

Guys, Let's End Toxic Masculinity & GBV Now

A Ten-Point Action Plan for South Africa

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An earlier version of this article was first Published on *LinkedIn*, in honour of all South African Women on the National SA Women's Day, 9th August 2022. As children, growing up as poor whites in South Africa, during the 1950's and 1960's, Peter, his sister and his mother were all victims of repeated domestic abuse and GBV by the intimate male partners of their mother. They are deliberately not identified here to protect their identities and privacy.

South Africa has made significant progress towards achieving gender equality since 1956, when 20,000 women marched to the Union Buildings on 9 August to protest the extension of the pass laws to women. Historically, chauvinism, colonial and cultural patriarchy and the various artificial glass ceilings have caused South African women to struggle to achieve the workplace, corporate and societal levels that their talents merited.

As part of the global movement towards achieving gender equality by 2030, South Africa celebrates an annual Women's Month and the National Women's Day on August 9th each year. This article has been rewritten and edited specifically as a contribution for the current National End GBVF campaign which ends on December 7th, 2023, and also to coincide with the current 16-Day period of END GBVF news, events and activism, see:

(https://genderlinks.org.za/wp-content/uploads/imported/articles/attachments/11949_11_gbv_action_plan.pdf).

South Africa's Sunday Times front-page headline on 7th August 2022 screamed a very alarming phrase, "*No Country for Women*". It bellowed in collective pain about how the growing South African crisis of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Femicide (GBVF), which was a terrible and unintended price to pay for the all the laudable political, cultural and social freedoms and gender and racial equalities that we have gained as a nation since the end of Apartheid in 1994.

Despite all the populist ANC government's promises, a National Strategic Plan (NSP) and an increased medium-term budget allocation last year (2022), the ANC government has failed the women and children of SA. A government's fundamental constitutional duty is to protect the security and safety of all its peoples. This is especially applicable to protecting SA's vulnerable women and children from the so-called "intimate partner" violence by family men who rape, beat and sexually abuse the women and children closest to them.

The SA GBV and femicide numbers don't lie. The Sunday Times article also starkly stated the truth, most importantly, from a woman's perspective, as this quote demonstrates:

If you are a woman, you are not safe. Your life (and your child's life) can be taken by men who do not recognise your value as a human being; who do not think your pain matters; who treat you as some contemptible, disposable thing.

Several leaders in the field were interviewed, including Gender Links special adviser Colleen Lowe Morna who said that the government hadn't put real leadership, energy and resources into reducing GBV. These are not mere statistics. These are real people whose lives have been taken away, violated, raped or traumatised. The newspaper went on to identify by name and photographs, thirteen actual people who were murdered, raped, sexually assaulted, or otherwise brutalised by men.

A "Call to Action" to the MEN of South Africa

Guys, it is time for us men (YES YOU with the hairy face, the Y Chromosome, and the Testosterone excess), to radically change our attitudes and behaviour towards women. We need to show much more respect for women and so change the way we treat women, especially our loved ones in their homes. Together, Guys, let's now step back, reflect, and totally reject any form of toxic masculinity or Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Real men don't hurt or abuse women. Real men do the very opposite: they love, care for and protect women and children. Real men fight for their women and children, not against them. Real men use their muscles and superior strength to protect women and children, not to batter them. Real men never harm or abuse women at all, whether physically, sexually, mentally, emotionally, financially, or socially.

Last year, several professional women working on a photo shoot at a Krugersdorp mine dump were gang raped. This speaks so clearly about the prevailing, horrific culture of toxic masculinity among SA men. We must change this toxic culture, systemically, quickly, and permanently.

Here is how:

I offer a practical, affordable, and readily implementable Ten-Point Action Plan to urgently mitigate and reduce widespread GBV and address some of these issues. Experts and stakeholders can readily improve and modify this starter plan until it is turned into a working blue-print and strategic plan which is realistic, feasible, affordable and provides outcomes that are easily measured.

1. Let SA Urgently Declare a National State of Disaster to Address GBV Today.

A National State of Disaster will give new impetus and accountability to all the many stakeholders, policymakers, legislators, prosecutors, the SA Police Services, social workers, victims and their families and children and others. They should be given new deadlines and timelines that could be measured in the context of what can be delivered. These stakeholders — including the policymakers, legislators, the Judicial services and all the many valuable women's GBV shelter providers and support groups— will focus on and address the underlying social, cultural, political, and behavioural actions behind these abuses in a strategic, systemic, and holistic way. This National "Call to Action" will quickly show purpose and direction. It should demonstrate that this is an emergency, broadcast widely using the powerful, existing, and ready-made platforms of current anti-GBV campaigns (such as the Government's current END GBVF and the current 16 days of activism). National awareness could be quickly spread in all social media including newspapers and the popular press, free-to-air television, and radio. It will show that we are a nation seriously committed to ending GBVF. It will demonstrate publicly that we have at last found the inspiration, renewed energy, and political will to act decisively against toxic masculinity, GBV and all domestic abuse of women and children. It will also show that we are serious about addressing the prevailing, underlying toxic, hyper-masculine South African "macho" man culture. It is because of this ingrained toxic male culture that SA fathers are too often very poor role models for their sons. Sons learn the wrong lessons about how to be a man. They also fail to learn how to properly treat women: equally, fairly, respectfully and with kindness. Such innovations -properly implemented and supported by well-funded, well-executed national education and media campaigns — will help break the intergenerational cycle of violence. This will all go a long way towards changing the glaringly asymmetric power structure that has always existed between men and women in South Africa and globally.

2. Let's Urgently Review and Redraft the National Strategic Plan (NSP) on GBV.

The intention must be to make the National Strategic Plan more rigorous, vigorous, hard-hitting, and effective than the original, weaker 2020 version. The review must urgently focus on the actions needing to be taken and the order in which, by whom, when and how they are to be implemented. It must show how the activities can be measured, the timescale needed,

who will be held responsible and the sanctions that may be applied for failure. All these actions and programmes require regular, written public reports and statistics-at least quarterly-to ensure proper accountability and monitoring with rigorous judicial, ministerial, and parliamentary oversight.

3. Let us Urgently Review and Strengthen all the relevant, but weak enabling SA legislation and so remove any obstructing Police or NPA bureaucracy or weak operational processes that block our societal and judicial progress against GBV.

Currently the powers of the police and prosecuting authorities are poorly drafted, with ambiguous processes leaving loopholes which defendants and their lawyers easily exploit, to avoid convictions. These weaknesses need to be quickly corrected. There are many synergistic steps here, which should aggregate and work together, including the rigorous redrafting of police and prosecuting authority powers, the removal of exploitable loopholes or ambiguity in police processes and paperwork and the abolition of wasteful inter-departmental turf wars that deplete state resources and time. There should be no more "Stalingrad delaying tactics", no more "disappearing dockets", no more court cases being routinely thrown out because of "insufficient evidence". We also need to eliminate the discretionary judicial sentencing powers of judges and magistrates in relation to GBV and domestic abuse and institute mandatory sentencing. There should be no more weak, lazy or biased judges, exercising too much discretion to give lenient sentences. We need strong, mandatory, prolonged sentencing of convicted GBV criminals and sex offenders for a minimum of 20 years. And there must be life sentences for repeat offenders to permanently remove these undesirable sexual predators from the homes and communities where they abuse their families.

"But", the judges and magistrates will say, "Our jails are already full". They are. So, (tongue in cheek) maybe we should consider reopening Robben Island for convicted sex offenders and GBV perpetrators. There we could safely lock the worst of them away, far from any vulnerable women or children. They can serve out their full sentences, safely away from society. The beautiful, wistful view of Table Mountain will remind them daily of the family and civil freedoms they have lost. SA society and women and children will be safer for their removal. They will not be missed.

4. Let's Review the Medium-Term Budget of the GBV resource fund (R21bn in 2021) and increase it significantly to fund these new measures and to reflect our seriousness and our firm collective intent to eradicate GBV from South Africa.

Sexual predation, abuse and GBV are completely unacceptable, antisocial behaviour. Use this enhanced budget to train, educate and sensitise thousands more special female GBV case workers to be proactive (preventative) and reactive (investigative). These GBV case workers could come from diverse backgrounds: they would be former law-enforcement officers, prison

warders and operatives, former police officers and investigators, social workers, or parole officers. These new initiatives would also create some much-needed new jobs and training opportunities for SA's chronically unemployed.

To fund this increased investment and resourcing, money can be taken away by virement from our repeatedly under-performing, under-qualified and vastly overpaid army of deployed senior SA cabinet ministers, civil servants, and police. We could top-slice the salaries of those persistently poor performers who earn above a certain annual threshold (say R1m gross CTC per annum). We could then supplement their reduced base salaries with new, performance-related incentives and bonuses for achieving tough yet attainable and predetermined annual targets for GBV arrests, convictions, and other measurable deliverables.

These new measurable accountabilities, KPI's and deliverables should include improved case detection and throughput, effective evidence collection, case management and docketing, improved education on professional complaints handling and DNA sampling, vastly improved forensic DNA testing and very reduced DNA test results turnaround times. The present tens or hundreds of thousands of backlogged forensic DNA cases again indicate severe maladministration and incompetence. Forcing a female rape victim to wait months or years before adducing the critical evidence in a DNA report is inhuman. There need to be forensic service's DNA testing lab managers and medical technologist's suspensions, demotions and, after due labour law process of course, - terminations. In addition, there should be personal, legal and financial penalties for the forensic laboratory managers and technologists who persistently underperform and who have allowed these inhumane backlogs of tests to accumulate. They have patently failed to serve their male and female patients who then suffer through their negligence and incompetence. With higher pay comes higher responsibility and accountability, values largely missing from our civil service and NHLS.

5. Let every community, village, town, township, and city in South Africa respond to the challenge of massive toxic masculine behaviour change by building prominent "Walls of Shame".

On a local wall of shame, SA women could place the names and photographs-properly vetted, authenticated and stamped by the police, judicial officer or other national authority-of people (97% of them men) convicted of rape, sexual harassment or those convicted of any other form of gender-based or sexual or domestic GBV crimes against women or children. These can be supplemented by digital walls of shame naming such convicted men on all social media. These walls of shame will provide a strong alert and pre-warning to innocent women and children. They will also strongly disincentivize repeat offenders. Repeat offenders should be removed from society with long custodial or genuinely lifelong sentences. They have had their chances at redemption.

6. Let us more enlightened men in positions of power, seniority, or authority in the workplace now voluntarily "step aside" to create new jobs and career opportunities for the general advancement of women.

In time, this systemic, voluntary behaviour change by men will progressively allow more women to enter the career ladders, break the "glass ceilings" and eventually run our countries, companies, universities, NGOs, institutions, and organisations. Women don't need our permission; they simply need us men to get out of the way. We more enlightened men need simply to stop casting our long, chauvinist shadows over them in the workplace and elsewhere in society. They need us to stop consuming all the organisational space and oxygen that they need to breathe in the political, corporate, and institutional workplaces in South Africa.

7. Let's give our female work colleagues the best and fairest chances of employment equity and equality in workplaces that they have long deserved. We now know that all five countries which had the greatest success in controlling the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020-2022 were run by women. Here in SA, the sporting women now, more often than not, outshine the men: Think Banyana Banyana winning the AFCON, something the men have never managed, and the SA Gold and Silver medals in the pool at last year's Commonwealth Games.

8. After all, Guys, let us be honest about this, let's create more awareness and widely publicise some of the most unpleasant facts about toxic masculinity and GBV in SA to educate the public, especially boys, male adolescents, and men:

- Men have caused and fought almost all the wars in history.
- Men have made all the unwanted, abandoned, or single-parent babies, often abandoning the women they have impregnated to care for the offspring alone and without financial support.
- Men are responsible for almost all violent crimes in SA and globally.
- Men are responsible for almost all most gun violence — so let's also strategically also now clamp down on the sale, vetting, owning, and licensing of guns, many of which end up being used by men to wound, maim, or kill their wives, children or girlfriends.
- Men are responsible for almost all the nationally recorded, SA gender-based violence, sexual harassment, and assaults

9. Conversely, the most important traditionally female roles on earth, the roles which literally ensure the very survival of the human species: Namely mothering, childbearing, child-rearing, child-caring and all forms of domestic cooking, cleaning, housework, and childcare. These vital roles are not even measured in the national GDP. This must change immediately. David Pilling produces hard evidence for this state of affairs in a compelling book, The Growth Delusion: The Wealth and Well-Being of Nations(published by Bloomsbury, 2018.) Pilling shows how the national measurement of GDP maps our past, our present and our future.

Yet in no country is that vital, multi-skilled, full-time, unpaid job of mother, child-bearer and child-minder, measured or counted as contributing in any way to the national GDP. Laughably, however, even the sale of stolen goods for cash contributes positively to GDP! Is such recording of the economic impact of theft really "good for growth", while ignoring all the important but unpaid female roles?

Conversely, billions of women's laborious decades of unpaid housework and childcare are excluded from the GDP of most countries. This results, by one recent evaluation, in a \$3.8 trillion underestimate of the size of the US economy,

see

<https://www.ft.com/content/b6182440-f21e-11e7-bb7d-c3edfe974e9f>. The negative global impact is, of course, much bigger.

Indeed, these unpaid but vital social and human roles are disparagingly referred to as "women's work". All these many taken-for-granted, traditionally female roles such as homemaker, houseworker, carer, child-minder, driver, cook, bottle-washer, bed-maker, entertainer, storyteller, homework supervisor, baby-sitter, nurse, healer, confidant and above all, Mother, are unpaid. And so, officially at least, they count for nothing. This cannot be right, logical, fair, or equitable.

10. Educate Boys at home and at current dreadful primary, secondary and University levels about how to behave correctly towards modern women.

Boys' education should include age-appropriate and examinable basic sex education and reproductive biology, facts about contraception, dating and understanding what constitutes informed consent, and the prevention and treatment of STDs. Every schoolboy needs to understand the modern social and cultural nuances of what constitutes date rape, be aware of all the #MeToo many prosecutions and case studies. All males need to be aware of, understand and even quote all the national GBV and sexual crime statistics. Likewise, all boys and men need age-appropriate and nuanced but practical understanding of what constitutes rape, including marital rape, and must be made aware of the mandatory sentences and punishments for rape and various sexual crimes. The objective here is to change the prevailing blokeish and toxic male culture and prevailing masculine and cultural mindsets. Collectively these actions will, if implemented effectively and holistically, foster positive male attitudes towards women and improve their knowledge about girls and women.

CONCLUSIONS

We are, after all, living in the "Age of Aquarius" and in an era of supposed human enlightenment. So, Guys, let's act like we are properly enlightened and let's all admit that we have had a very long and dominant innings, generally running everything in the world. For many millennia, throughout the world, we have prevailed in most national political, institutional, and corporate leadership roles. We have now overstayed our welcome. Instead of hogging these leadership positions for ourselves and then, more often than not, doing them badly - there are simply too many examples to quote - let's rather leave it to those more talented and competent women who can lead.

And do we really also have to remind ourselves about men's long and often autocratic, brutal male leadership track record in recent history? Think Tito, Hitler, Mussolini, Verwoerd, Pol Pot, Kim Jong Un, Putin, Trump, Bolsonaro... need I continue? Conversely, the list of female despots is, reassuringly, very short. With this terrible male track record, it is clear that women world leaders in future simply cannot do any worse than men: they can only do better.

For their part, modern women also now need to step out now from the long and often patriarchal, chauvinist shadows of their male counterparts.

The World needs these more enlightened and capable women to step forward confidently now. We need them to raise their hands and sign up for more and larger leadership roles. We want a new generation of confident, well-qualified and competent female leaders to provide the smarter, more feminine, nurturing, inclusive and caring leadership that everyone agrees the world needs. Especially now.

(Parts of this this article by Dr Peter Cruse first appeared as comments in LinkedIn https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/let-men-now-stand-aside-all-more-capable-women-run-world-cruse?trk=portfolio_article-card_title

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