about seeing a man killing his girlfriend, being a witness in court and going to her funeral. Feeling that he could have done more to help her, he is now racked with sadness and guilt and wants to go for counselling at Mpho Ya Basadi.

Mpho Ya Basadi, which works to reduce rates of abuse, rape and domestic violence, runs various programmes including trauma support groups and face-to-face counselling for GBV survivors as well as those who have witnessed or perpetrated GBV.

Their work also involves, but isn’t limited to, holding workshops with men, women and youth, with debates that get to the heart of various GBV-related issues. “Participants talk openly about the impact of domestic violence on women, which gives others a better understanding of it,” explains Sylvia. “Some men think it’s OK to beat their wives because they witnessed their fathers abusing their mothers. We talk about how growing up in a toxic environment can lead one to normalise and perpetrate GBV, which is wrong.

“In some cases, unemployed men lash out at partners, who are working, out of frustration. Our workshops highlight to men that they shouldn’t feel insecure and powerless if they aren’t working, but can support their families by doing household chores. Men are raised not to cry or talk about their own experiences of abuse and this can lead them to become abusive because they haven’t properly dealt with their trauma.”

In the workshops, Sylvia also informs participants about the importance of healthy communication because lack of effective communication often leads to animosity. “We highlight the need for couples to talk about problems as they arise, rather than bottle them up, which has the potential to result in domestic violence,” she explains. “It’s also necessary for couples to wait until they’re calm before discussing problems.”

Going forward, Sylvia hopes to incorporate Healing Days into her organisation’s programmes so their benefits reach larger numbers of people.

A Healing Day in Tzaneen, Limpopo, happened on 6 July 2022.

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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. We also do public awareness and sector-strengthening on GBV-related issues.

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.