



DRAFT CONCEPT:

Campaign to Build a United and Effective Faith Movement to end GBV

Background and Rationale:

The high levels of gender based violence in South Africa are well known and indisputable: South Africa is widely known as the 'rape capital of the world', with the highest rape statistics of any country that is not actively in a war. While rape statistics have decreased during the past quarter, the low reporting rates make this figure a moot point. Part of the challenge is that GBV statistics, apart from Rape and Attempted Rape, are not collected separately by SAPS or STATSSA, but tend to be buried in other crime statistics and so the issue easily remains invisible.

Nevertheless, what is very clear to the civil society sector, and in particular those who collect more specific GBV statistics, is that GBV cases are increasing in both numbers and brutality. And this in spite of many Government and civil society initiatives having taken place over the past 5 years and more.

President Cyril Ramaphosa has rightly identified GBV as 'the second epidemic' alongside COVID, and his response to civil society lobbies since 2019 has been proactive, with the launch of a National Strategic Plan on GBV and Femicide (NSP) marking a historic milestone in the struggle to end GBV in South Africa.

Two significant recent developments with respect to the faith sector in relation to Gender Based Violence have emerged in the past 2-4 years:

- A reading of the first few drafts of the NSP showed that the faith sector was regarded, at best as irrelevant to this struggle, and at worst, as key perpetrators of GBV. While this has changed as a result of faith sector advocacy, this is still the overriding view, and it continues unfortunately, to be borne out by high profile media cases as well as painful survivor reports of secondary abuse;
- At the same time, there is emerging evidence that some highly innovative and effective work is being done by diverse stakeholders in the faith sector – although its impact is limited by the fact that most initiatives act in isolation, and push-back is an ever-present phenomenon (often on the basis of misuse or ignorance of sacred texts).

This is an important time in South Africa for the faith sector to build its capacity and become more credible in being able to make a potentially profound impact on secular-religious initiatives.

National Census statistics show that over 80% of South Africa's population identify as members of faith communities, the majority of whom are Christian (of various denominations). Thus, faith communities continue to exert a great deal of influence over people's attitudes and behaviours.

Indeed, religious institutions have many strengths that can be harnessed as assets to strengthen broader sector coordination, such as their widespread social networks and ubiquitous infrastructure, as well as the respect that is still accorded faith leaders in the public sphere.

However, diverse scholars have pointed to the damaging effects of narrow religious teachings that often collude with some destructive cultural beliefs to create an environment conducive to condoning or even encouraging different forms of gender based violence. In spite of this, research shows that many people, including GBV survivors, continue to turn to their faith communities for support when in crisis. These scholars have also identified both oppressive and liberatory elements in most sacred texts and cultural traditions in relation to gender justice and GBV. Their work shows how these can influence faith



communities to shifting damaging inherited religious and socio-cultural assumptions. This can pave the way for the faith sector to become credible and effective contributors to multi-stakeholder efforts to end GBV and mitigate its current impact.

In June 2020, a number of people and organisations of faith got together in response to the increasing levels of femicides, unwanted pregnancies and evidence of increased domestic violence during COVID Lockdown Levels 5 and 4. It was agreed to establish a national Collective, and the Faith Action to End GBV was born. It aims to equip the faith sector as a credible and effective stakeholder in contributing to the National Strategic Plan to End GBV and Femicide.

However, as the faith sector, we are far from united, and we still tend to focus on doctrinal differences between religions, and even between different denominations or sects.

This campaign is based on the belief that the time has come for the faith sector to unite in its efforts to bring an end to GBV and address its underlying drivers. But to do so, not in a way that whitewashes our differences, but in a way that does not shy away from the hard conversations that we need to have, internally and between us.

Projected Outcomes and Contributions to the National Strategic Plan on GBV and Femicide (NSP)

Overall Goal:

Over the next 3-5 years, increasing numbers of transformed Gender and GBV-Competent Faith Communities will be integrally contributing to multi-stakeholder initiatives to achieve the National Strategy to end GBV and Femicide

Key Process Outcomes:

1. It is expected that this campaign will contribute towards accelerating the formation of a strong and diverse **Faith Movement to end GBV**;
2. This movement will offer a vehicle to further mobilise, conscientize and equip diverse faith communities to transform internally to address key religious drivers of GBV;
3. Participation in this movement will also enable increasing numbers of faith communities and their leaders to become actively involved in multi-stakeholder NSP initiatives at all levels to address GBV and mitigate its impact.
4. Increasing numbers of faith leaders will participate in diverse multi-stakeholder initiatives to achieve the objectives of the National Strategic Plan on GBV and Femicide

How does this Project Contribute to the National Strategic Plan on GBV and Femicide?

This campaign will mainly and most immediately contribute to Pillar 1 and in part to Pillar 2, as below.

INDIRECTLY and over time, specific commitments likely to be included in the Joint Statement and the extended activities that will flow from it, are projected to result in increasing numbers of faith leaders, members and institutions actively contributing indirectly to Pillars 2 to 6.

Pillar of the NSP	Core Outcome of the NSP Pillar	Contribution of this Project
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Pillar 1: Accountability, Coordination and Leadership	Harness ALL to respond to the crisis. Elevate accountability at all levels	DIRECT: Harnessing all progressive actors in the faith sector into a united movement improves coordination of faith efforts. The signatures and subsequent progress monitoring enhance will accountability of the faith sector. Ongoing workshopping to equip faith communities will improve leadership capacity to address GBV and contribute to NSP structures and initiatives.
Pillar 2: Prevention and Rebuilding Social Cohesion	Stop violence before it happens	DIRECT: The collaborative process of defining key themes and constructing a joint statement will open conversations about addressing underlying religious and theological drivers of GBV. Engaging top leadership in this way can have profound impacts on whole faith institutions. Campaign Media will open wider conversations amongst people of faith about faith institutions and GBV, INDIRECTLY contributing to prevention. INDIRECT: Clauses committing faith communities to address and transform the above, and workshopping to support concrete actions within faith communities, will contribute to Prevention.
Pillar 3: Protection, Safety and Justice	Enforce, implement and adopt laws and policies	INDIRECT: Calling for commitment to creating faith institutional structures for survivors to lay complaints of internal abuses and investigations and tribunals, will contribute to improved access to justice and improve safety from GBV in faith institutions. The Statement is likely to also contain a call for faith leaders to engage in direct advocacy to improve survivors' access to justice through SAPS and the courts.
Pillar 4: Response, Care, Support and Healing	Provide victim-centred, survivor-focused, accessible quality services	INDIRECT: Clauses and action plans containing concrete commitments to support survivors' journeys towards healing and justice draw on the pastoral counselling strengths of faith communities. The campaign will also create opportunities for faith actors to collaborate with other GBV stakeholder to offer continuity of care through Rapid Response Teams and other collaborative support structures.
Pillar 5: Economic Power	Address the structural drivers of GBV	INDIRECT: Calls to commitment to addressing issues of power relations and unequal access to leadership within faith structures can help to reduce women's vulnerability to GBV.
Pillar 6: Research and Information Systems	Deepen understanding and knowledge	INDIRECT: Improved coordination as the movement consolidates will also entail ongoing action research and documenting of good practices.

Key Strategies:

In sum, the intention is to organise a high-level, high-impact mobilisation campaign across the South African faith sector, built around two main OUTPUTS:



- a collaboratively constructed **Faith Statement of Confession and Commitment to End GBV**,
- **signed** by large numbers of leaders and members of diverse faith communities, and
- **workshopped intensively** by individual faith communities and congregations, in ways that produce effective concrete, transformative and contextually appropriate initiatives to address GBV.

Progress Indicators:

- 1000 signatures and at least 250 faith communities endorse a Public Declaration of Commitment to address SGBV as priority.
- By the end of 2023, a % of the signatory faith based organisations show an increase in gender competence evidenced by verifiable initiatives to address GBV.

Activities

Core Mobilising Activities

1. Engaging high-level faith leaders and faith-based GBV activists in a consultative conference or summit around: Why a united response to GBV is needed, what it might mean, to identify core themes and ultimately produce a draft Joint Declaration of Confession and Commitment to address GBV as a priority activity (Integrating contributions of diverse faith leaders in its formulation.)
2. Undertaking a public signing ceremony (online or hybrid) led by senior faith leaders and co-founders of the Faith Action Collective and other faith coalitions to address GBV
3. Supporting diverse faith communities to workshop this Declaration widely at all levels - communities – with a focus on interpreting its practical implementations in their own context, and developing context-appropriate action plans to address GBV (at which increasing numbers of signatures are added to the online joint Statement).

Harnessing the Energy and Vision into Action:

4. As part of the above process, a Faith Action Collective Communications campaign raises the profile of the Collective and other related coalitions;
5. Signatory organisations are submit information about their own organisation and its GBV work – and their initiatives are profiled on the Faith Action Website and across social media as inspiration to others
6. Signatory organisations are also invited to submit monthly calendar entries of activities and events, to encourage collaboration and solidarity support between partners in the Faith Action Collective – ultimately growing the reach and impact of the movement.

Drafted by:
Daniela Gennrich, Coordinator
We Will Speak Out South Africa

**WE WILL
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Working together to end sexual and gender based violence
coordinator@wvsosa.org.za

Field Code Changed