

RESPECTING RIGHTS - STOPPING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA

In commemoration of the 60th anniversary of human rights and observance of the 16 Days of No Violence against Women and Girls, Margaret Sanger Center International-South Africa provided financial support and technical assistance to four of its partner CBOs with the planning, design, and implementation of a series of activities in Soweto and Orange Farm during December of 2008. These activities were geared to: empower youth, young women and girls to speak out against gender-based violence and other forms of human rights abuses; create greater knowledge about family violence and HIV/AIDS and to encourage reflection on such issues; and involve men and boys in the urgency to change dangerous social norms.

Male involvement in the fight against human rights abuses

In Orange Farm on December 5, 2008, Let Us Grow (Legrow) facilitated a Men's Calabash – a dialogue between men and young men from the community. This event created a platform for 30 men and boys to discuss issues that affect them as males, a space for men to reflect on their attitudes and stereotypes about local women, and challenged their way of thinking. Topics discussed were HIV/AIDS, gender and family-based violence, and human rights. The South African Bill of Rights was also explained to participating men and boys.



Changing dangerous social norms

As a follow-up to the Men's Calabash, Legrow collaborated with the 'One Man Can Campaign' of the Sonke Gender Justice to carry out a men's march in Orange Farm on December 8, 2008. The march's theme was "change makers" and targeted 116 men and boys. A mural was unveiled that communicated specific messages from men to the community. Messages included: "Respect all rights", "Real men don't rape", "One man can stop violence", "One man can stop abuse", "One man can influence change", and "Men can share."

Empowering youth, young women, and girls

On December 9 and 10, 2008, Personal Concept Project (PECOP) carried out '100 Girls Walk and Talk' in partnership with SAPS Soweto. Girls ages 12-19 from ten community-based organizations were joined by 15 local female police officers, as they took to the streets of Soweto for two days to protest the continued and escalating violence on girls in the neighborhood and to acknowledge the efforts of local police in protecting girls against sexual and domestic violence and other human rights abuses. '100 Girls Walk and Talk' also launched a bi-monthly newsletter to be used as a mouthpiece that will effectively speak to silenced girls in the community during 2009. Caxton Newspapers and BICSA (the charitable arm of BIC pens) pledged support for the partnership.

In Orange Farm, Sizanani Community Development Project conducted two workshops on the rights of orphaned and vulnerable children. The first workshop was attended by 20 guardians of children-headed households; the second for 23 orphans and guardians. Sizanani also trained 20 of its own care givers and 40 care givers from other CBOs in the area on breast cancer. These care givers are instructed on how to teach community women to conduct breast self-examinations.

Reflections on family violence and HIV/AIDS

On December 1, 2008, Soweto Youth Parent Partnership, the local Police Victim Empowerment Center, and PECOP assisted by Gender Links, Engender Health, and Arethusaneng Community Care and Support Project, brought together 500 parents and youth to remember members of the community lost to family violence and HIV/AIDS. The day's events took stock of the many efforts by all present and further encouraged the community to support efforts to reduce HIV/AIDS, family-based violence, and human rights abuses. Victims of Violence and People Living with AIDS gave moving talks on how to survive and cope with these two challenges.



MARGARET SANGER CENTRE
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**Margaret Sanger Center International – South Africa
Planned Parenthood of New York City**

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Below are testimonials from two youth participants.

Mpumi N. (age 19)

My name is Mpumi and I am a 19 year-old teenage girl. When I was first introduced to the programme I was troubled both from home and by my community's treatment towards girls. I have anger and wish I could change the way girls are treated both at our homes and in public, more and more girls are killed if not raped. Weekends turn out to be a nightmare for most teenage girls and young women. On the 9th and 10th I was one of the 100 voices of girls and young women – I feel great that I walked for hours and talked for other hours. I need change and it looked like all girls need it. Thanks to the local police who continue to protect and advise us; it was great to have them by our side. I was glad that the 9-10 December 2008 was not just a lip service but that we have a concrete way forward – like a publication for teens – that will not only serve as our mouth piece, but also as an interactive tool for mostly silenced girls.

Sithembiso N. (age 17)

I never thought growing up that working in the kitchen as a boy or a man can reduce family-based violence and abuse of women and girls through sharing of responsibilities in the house. My older brothers who are currently all in prison once told me that only gays work in the kitchen, real men don't. During my two days of working in the kitchen preparing food for girls, and washing dishes and pots after we have served the food opened me up. Firstly, I felt very embarrassed when I checked my peers who were boys and able in the kitchen. They were boys but they were very informed about measurements and positioning of many kitchen tools. I realized that my older brother nearly deprived me an opportunity to stand and support my sisters and grandmother. I always felt that they deserved to stand the whole day doing house chouse, while me and my brother were up to nothing. Now I have my responsibilities and there is more peace, understanding and communication on house responsibilities between me and my grandmother, and my sisters. I feel that I am more appreciated since I also play a role in the management of the house. Big-up to "boys in the kitchen activity."