

“Safe Men, Safe Women”

Margaret Sanger Center International and the battle to end Gender-Based Violence

Johannesburg, South Africa- a group of a dozen teenaged boys sit together in a room discussing the effects that their behavior has upon the women in their community. They talk about the links between the violence of their country’s past and the prevalence of domestic violence in the present. They encourage one another to try to change men’s attitudes towards women in an effort, as one young participant puts it, “to have a positive impact on women like our moms and sisters.”



These young men are teen advocates at Vuselela, a community-based organization working with Margaret Sanger Center International to expand its programs and help it to increase its impact on youth throughout its local community. MSCI provides small grants to community-based organizations to support creative work approaches to the struggle against gender-based violence. “Here in South Africa, as in much of the developing world, it is impossible to face issues of HIV/AIDS or Sexual Health without also addressing gender-based violence,” says Errol Alexis, MSCISA’s interim director. “And one cannot stop gender-based violence without involving men and helping them to understand the ways that messages of machoism and domination have influenced the way that they think in very subtle ways.”

Through their work with Vuselela, these boys are changing their views. Through activities like Talk Shows, Street Campaigns and peer discussions, men and boys in this community have become allies in the fight against gender-based violence. In a country where a woman is beaten every ten seconds, a growing number of young men are beginning to understand their roles as advocates for peace.