



SAFFI's Gender-based Violence Intervention Programmes: Documenting the Experiences of Religious Leaders and Faith Communities in a South African Context

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Abstract

Gender-based Violence (GBV) against women and girls and Domestic Violence (DV) remains one of the most pervasive human rights violations of our time, and one of the biggest South African national problems. While “Rights” discourse is an essential democratic value, it is not in itself a plausible intervention strategy in contexts where religion (embedded in culture) is a social determinant of hierarchical gender power-relations. A significant gap exists in literature which speaks to the experiences of NGOs, practitioners and religious leaders working in these fields to account for how these problems are experienced and addressed at grass-roots level. This two-part report reflects on analyses the efforts of the South African Faith and Family Institute (SAFFI), a multi-faith NGO focused on strengthening the capacity of religious leaders and faith communities in addressing violence against women in intimate relationships, families and society.

Part two of the report explores how religious leaders and their congregations have experienced different phases of the SAFFI model. This report employs a participatory action methodology to reflect thematically on the challenges and successes as experienced by SAFFI participants. The report goes on to: problematize what meaningful participatory learning and action looks like, how a whole community response to domestic violence can be supported, how and why community actors mobilise for change, how cultural and race identifications impact how we talk about domestic violence at grassroots, how different spaces are important for healing and how binary notions of gender need to be disrupted in order to deal with some of the root causes of violence against women.

Based on reflecting on organisational records and participants’ lived experiences, this report highlights the critical place of faith and religion in conversations of gender justice and violence against women. It provides a platform from which to reflect on the practicalities and challenges of addressing this work at a grassroots level and acts facilitates a conversation which can deepen and sharpen the work of SAFFI and gender justice interventions more generally.

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We extend a special thanks to Ms Megan Robertson, who as SAFFI's Research Assistant for this project, was also responsible for the fieldwork, interviews and the writing up of the research findings in the report. Ms Robertson is a PhD candidate at the University of the Western Cape where she pursues her studies in the area of gender, sexuality, religion and transformation. Her studies focuses on the lived experiences of queer clergy and how they engage with the institutional cultures of the church.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CBD	Community-Based Development
DSD	Department of Social Development
DV	Domestic Violence
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGOS	Non-governmental Organisations
RLs	Religious Leaders
SAFFI	South African Faith and Family Institute
SAPS	South African Police Services

Chapter One: Introduction

I. Introduction

Gender-based Violence (GBV) against women and girls and Domestic Violence (DV) remain one of the most pervasive human rights violations of our time, and one of the biggest South African national problems. The South African Faith and Family Institute (SAFFI) uses the terms such GBV, DV, violence against women (VAW) and intimate partner abuse (IPA) interchangeably – choosing the term which best describe the context of the violence experienced / perpetrated. While GBV may be perpetrated against women, girls, men, boys and the various LGBTBIQ communities, the majority of affected individuals are women – and by extension their children. The unequal distribution of power and resources in society is seen to be the main social driver of skewed gender power relations:

[Gender-based violence is] ...violence that occurs as a result of the normative role expectations associated with each gender, along with the unequal power relationships between the two genders, within the context of a specific society¹.

GBV is recognised as the violation of basic human rights (WHO, 2002a). However, while “Rights” discourse is an essential democratic value, it is not in itself a plausible intervention strategy in contexts where religion (embedded in culture) is a social determinant of hierarchical gender power-relations. SAFFI saw this as a gap in the multi-sectoral DV intervention strategies. While there is a plethora of literature defining, describing and theorizing the nature and impact of DV on individuals and groups, there is a recognised gap in evidence-based research on the intervention work done at grassroots by NGO’s (non-governmental organizations)². This makes it difficult for those working in the field to know the impact of particular intervention strategies. This SAFFI research project, funded by the Joint Gender Fund³, seeks to report the findings of research done on strengthening the capacity of religious leaders and faith communities in addressing violence against women in intimate relationships, families and society.

In recognizing the critical role faith plays, not only in the justification of GBV but also that it has the potential to be a resource for challenging the dehumanizing effects GBV has on both victims and perpetrators, SAFFI developed a five-phase Domestic Violence Pastoral Care Training and Capacity Strengthening Model (also referred to as the ‘SAFFI Training Model’). The model targets religious leaders (RLs) with the aim of strengthening their capacity to work with those directly affected by GBV, as well as with families and faith communities for whom GBV has become a scourge. Various ecclesial and pastoral activities, including sermon preparation and preaching also lend themselves to proactive interventions.

¹Bloom, S 2008, Violence against Women: A compendium of monitoring and evaluation indicators, Chapel Hill, Measure Evaluation, pp.14.

²South Africa boasts an active civil society with a lively non-governmental sector of roughly one hundred thousand registered non-profit organizations (NPOs) and an estimated fifty thousand unregistered ones. The Department of Social Development in South Africa refers to non-government organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) collectively as non-profit organizations (Jankelowitz, L 2007).

³<http://www.jointgenderfund.co.za>

In September 2016, SAFFI introduced Phase 3 of the SAFFI Model, viz. ‘Our Places of Worship: True Sanctuaries of Hope and Healing’ which is a 10-week resource-support series offered to geographically selected RLs who had already completed Phases 1 and 2 of the SAFFI Model.

Phases 4 and 5 of the SAFFI Training Model have been happening organically during the implementation of Phase 3. For example, it became necessary to establish the Religious Leaders Forum on GBV in Oudtshoorn and Atlantis from the onset of the 10-week series⁴.

The methodology employed to investigate how selected RLs and their congregations have experienced the SAFFI Training Model includes a heuristic model inquiry into the experiences of RLs and the community of faith⁵ and participatory action research. The research problematizes what meaningful participatory learning and action looks like; explores how a whole-community response to DV can be supported; describes how and why community actors mobilise for change; reflects on how cultural and race identifications impact how we talk about DV at grassroots; motivates for how different spaces are important for healing and how binary notions of gender need to be interrupted in order to deal with some of the root causes of violence against women.

The envisaged outcomes of the research project are significant on three levels. Firstly, it enables SAFFI to deepen and sharpen the work the organisation does with RLs going forward; secondly, it enables the organisation to create further useful support mechanisms and resources for RLs who are doing this type of intervention work in their faith communities; thirdly, it makes a unique contribution to existing knowledge on how DV can be mitigated against within communities in South Africa.

In order to achieve these outcomes, three broad questions guided this research project:

- What effect has the SAFFI Training Model had on religious leaders’ understanding of their role in perpetuating and/or interrupting violence against women in intimate relationships and family life in what they teach, preach and offer during pastoral care? And, is this reflected in their actions and behaviour?
- What effect has the SAFFI Training Model had on congregations/faith communities whose RLs and /or lay leaders have participated in the SAFFI Training Model?
- How can the experiences of RLs, lay leaders, congregations and faith communities who have participated in the SAFFI Training Model, contribute to advancing a whole-community response to reducing and eradicating GBV against women and girls?

⁴The forums serve as a safe-space for debriefing on current domestic violence pastoral care cases as well as personal psycho-social support which RLs need for themselves and their own families. Furthermore the forums offer opportunity for RLs to debrief on the spate of brutal rapes plaguing communities in the Western Cape.

II. Overview of the SAFFI Domestic Violence Pastoral Care Training and Capacity Strengthening Model

The SAFFI Training Model's overall objective is aimed at strengthening the capacity of RLs and faith communities as they contribute towards the reduction and eradication of GBV and DV⁵. The objectives of the model include:

- To equip RLs/faith communities with basic knowledge about the complex dynamics and faith issues related to GBV.
- To deepen RLs/faith communities' understanding about the theoretical frameworks relating to root causes and contributing factors relating to violence against women.
- To share information about the legislative frameworks operative in the South African context.
- To equip RLs and faith communities with basic skills to support domestic violence victims / survivors, their children and abusers.

These aims were rolled out through five phases of the training and capacity strengthening of RLs and faith communities. These are outlined in the table below:

Table A: Programme Design

Phase	Outputs (Activities)	Outcomes (Expected Result)
Phase 1: Recruitment and Sensitizer Workshops	Recruitment of RLs (and lay counselors/leaders in faith communities) to participate in the Sensitizer Workshops on the faith dimensions of DV. The workshop uncovers the complex faith dynamics involved in situations of IPA and GBV, pointing to the sacred responsibility of RLs to become part of the solution. Follow up fieldwork includes debriefing sessions with RLs and an invitation to continue into Phase 2.	To increase knowledge about the faith dimensions of DV and the need to become much more aware of how RLs preach and offer pastoral care to individuals and families in their faith communities
Phase 2: 5-Day Domestic Violence Pastoral/Spiritual Care training	RLs (and lay counselors/leaders) who completed Phase 1 participate in a basic yet comprehensive DV Pastoral/Spiritual Training. This training equips participants with the ability to discern between a marital problem and DV; how to intervene with victims and perpetrators whilst keeping mindful of healthy boundaries during pastoral care. The training also introduces participants to some of the easily misinterpreted scriptures and teachings as well as resources present in various religions. Lastly the training affords participants the opportunity to learn about the legal instruments available and they get to meet key stakeholders and service providers.	Improved capability (knowledge and skill) on DV pastoral/spiritual care of RLs and faith communities.
Phase 3: 10-week resource series: Our Places of Worship: True Sanctuaries of Hope and Healing	SAFFI develops themes around which sermons and other ecclesial programs could be developed – in consultation with RLs	To implement the series with the help of SAFFI resources which provide guidelines for scriptures to be used, questions to ask and points to make.

⁵ Ismail, F & Petersen, E 2013, Ubuntu in the Home Project Report, South African Faith and Family Institute.

<p>Phase 4: Support services, continuous in-service training, mentoring, supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the support service.</p>	<p>SAFFI assists and guides RLs and faith communities to establish support services/intervention strategies to interrupt GBV against women. Further training and mentoring are shaped and guided by the different contexts and needs of RLs who have been through at least Phases 1 and 2 of the SAFFI Training Model. In-service trainings offered at the time of writing include: The Prevention in Action training which offers practical tools to stimulate RLs and lay counselors/leaders as they come up with localized actions. Family Preservation and Pre-marital Counselling training. Other activities under this section include RLs being invited to participate in other conferences where they engaged with RLs from diverse denominations/religions and other stakeholders on issues related to GBV.</p>	<p>To establish pastoral/spiritual care support services for victims / survivors and / or accountability services for perpetrators of DV Increased technical support to faith communities.</p>
<p>Phase 5: Monthly or quarterly meetings with RLs and faith communities and establishing and supporting RLs forums on GBV.</p>	<p>These community-based Religious Leaders Forums on GBV are established to provide a safe space of support, guidance and debriefing for RLs (and lay counselors/leaders) on pastoral care cases, which they deal with. These forums also provide opportunity for group psychosocial support and guidance for RLs in cases that might involve their own families. Generally the forums provide a platform to discuss around various themes on GBV/DV as an ongoing support network for RLs to deepen and strengthen the work they do in their communities.</p>	<p>Established RLs forums on GBV. The hope is for a Faith Sector fully integrated into other community-based GBV forums and campaigns/services.</p>

This SAFFI Training Model is underpinned by a participatory action research methodology. The basic premise of which is that: research is done; a programme is implemented; research is again done on the programme; necessary changes to the programme are made, and this cycle is repeated.

Since inception SAFFI has completed Phase 1 and Phase 2 with seven different geographic communities in the Western Cape. As part of Phase 3 the 10-week support series was piloted in three of the geographic communities namely, Atlantis, Khayelitsha and Oudtshoorn. A total of five different Pentecostal denominations participated in this pilot series. Phases 4 and 5 have taken shape through additional trainings such as the Prevention in Action, Pre-marital Counselling and Family Preservation training as well as through the establishment of community-based Religious Leaders Forums on GBV in Atlantis and Oudtshoorn. However, the intention would be for this report to assist in strengthening Phase 1 and 2, further developing support systems for Phase 3, and helping SAFFI become more intentional about what needs to be done in Phase 4 and 5.

2.1. Overview of the Sensitizer (Phase 1)

The Sensitizer Workshop (also referred to as a Sensitizer) is the initial 4-hour training session designed to create awareness amongst RLs (and lay counsellors/leaders) about the faith dimensions of DV, and their responsibility in providing help to families experiencing DV. The Sensitizer is the first workshop contact RLs have with SAFFI.

The Sensitizer serves to introduce RLs to SAFFI and to explain SAFFI's aims, theories, methodologies and approaches. Participating RLs are introduced to the overall SAFFI Training Model as an offering for an ongoing journey if they wish to continue a partnership with SAFFI beyond the Sensitizer. The Sensitizer acts as a stimulus for RLs to confront the manner in which faith communities are addressing GBV, DV and IPA. It is at the Sensitizer where RLs decide whether they would like to engage in further training and work alongside SAFFI.

If the RLs wanted to go ahead with more training, the logistics of the 5-day training were discussed. Only those who attended the Sensitizer could attend the 5-day training. This condition meant that RLs often asked for more sensitizers as RLs encouraged important lay leaders and other RLs to attend. SAFFI is intentional about the need for RLs to complete both the Sensitizer and 5-day training before their lay counsellors/leaders are to also participate in the same. The reasoning for 'RLs only' training spaces is that it provides the much needed opportunity for debriefing and reflection about their own theological questions and challenges. Here they find the much needed guidance and exchange with colleagues who may be struggling with similar challenges whilst also drawing strength from the support offered to them by the training process and content. In instances where training participants are a mixture of RLs and lay counsellors/leaders and stakeholders, RLs' specific need for deeper theological engagement are scarcely met.

2.2. Overview of the 5-day Training (Phase 2)

The 5-day training builds on the work completed in the Sensitizer. The training focuses on the dynamics of DV, the root causes and contributing factors of gender and DV, unpacking faith issues in DV and IPA, the Domestic Violence Act and how to make use of it, and healthy boundaries during pastoral/spiritual care interventions with victims/survivors and perpetrators of DV.

This training aims to help RLs in communities of faith understand the prevalence and impact of DV in their local communities. RLs are trained in ways of fostering a culture that discourages domestic violence.

Subsequent to the completion of both training sessions, in-person interviews are held with participants to discuss the ways the training took effect in the daily work of RLs. This serves to ascertain how RLs would like to take the work forward and how further mentoring and training could be provided.

2.3. Overview of the 10-week support series (Phase 3)

The vision of this series was towards making "Our Places of Worship: True Sanctuaries of Hope and Healing". Ten themes were developed by SAFFI and the RLs around which sermons and programmes could be developed. The aim was to create, with RLs, ideas and guidelines on how issues of DV and IPA could be spoken about and addressed in faith communities. RLs mostly implemented these themes in their Sunday church sermons however there were three faith communities (two in Atlantis and one in Oudtshoorn) who used the youth resource developed by SAFFI to guide their youth ministries through the same themes.

The themes were as follows:

Theme 1: Our places of worship: True sanctuaries of hope and healing (Introduction to DV and the 10 week series)

Theme 2: Uncovering the root causes of racism and violence against women

Theme 3: Being Salt (Healing) and Light (Hope)

Theme 4: Body as the temple of the Holy Spirit – Who am I and whose am I?

Theme 5: Marriage is sacred and divorce is hateful. Why?

Theme 6: Tamar is raped by her brother, Amnon – the family’s response

Theme 7: Amnon rapes his sister, Tamar – the family’s response

Theme 8: The healing process – is there no balm in Gilead?

Theme 9: Mourning the loss of the relationship and moving on

Theme 10: Repentance, forgiveness and the pledge of re-commitment to being a place of hope (light) and healing (salt)

The development and implementation of the 10-week support series was an exercise in action research. RLs were an integral part of developing the ten themes. RL’s were co-researchers with SAFFI and were encouraged to make suggestions and changes to any themes or processes. Based on an initial discussion of themes an extra theme was added to what were originally nine themes, namely, “The importance of uncovering the root causes of racism and violence against women”.

In these initial discussions it emerged that the RL in Khayelitsha would not be able to implement the ten themes in the structured weekly way the themes were set out. Because his church already had a set structure of themes and scheduled preachers in place, he would need to adapt and incorporate certain themes into the existing structure and leave out others. Originally this was seen as the unstructured approach which SAFFI would compare to the more structure approach the other RLs followed. However, most RLs experienced struggles in implementing the 10-week series and almost all made adjustments to the religious scriptures used and how it was presented. Therefore this report focuses more on comparing contexts than on comparing a structure and unstructured approach.

Once RLs got buy-in from the leadership of their churches they began to implement the series with the help of SAFFI resources which provided guidelines for scriptures to be used, questions to ask and points to make. RLs were also asked to assign observers who would make notes in their sermons; youth group sessions, women’s group sessions or other ministries where they would implement it. RLs met together with SAFFI each week (one group in Oudtshoorn and one group in Cape Town) to debrief on what had happened the previous week and to prepare for the coming week. These debrief sessions provided room for adjustments, additions or deletions to be made to the content and process.

Chapter Two: Data Production

This chapter contains a theoretical reasoning behind choosing participatory action research methodological approaches for this research. Further, an overview of how data was produced and analysed will be provided. Lastly, this chapter provides a discussion of the ethical considerations and limitations to the research.

I. Secondary data production

SAFFI has mostly evaluated changes using activity and pre- and post-training evaluations using questionnaires to establish whether exposure to SAFFI has made any impact on participants' knowledge, beliefs, and behaviours. We also conduct follow-up impact assessments a few months after the trainings in order to learn how RLs are beginning to implement the knowledge acquired and paradigms that have shifted. Further, SAFFI has collected significant change stories emanating from the education and training conducted and sensitizer workshops.

Minutes and reporting of the weekly debriefing sessions which took place over the period of the 10-week series was also looked at.

These reports were used in order to find similarities and differences in the experiences of RLs in the various communities which SAFFI worked in from 2014 till 2017. These communities include Atlantis, Khayelitsha, Edgemoed, Bonteheuwel, Hanover Park, Oudtshoorn, Phillipi, Bishop Lavis, Strand, and Ceres in the Western Cape of South Africa.

II. Primary data production

2.1. Overview of geographic areas included in primary data production

A brief overview of each area in which primary research was conducted is outlined below:

Atlantis

Atlantis lies 40km north of Cape Town. It was created in Apartheid as an industrial area as well as an area demarcated for the coloured community who would provide a labour force. Manufacturers were provided with government incentives to operate in this area but by the 1980s these incentives were no longer offered and many manufacturers closed down their businesses. Participants reported high levels of unemployment and crime in this area. Atlantis is commonly regarded by residents and non-residents as dangerous and violent. However, participants also problematized this and argued that it was no more dangerous than other areas in and around Cape Town. Participants also countered the negative narrative of Atlantis with positive attributes saying that they experienced it as a close-knit community where people know about and care about their neighbours.

Oudtshoorn

Situated in the Klein Karoo in the Western Cape, Oudtshoorn is a rural town. At the same time it is an established town as it functions as a successful tourist destination. The participants who SAFFI worked with came from Bongoletu in Oudtshoorn, the township demarcated for black Africans in Apartheid. Similarly to Atlantis, participants here described a close-knit community where everyone knew each other. However, participants from Bongoletu described social ills such as high unemployment, poverty and alcohol abuse as significant problems affecting the

community and most specifically the youth. The community is also clearly divided on racial lines which have been further aggravated by recent political divides⁶.

Participants also explained that the men and boys were absent from the everyday life of the community. Many participants and members in the community who the research team encountered agreed with this and the team commonly witnessed groups of young boys living on the streets and eliciting money. Men and boys were specifically absent in the church. The research team witnessed this first hand as not one man or boy was present in any of the focus groups conducted in Oudtshoorn (this contrasted with the research teams experience in other areas).

It is also important to note here that interviews and focus groups in Oudtshoorn were conducted at a time when a girl in Bongoletu was recently raped and killed by her boyfriend. Some of the participants knew either the boy or girl personally. Participants spoke about this incident as an uncommon occurrence in the area. Although this may or may not be uncommon, participants were able to attach significance to SAFFI's work through this incident.

Khayelitsha

A large, urban township situated on the outskirts of Cape Town. Participants here described the area as diverse in terms of the different ethnicities, cultures and traditions presented through the people living in Khayelitsha. As with the other areas, participants in Khayelitsha described the area as experiencing all the social ills one experiences in society – for example, drugs and alcohol abuse, violence, teenage pregnancy and many others. One of the most significant problems in the participants' opinion was the large amount of shebeens⁷ which occupied spaces in Khayelitsha. They also presented a narrative which dismissed Khayelitsha as solely negative by explaining that residents of Khayelitsha are also pastors, lawyers, and doctors. Furthermore, they explained that there were just as many churches in Khayelitsha as there were shebeens.

2.2. Interviews

For the 10-week support series, six RLs from Atlantis, Oudtshoorn and Khayelitsha were asked to participate. Two RLs came from each respective area. However, one of the RLs from Khayelitsha had to drop out early in the process due to ill health which meant five RLs remained. The RLs from Oudtshoorn also dropped out due to constraints on their time but two other RLs from the area were able to implement the support series. All these RLs had attended the Sensitizer and 5-day trainings, and had demonstrated a key interest in continuing the work with SAFFI.

RLs in these geographic areas were approached as these were communities where SAFFI had a sustained presence over several years and had built up legitimacy with the RLs and some of the faith communities. In terms of implementing the 10-week support series, these three communities also provided three different contexts from which SAFFI could draw learnings

⁶ 2017, Interview with SAFFI Oudtshoorn Project Manager.

⁷ An informal tavern or bar.

and further develop support mechanisms. These five RLs formed part of the study population. However, one RL implemented the help of his wife and another, the help of another pastor – they were involved to such an extent that they too became part of the study population.

Seven RLs from Atlantis, Oudtshoorn and Khayelitsha faith communities who had participated in the Sensitizer, 5-day training and the 10-week series participated in interviews and focus groups. The following RL's were interviewed individually besides Ross and Charmaine, who were interviewed jointly.

The table below details the participants' geographic areas of residence and work, their Christian denomination, their gender and race. SAFFI works with a feminist understanding of gender and race as performed and constructed identities. However, for the purposes of this research, race and gender were also important markers of identity which operate within systems of power and which influence how different people engage with SAFFI's work and the work of GBV. These markers of identity became significant in how participants constructed their experiences and are important in acknowledging the nuances and specificities of what we are learning.

Table B: Overview of RL's Interviewed

Religious Leader	Overview
Lumko	Khayelitsha Pentecostal ⁸ Male Black African ⁹
Ross	Atlantis Pentecostal Male Coloured
Charmaine	Atlantis Pentecostal Female Coloured
Amanda	Atlantis Pentecostal Female Coloured
Mbalo	Oudtshoorn Pentecostal Male Black African
Dorman	Oudtshoorn Pentecostal Male Black African

⁸Pentecostal refers to a broad category of Pentecostal Mission churches (See, Anderson, A 2004, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom).

⁹Black African is used here rather black which used to refer more generally to people of colour.

Nancy	Oudtshoorn Pentecostal Female Black African
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The interviews were semi-structured and questions were guided by four broad themes namely: 1) Early childhood and family life; 2) Marriage and current family life; 3) Their journey as a RL; 4) Their journey with SAFFI.

2.3. Focus Groups

Focus groups were arranged by asking the RL's SAFFI had interviewed to arrange for the research team to meet with 3 to 4 of the members in their churches who had been part of the 10-week series. Focus groups were arranged according to identity groups i.e. Lay leaders, youth and women, as well as by area. Although attempts were made at interviewing an all-male focus group this did not happen. The table below illustrates each focus group and disaggregates it into gender and race (again these markers of identity are used to understand the experiences as shaped by the hierarchies of power and social structures). Where appropriate other markers which shaped participants' experiences or their interactions in the focus group such as age or leadership position are specified.

Table C: Overview of Focus Groups Conducted

Focus Group	Overview
Oudtshoorn Women's Group	7 black African women
Khayelitsha Lay Leader Group	2 black African men 2 black African women This group consisted of two married couples.
Atlantis Youth Group	4 coloured women 7 coloured men 2 of the men were older youth leaders
Oudtshoorn Youth Group	6 black African women 3 were school-going young women and 3 were women ranged between their 20s and late 30s
Atlantis Lay leader Group	3 coloured men (1 of which was a youth leader) 4 coloured women (1 of which was a youth leader)
Oudtshoorn Lay leader Group	8 black African women 1 black African man (he was also a pastor in the church)

Previous research suggests that the use of single identity groups stimulates different dynamics within groups which become useful to understand how experiences become constructed in different settings. Often single identity groups, especially those categorised as vulnerable are often at ease to express their desires and concerns without being labelled in derogatory ways or "corrected"¹⁰. Based on this research, SAFFI conducted focus groups with women, lay leaders and youth separately. This also allowed the research team to explore whether there were any

¹⁰ Pattman, R & Chege, F 2003, "Dear diary I saw an angel, she looked like heaven on earth: Sex talk and sex education", *African Journal of AIDS Research*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 103-112.

differences in the experiences of different groups within the church congregations. Often the content was presented differently in sermons where the whole congregation was involved compared to in women's groups or youth groups. These separated focus groups also helped to compare the different methods in which the content was presented.

Although separating groups according to identity markers such as age and gender picks up on the importance of how people present their identities in different contexts, it is also problematic, as it may reinforce the assumption that categories such as male and female or young and old are essentially different categories, which can explain people's behaviours and opinions¹¹. The research team tried to challenge this by asking questions in the focus group which encouraged participants to think critically about why they were attributing certain behaviours or ideas to assumptions about for example gender.

All focus group discussions began with brief introductions. This was followed by conversations facilitated by the researcher with participants on broad themes relating to: how they would describe their community and church, how the 10-week support series was implemented, what they liked and did not like about the experience.

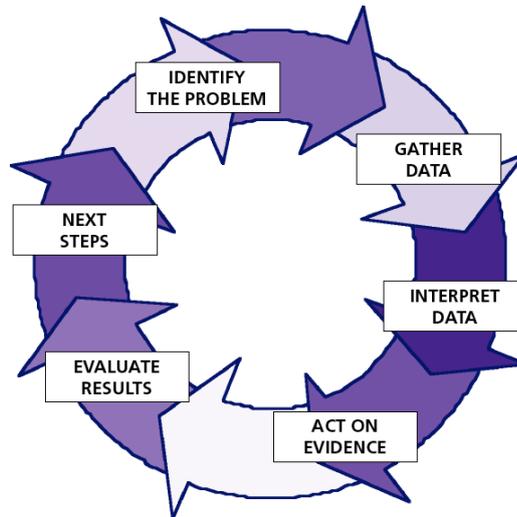
2.4. Implementing an action research approach

In developing and piloting the SAFFI Model, a participatory action model has been adapted. With the piloting of the 10-week support series, this participatory action approach became more intentional. The methodological learnings adopted for this project is guided by the theoretical underpinnings of SAFFI's work, which invites personal and collective healing and transformation through practice. Furthermore, action research provides empirical evidence, based on peoples lived experiences, as a platform from which to deepen and further the work of SAFFI and gender justice interventions more generally.

Action research typically cycles through the following phases: targeting an area of collective interest; collecting, organizing, analysing, and interpreting data; and taking action based on this information¹². Put simply, action research is "learning by doing" - a group of people identify a problem, do something to resolve it, see how successful their efforts were, and if not satisfied, try again. For action researchers, theory informs practice and practice refines theory in a continuous transformation. In any setting, people's actions are based on implicitly held assumptions, theories and hypotheses, and with every observed result, theoretical knowledge is enhanced.

¹¹ Pattman, R & Chege, F 2003.

¹² Calhoun, E 1994, How to use action research in the self-renewing school, ASCD, New York.

Figure 1: Action Research Cycle (2009, Ferrence, pp.9)

One of the most important features of a participatory action research approach lies in the relationship between those conducting the research and those “being researched”. That is, the “subjects” become partners in the research process, and share responsibility for identifying specific problems and applying local, action-oriented strategies¹³. However, participatory means more than simply including participants in the design and implementation of the project. At a more meaningful level it means acknowledging that “human beings [co-create] their reality through participation, experience, and action”¹⁴. This requires a democratic form of communication and interaction in research encounters.

In practice, this meant that SAFFI adopted an interpretive and constructionist paradigm as a basis from which to conduct interviews and focus groups. This is characterized by a belief in a socially constructed, subjectively-based reality influence by historical, cultural and social contexts. This therefore requires a method of engagement which will unlock how participants construct and negotiate their experiences. Adopting this theory means that truth becomes subjective, and therefore the reality of what happened is less important than how participants experienced and remember it. In this light participants are viewed as the experts on their own realities and are seen to be co-producers of knowledge (rather than the researcher being the objective expert). This principle of collaborative research presupposes that each person’s ideas are equally significant as potential resources for creating interpretive categories of analysis, negotiated among the participants. It strives to avoid the skewing of credibility stemming from the prior status of an idea-holder. It especially makes possible the insights gleaned from noting the contradictions both between many viewpoints and within a single viewpoint¹⁵.

These ideas were applied practically in every aspect of the research. Firstly, RLs were included in the development of the 10-week support series, in the adjustments and changes made to the

¹³ Denzin, N & Lincoln, Y 1994, ‘Introduction: Entering the field of qualitative research’, Handbook of Qualitative Research, Sage Publications, London.

¹⁴ Denzin, N & Lincoln, Y 1994, pp. 206; Best, A 2003, Doing race in the context of feminist interviewing: Constructing Whiteness through talk, Qualitative Inquiry, vol. 9, no. 6, pp. 896.

¹⁵ Winter, R 1989, Learning from experience: Principle and practice in action research, Falmer Press, London.

series and in the final analysis of the data. Weekly analysis of the 10-week series took the form of the debriefing sessions where participants could adapt and change the action as well as learn from other RLs in the group. The final group analysis in which staff and RLs and some lay leaders took the form of a research retreat. Preliminary themes were extracted by the research team and were presented to the group and discussed. These conversations shaped which themes are presented in this report and how they are analysed in the discussion.

During interviews and focus groups, participants were treated as the experts on their own lives while the researcher was an interested outsider. The researcher did this by picking up on issues and topics which the participants themselves raised, in response to broad questions. In this way participants were able to set the agenda of the conversation. This promoted relationships with the participants which brought about rich and interesting conversations about the participants' thoughts and experiences which are often taken-for-granted. The interviewer allowed for these assumptions to be critiqued by the participants themselves by asking probing questions which encouraged participants to reflect critically. For example, in the focus group with women in Oudtshoorn, a woman said, "If you say men abuse then maybe men will come then obviously all the women will come and listen to the men". The researcher followed this up by asking "why do you say 'obviously' women would come?" The participant then elaborated, "...women are also curious about what men have to say, obviously because it's always women, when something is about men then they (women) won't even hesitate to go". The researcher probed further by asking, "Are the men not interested in what the women have to say?" and the participant responded by saying, "I don't think so, in my opinion". The entire group agreed when asked whether they agree or disagree. This encouraged participants in the group to talk critically about their perceptions of men and to explain clearly the gender dynamics they were experiencing the community. In this way explanations and assumptions were not presupposed by the research team but produced through the teams encounters with participants.

The researcher asked questions in interviews in ways which encouraged participants to make certain links with their stories and which encouraged participants to think of their experiences in ways which they would not ordinarily do. For example, one RL spoke about how she felt as though she was the odd one out in her family and had a distant relationship with her father who was closer to her other sisters when she was young but that the relationship got better once she was married. The researcher asked, "Do you know why the relationship changed and got better?". She responded, "I can't really say", after thinking she responded, "I was probably a bit stubborn". She then went on to describe in more detail how she was as a young girl, and how she was similar to her father. This change from not knowing, to thinking and then constructing a narrative which might explain why the relationship changed shows how she was encouraged to think of her story and tell her story in ways she would not need to do in ordinary conversation.

In focus groups the spaces created in the research were in themselves ethnographic sites of interaction where the context of the interview/focus group and dynamics between researchers and participants and between participants themselves would construct what was spoken about, how it was spoken about and what was not spoken about. The interviewer was intentional about

asking the group whether they agreed or disagreed with others' responses. Thus, the focus group was not treated as individual interviews happening within a group setting, rather, the group dynamics allowed for a group to co-create knowledge together. These dynamics constitute data in itself and are reflected on in the analysis of the data.

In order to further take into account the dynamic of researcher and individual or group as co-producers of knowledge the researcher and research assistants (who assisted with filming and logistics) answered specific reflection questions straight after each research encounter. These questions were: How did you feel before, during, and after the interview? What were the dynamics in the group/interview? What stood out for you? Were there any similarities and/or differences between this encounter and others?. These reflection pieces made explicit the interpretations, assumptions, judgements or concerns that were made and took account of the context and dynamics in the groups.

The nature of the research embodies a multiplicity of views, commentaries and critiques, leading to multiple possible actions and interpretations. This plural structure of inquiry requires a plural text for reporting. This means that there will be many accounts made explicit, with commentaries on their contradictions, and a range of options for action presented. This report, therefore, acts as a support for ongoing discussion among collaborators, rather than a final conclusion of fact.

III. Data Recording and Analysis

All interviews and focus groups were audio and video recorded with the permission of participants. The researcher also took notes and drew a diagram of the focus group set-up. This made it easier to reflect on the dynamics of the group during analysis.

Findings which emerged from the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), interviews and focus groups were organized into various broad categories. These categories are thematic and took into consideration the contexts in which these themes emerged.

Grounded theory was used in the analysis of the data. Grounded theorists advocate the development of theory from interaction with the research participants¹⁶. Grounded theorists also advocate for simultaneous data collection and analysis. Therefore the debriefing sessions throughout the 10-week series and the evaluation forms throughout the SAFFI model served as an ongoing preliminary analysis of SAFFI's work. Analysis also took place after each research encounter through informal debriefs between the research team and, as mentioned above, through the writing up of self-reflective pieces.

This preliminary analysis helped to shape the way in which the research team conducted interviews and focus groups which followed and enabled the researcher to continuously

¹⁶ Charmaz, K 2004, 'Grounded Theory', in J Smith (ed.), *Grounded Theory: Qualitative Psychology*, Sage Publications, Los Angeles; Strauss, A & Corbin, J 1990, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, Sage Publications, Newbury Park.

interpret and re-interpret M&E and interviews and focus groups with new insights and lenses. This preliminary analysis also formed the basis from which group analysis was conducted with RLs.

3.1. Group Analysis

After all the interviews and focus groups had been conducted and themes had been extracted from the primary and secondary data. A group analysis retreat was conducted.

This collective analysis took place between all SAFFI staff and the RLs as well as some lay leaders who had participated in the research process. The preliminary themes were presented to the group. Groups were then broken up and asked to discuss the following questions: What surprises you about the data? What is missing in the data? What new questions this data lead to? What lessons can we learn from the data?

Doing analysis as a collective again served to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions in the research. It was a creative process in which new insights and reasoning was brought to the table.

3.2. Self-reflexivity

From the outset of the study it is important for the reader to understand the researcher's position and any bias or assumptions that impact the inquiry. SAFFI's research team were mindful throughout the process of their own religious, cultural, racial, gendered and other positional identities. One can never remove oneself from the research but it is important to be conscious of the power dynamics within a research encounter and to create an environment from that which creates a more equal playing field. In some instances this meant that one member of the research team could not be part of the youth focus group, as she was from the community and regarded with respect as a leader, her being in the room may have silenced some of the young people.

The relationship the researcher established with participants was an important part of collecting data, and indeed constitutes data in itself. In the findings and discussion in chapters to follow, the experiences of the research team (based on the reflection notes) within the research encounters are also used as a source of data to understanding how participants construct their identities.

IV. Ethical Considerations

Problems concerning confidentiality and anonymity are addressed in this report by assigning pseudonyms to participants of this research. Therefore connections cannot be made between responses and participants. However, where these connections may be obvious in terms of the context in which quotes or analysis takes place, further permission will be requested from the participant. Furthermore, the names of churches will also be excluded in the report and labelled using a letter of the alphabet in order to maintain the churches' confidentiality.

All participants were thoroughly informed before the interviews and focus groups about the research process and its aims, the procedure and advantages of the study. Participants were not

paid to participate as the research team did not want them to feel coerced into giving answers which pleased SAFFI or which bound them to the process in any way. Participants were also informed that they were able to leave the interview process at any time in the duration of the study without any consequence such as not being able to participate in future SAFFI events or through any actions or behaviours of their RL.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants verbally and in a written format. Informed consent forms are stored separately to other research data so as to not be connected to the specific participants. Only the research team and supervisor have access to the recordings of focus groups and interviews.

Each faith community who participated in the research will be invited to participate in a report back conference and will receive a copy of the findings of the study. SAFFI also ensured that within the research team there was a trained counsellor with experience in dealing with GBV in intimate relationships and other matters.

V. Challenges and Limitations

5.1. Limitations in the analysis of monitoring and evaluation data

SAFFI's monitoring and evaluation forms have varied slightly over the years that SAFFI has been in operation. This means that data has not necessarily been recorded in ways which allow comparisons to be made over time.

The monitoring and evaluation data which includes staff, fieldworkers and observers reports also vary in terms of what has been recorded by different people and sometimes using different forms. Common themes could be extracted from this data, but more nuanced data which analyses the context and dynamics in which the data was produced is largely missing. Although the reliability of what was recorded about certain training are workshops can to some extent be examined for reliability when cross referenced with different staff notes and participants evaluation forms, this is not consistent for all interventions.

Lastly, none of the data from participants' evaluation forms have yet been quantified making it difficult to extrapolate trends in how SAFFI's work impacts people according to race, gender, age, faith, or education level.

Despite these limitations certain themes appeared across the board and the reports from staff and fieldworkers often provided more nuanced analysis of why and how these themes appeared. The more prominent themes which emerged from data often also correlated with the RLs experiences who were interviewed and this provided narrative evidence which could provide examples and context to the existing M&E data.

5.2. Limitations in the participatory action research

The comparison between five faith communities in three locations does not necessarily provide a generalizable sample with which to compare how SAFFI's model was impacted the RLs and faith communities. However, they do provide case studies and empirical evidence on some of the dynamics involved in working with RLs and faith communities on gender justice issues. It

also does demonstrate learnings and opens up new questions which will allow SAFFI to deepen and further its work in the future.

Another limitation was that the research team was limited in its ability to produce egalitarian-type focus group settings. We wanted to prevent lay leaders and RLs from being part of focus groups. This was based on the assumption that having a leader present would cause some self-censorship in the group. Unfortunately in the Atlantis Youth Group, the Khayelitsha Group and the Oudtshoorn Women's Group, leaders were present. The groups seemed to feel free to express their negative experiences, for example one young person said that the programme "was boring" in the presence of their youth leader. There were also moments when the groups did out rightly disagree with their leaders. However, we cannot be sure how much the leaders presence influenced what was being said and more importantly what was not being said. These power dynamics were taken into consideration when analysing the data, and constituted data in itself. Furthermore, as researchers in our own self-reflection we were able to pick up moments of contention and silent disagreements in the group.

The influence of dynamics in the group could also have been influenced by the RLs who were in control of choosing the participants for the focus groups. On one hand this was logistically appropriate as there were realistic time constraints on the project. It was also appropriate in that RLs were acting as co-researchers in the project. However, SAFFI also recognises that RLs may have been selective in who they chose to participate in the focus group. There is also the likelihood that being chosen by the RL could also have influenced what participants chose to say and not say in the focus group. This specifically played out when RLs chose family members or close friends to participate in the focus groups, for example in one focus group when asked whether the RL should change anything about how they did the sermon, his daughter answered while laughing that she could not say anything.

Another limitation to the study was that the interviews and focus groups were conducted either in English or Afrikaans. The mother tongue of some participants however was Xhosa and communicating in a second or third language often influences how stories are told, what meanings are communicated about certain narratives and what stories are not told. One participant communicated this by saying that if the interview was conducted in his home language it would have been different as he could express himself differently in his own language.

Chapter Three: Findings from the Sensitizer and Training

Pre and post activities training questionnaires and evaluations have suggested that the project so far has progressively brought about changes that it set out to achieve. The interviews with RLs were used in conjunction with M&E accounts of RLs' experiences. In many ways the interviews supported the themes which appeared in the M&E data and provided narrative examples and illustrations of what the M&E forms were showing.

I. The Sensitizer Creates Trust and Creates a Consciousness

The sensitizer has been a necessary part of the SAFFI model. It has created a sense of trust and a relationship between the organization and the RLs. Because the geographic areas in which SAFFI worked were often poorer, historically marginalised communities with high levels of unemployment, poverty, crime and other social issues, these communities had been exposed to many NGO's and government programs. Many of which in the opinions of RL's had not done much¹⁷. RL's reported that because of this, they were weary of being part of another process which would, in their opinion, not yield results.

RLs commented that the information they received was new information and the facilitators who presented were knowledgeable and passionate about the content¹⁸. This was reported in all Sensitizers and was further evidenced by the interview with Ross who said "I came to the first session wanting to see if they would offer something that I didn't know and give me stuff which I could actually implement"¹⁹.

Secondly, the Sensitizer creates awareness and inspires a sense of urgency to do something about issues of DV and IPV²⁰. One participant in the Atlantis Sensitizer in 2013 said that it created a "consciousness"²¹. RLs reported that they realised the crucial combination between faith and GBV. Many RLs reported that they now understood that violence happens in the church not only outside²². This awareness and urgency meant that a follow-up training was not forced upon the RLs but rather occurred when requested by participants. In all Sensitizers the M&E indicates that there were requests for more workshops and more information. This buy-in meant that trust was established and a firm ground could be built upon to engage in long term, in-depth training and work in the future.

These workshops acted as catalysts for RLs to become more concerned, committed and dedicated to addressing domestic violence within their faith communities.

¹⁷ 2017, Interview with Ross; 2017, Interview with Amanda; 2017, Interview with Dorman.

¹⁸ SAFFI 2012-2017, Sensitizer evaluations.

¹⁹ 2017, Interview with Ross.

²⁰ This was most explicit in SAFFI 2012, Ceres Sensitizer; SAFFI 2013, Ceres Sensitizer; SAFFI 2013, Strand Sensitizer; SAFFI 2013, Oudtshoorn Sensitizer; SAFFI 2014, Edgemead Sensitizer follow-up report; SAFFI 2014, Atlantis Sensitizer).

²¹ SAFFI 2013, Atlantis Sensitizer.

²² SAFFI 2012, Ceres Sensitizer; 2013, SAFFI Atlantis Sensitizer; 2013, SAFFI Phillipi Sensitizer.

II. Stimulators and Barriers to Learning

Visual learning methodologies proved to be especially useful and striking for participants. A DVD detailing the story of a GBV survivor was commonly used as an example by participants as an important part of the work²³. Other formats of learning such as visual metaphors (such as illustrated by Miriam's story²⁴), group discussions, personal reflections and mini-lectures proved helpful and stimulating for learning and conversation²⁵.

One of the barriers to learning identified by participants was issues of language. When Sensitizers began in 2012, issues of language cropped up for Xhosa speaking RLs. One RL quoted from Nelson Mandela in her evaluation form to express her deep desire to be communicated with in her mother tongue, "to speak to our hearts and not only our minds"²⁶. These requests are demonstrative of an appeal for respect and dignity and would continuously crop up in trainings where the facilitator could not speak the mother tongue²⁷. At the time of writing SAFFI employed staff who, together, could facilitate workshops in English, Afrikaans and Xhosa. However, some of the notes remain available in English only. Further, it is important to note many words used in the trainings such as "patriarchy" do not have direct translations into other languages such as Xhosa and is something which remains a gap for gender work in the African context at grassroots²⁸.

Lastly, language and literacy created barriers in terms of receiving feedback. Written work and evaluation feedback was difficult to receive in cases where participants could not read or write²⁹. This hints at the need to develop new ways of doing M&E³⁰.

III. A Space to Network with the Community and Each Other

One of the intentions of day four of the 5-day training was to expose RLs to other community resources, government and civil society stakeholders committed to working to eradicate GBV and DV. All training evaluations indicated that this exposed RLs to networks within their communities and made them aware of the resources around them.

In one case a participant reported that their confidence in the police's ability was restored through the workshop based on the competence the police offer displayed regarding how South

²³ SAFFI 2012, Bishop Lavis Sensitizer.

²⁴ In this visual learning exercise, the facilitator reads out the life events of a fictional woman called Miriam which is played by a volunteer who sits on a chair in the centre of the group. Eight life events are read out. Each event is an example of how Miriam is abused, denied help or where she receives messages with religious undertones which excuses the abuse she receives. To illustrate the impact of each life event on Miriam, another volunteer throws a blanket over the Miriam volunteer. The facilitator then reads out eight ways in which Miriam was helped by those around her. With each of these, participants are asked to remove one of the blankets from Miriam. A discussion is then facilitated with the group.

²⁵ James, A 2013, Oudtshoorn Training Report; James, A 2014a, Khayelitsha Training Report; James, A 2014b, Atlantis Training Report.

²⁶ SAFFI 2012, Strand Sensitizer.

²⁷ SAFFI 2014, Bredarsdorp Sensitizer; James, A 2014a.

²⁸ 2017, Interview with SAFFI Facilitator.

²⁹ SAFFI 2014, Oudtshoorn Training.

³⁰ SAFFI 2014, Oudtshoorn Training.

African Police Service (SAPS) is able to assist with GBV³¹. In an interview with Pastor Ross he said that made connections with the court and the Department of Social Development (DSD), “now I know who to contact if something happens”³².

Amanda: We cannot do the work of the police, we cannot do the work of other institutions. We work on the faith side of the person but the other institutions...social services work on the social issues and so on...

Feedback from fieldworkers also indicates that the trainings provided an opportunity for RLs to network across denominations³³. In areas such as Atlantis and Oudtshoorn and partly as a result of historical racial segregation and inter-denominational church politics, many Pentecostal churches worked in isolation of others. The trainings presented RLs with a chance to come together around a common cause. The Religious Leaders Forums on GBV in Atlantis and Oudtshoorn, also serve as a platform for RLs to collectively work against GBV/DV/IPA. So much so that Oudtshoorn group has shown interest in coming together around other issues facing the country and the churches³⁴. This created with the RLs a sense that they are not alone.

IV. Increased awareness and deeper knowledge and DV inspires action

Based on the evaluation forms, all sensitizers and training workshops were credited by participants as imparting useful new knowledge and enhancing the knowledge RLs already had. Participants would often cite knowledge of the DV act, the cycle of violence and the types of DV as important content which they received. Participants described the sessions as an “eye opener”³⁵, as providing a “deeper understanding to what causes violence and the different forms it can take”³⁶. Expressions such as “SAFFI took the veil off” demonstrate the common occurrence of participants reporting that a deeper awareness of the issue of DV/IPA was created³⁷.

In all one on one interviews with RLs in 2017 they reported that SAFFI comes alongside RLs to increase their existing knowledge. The excerpts below give four examples of how RLs described this.

Lumko: I was just preaching from my experience of my family. Then when I came to SAFFI...then I see, and my eyes get opened wider than before...now I know exactly, I know where the cycle of violence starts. Now that strengthened more my preaching.

Mbalo: SAFFI opened my eyes. I am a trained pastor. But SAFFI showed me something which I never really had on my mind, or I didn't really care about. After that first training which took place for a whole week...there was a lot of things that helped me for example

³¹ SAFFI 2014, Khayelitsha training summary report.

³² 2017, Interview with Ross.

³³ 2017, Interview with Fieldworker.

³⁴ 2017, Interview with Oudtshoorn Programme Manager.

³⁵ SAFFI 2014, Zonnebloem Youth Sensitizer.

³⁶ SAFFI 2012, Bishop Lavis Training.

³⁷ SAFFI 2014, Atlantis Training follow-up report.

the governments laws and your rights (referring to the Domestic Violence Act), that's something new that I never really knew.

Dorman: SAFFI made me more advanced. I did things out of experience but SAFFI gives me more [knowledge about] the law. Because I didn't go into much depth from the laws side...SAFFI makes me a more knowledgeable person.

Amanda: ...we didn't know how to handle some of the things, because as a faith leader you would never tell someone to go to the police station. You will say let's just pray about it, especially with m, I will tell people just pray, pray. But there are certain things you need to do, the program really taught me about those things...sometime we need to take bold steps.

Follow-up reports with trained RLs showed that this knowledge and awareness of DV/IPA and its intricacies inspired many RLs to action. Various RLs from 2012 till 2015 reported that they were advocating for change in the spaces where they have influence. RLs reported preaching with deeper insight, intervening in situations where they have suspected DV, being able to offer more informed pastoral /spiritual care to women and families who are afflicted by GBV, arranging conferences and speaking opportunities among their church networks and denominations, spreading information about DV/IPA to wider audiences. One RL encouraged an aspiring priest to focus on GBV as part of his theological training and assisted him in this process. Further, one of the Oudtshoorn RLs began to work in a local community-based GBV program as a community development worker / counsellor³⁸.

There were also requests by some RL's that SAFFI could further go into certain areas of knowledge to expand existing knowledge. One RL specifically mentioned professional counselling and dealing with the perpetrator as areas which she would appreciate more training³⁹.

V. The Concern about the Focus on Women Abuse

Throughout the trainings there was a constant concern, often although not exclusively from male RLs, to talk about abused men. In all trainings, apart from two, there was concern expressed that SAFFI was only talking about women abuse.

This could be linked to the evidence in evaluation forms which shows that although knowledge on DV/IPA had increased, in many trainings attitudes and beliefs towards traditional norms of gender binary identities remained either in-tact or were reinforced. For example in one training, more participants agreed after training that a women should obey her husband⁴⁰. It is clear then that the SAFFI training did not challenge stereotypes around gender roles .

³⁸ Ismail, F & Petersen, E 2013.

³⁹ 2017, Interview with Amanda.

⁴⁰ James, A 2013; James, A 2014a.

VI. Reflection on Their Own Lives

A common result of the sensitizer and trainings was that it would often bring about self-reflection for participants. In the Strand Sensitizer in 2012 participants spoke about how the case study, Miriam's story, which depicts how a woman being abused might feel, reminded them of their sisters and mothers who they had seen go through abuse without receiving any help⁴¹. In another sensitizer in Atlantis in 2014 one RL spoke about her sister's suicide which was the result of being abused by her husband. At the same workshop another RL communicated her fear that her son would become like her abusive husband⁴². Some RLs even identified themselves as abusers as one man claimed, "I realised I am an abuser"⁴³.

These personal revelations surface feelings of anger and hurt in some cases⁴⁴ and healing and empowering for others⁴⁵.

In interviews with RLs this also consistently came up as a result of the trainings in the RLs lives. One RL spoke about how exposure to the trainings and knowledge had influenced how her husband had treated her son. She also shared an experience of abuse of her daughter.

Amanda: I never shared this with anybody. My husband has a son, but it's not my son. My oldest daughter was nine years old and one night she came to us and said he (the son) wanted to have intercourse with her. And, sho (expression of exasperation), that was the time of our lives...even that situation in our house, I never looked at it that way but SAFFI opened that thing up to me. We didn't do anything at that time, we just took her to the doctor and the doctor said no there was no intercourse nothing but we have to take him out of the house. That's all we didn't. We didn't take her for counselling, we didn't do anything, she just had to deal with it on her own. And she was young, because we did not recognise how this thing was...a huge thing happening there.

Noticeably, the one majority white group which SAFFI worked with in Edgemoor/Parow was the only group to not speak about their personal experiences. They tended to speak about stories of people they knew, but not close family members or friends, and sought to engage with the practical steps rather than personal stories and personal effects of abuse⁴⁶. Although this is not a generalizable finding it does give some insight into how race, culture and other social identifications intersect and influence training and workshop spaces. This is further problematized in the discussion.

VII. Working Inter-Faith and Intra-Faith

Findings from the M&E data show that working across faiths and even intra-faith but between denominations can present certain challenges for facilitators and RLs.

⁴¹ SAFFI 2012, Strand Sensitizer.

⁴² SAFFI 2014, Atlantis Sensitizer.

⁴³ SAFFI 2012, Bishop Lavis Training.

⁴⁴ SAFFI 2013, Strand Sensitizer.

⁴⁵ James, A 2014a; SAFFI 2014, Oudtshoorn Training; SAFFI 2014, Atlantis Training.

⁴⁶ SAFFI 2014, Edgemoor/Parow Sensitizer.

In many of the trainings the interest in discussions of scripture were plainly asserted by RLs in the post-training evaluations. Scribes in the Oudtshoorn training in 2014 noted that RLs were especially engaged in the conversations around scripture and interpretations of scripture largely stemming from their different denominational and doctrinal backgrounds. In this particular workshop the discussion seemed to become tense to the extent that, in order to continue, the facilitator had to get participants to agree on certain guidelines for interpreting scripture rather than getting them to agree to the same interpretations. However, in most trainings there was also a sense of Christian community which was created between the participants as they sang and prayed together and sometimes revealed quite personal stories.

SAFFI's work in training settings has thus far been limited to Christian RLs. However, in acknowledging that SAFFI is a multi-faith organisation and would want to work with different faith leaders it is important to consider how this work could be translated to different faiths and how trainings would look in inter-faith settings. In the week 4 debrief of the 10-week support series, the topic of interfaith came up and RLs were asked whether they would engage in these topics with RLs representing other faiths. RLs responded that they could not be put under one blanket with other faiths and that such an approach would lead to "chaos"⁴⁷.

Regardless of the nature of the presumptions behind these statements, it does indicate that there is a resistance or cautiousness from some RLs to working across faiths and even across denominations. This is an area of work which SAFFI has not yet explored in detail within a training setting as part of the SAFFI Training Model, but it opens up questions and considerations for facilitating training in both inter-faith and intra-faith settings. Consultations and exploration about such training programs being implemented with Muslim, Hindu, Jewish and other religions revealed that each religion has its own unique challenges and approaches in dealing with issues relating to GBV/DV/IPA and that there is a tendency to keep such issues close and within the home and the religion. Even in instances when some SAFFI facilitators were from religions other than Christian they informed that different strategies are necessary to reach into the other faiths. SAFFI decided to pilot the Training Model within the readily accessible Christian faith communities at this stage.

⁴⁷ SAFFI 2017, 10-week Support Series Week 4, Debrief Notes.

Chapter Four: Findings from the 10-Week Support Series

This chapter is divided into two sections, the first reports the findings based on what RLs communicated regarding their experience of the 10-week support series. The second section is based on what congregants communicated regarding their experiences of the 10-week support series within their contexts. The findings of the congregant's experiences are not removed from the contexts of the congregations and the contexts and dynamics evident within the focus groups. Therefore these findings are presented based on a reflection and analysis not only of what was being said but also how it was said, what was not said, and on the body language and dynamics between participants.

I. Experiences of Religious Leaders

1.1. Why RLs commit to furthering the work of GBV and DV intervention

Based on the life history interviews done with RLs it seems as though their motivation for being committed to the process of the SAFFI model and for furthering the work can be divided into three reasons: 1) a personal history of experiencing or witnessing abuse, 2) a responsibility of the church to the community and 3) challenging the norms within their larger community.

Personal history of experiencing or witnessing abuse:

Two men of the six RLs spoke about a personal history of witnessing or experiencing abuse or absent as a child. They spoke about these not as a direct response to a question about abuse, but rather brought it up in response to the more general question of, "describe your family growing up".

Lumko: Before I married, I looked at my father. My fathers supposed to be my model, but I looked at my father for what he was doing to his wives and...because he was beating his wives very badly. When he did the oldest wife, then the youngest wife, although she did nothing to him, then she must go away otherwise when he is finished with that one, he is coming to the younger one, if he started with the younger one then he would go to the older one. So something I said [to myself], when I am married, I will never lay a hand to my wife. I will never do that.

Ross: Those people who are angels in church but when they get home, they are devils. My father was person like that. Till I stood up to him one day and said, till here [and no further], we serve God here and if we serve God, be an example. And the decision I made there, if God gives me a partner, then God must help to never make my partner run around. And as a child then you must go lay down to sleep and wonder, is he going to come in? Is he going to wake us up from our sleep? Is he going to chase us around again? So I grew up with fear.

Interestingly, the RLs who spoke about these negative experiences, without prompting would also reconcile their relationships with their fathers. Both men began by describing their fathers as abusive or "the devil", but through telling the researcher about their childhood or marriage would speak about how their father changed, or how their father was not all bad. Both men used their experiences as a lesson for their own marriages, saying they decided before they

were married that they would never be abusive. They also connected their relationships with their parents to their religious beliefs and identity. Ross explained that his father changed because Ross, who identified his role in his family as the leader set apart by God, was able to confront him, pray for him and show him a better way. RL Lumko spoke about some of the good he could take away from his father, but also the lessons he learnt and how because Lumko was Christian, unlike his father⁴⁸, he would do better.

Research shows that exposure to violence as a child can lead to them becoming perpetrators of violence. However, this research shows that in some cases people have made meaning out of their experiences and in these cases particularly through the use of religious belief and identity. There is therefore scope to use experiences of abuse and neglect in conjunction with ideas of reconciliation, as a possible means to encourage change.

These experiences were spoken about in relation to how they view their own marriages and family lives and in terms of their commitment to making family life better for those with whom they work.

Responsibility of the Church to the Community:

Three of the pastors spoke about how they see their role as a RL, and the church more generally, as having an important role to play in the community. Lumko spoke about how, before he was a Pastor, he worked with the street committee. This experience showed him the extent of violence taking place within his community. Although it wasn't the norm, when he became a Pastor he decided that his congregation should be part of the community. He understood his role as a Pastor as connecting with the community. Similarly, Dorman spoke about his roles as a RL as "Serving the community" and Ross spoke about himself as a "father of the community" not just of his family.

These descriptions of service and dedication were described as motivators for the RLs dedication to what they do. They spoke about this as the reason they get up at any time of the night to help someone out in the community. It seemed to be a source of deep pride for many of the RLs who seemed to take pleasure in recalling some of the times they went out of their way to be able to help someone in the community. Often, the interview itself was surrounded by an element of the RLs being needed by others as phone calls would frequently go off, RLs would have to excuse themselves briefly from the interview to attend to an urgent phone call or the interview would begin by them saying that they had just come from a private engagement. This sense of "busyness" in the community, was deeply attached to their understanding of their work in their church and community as "a calling". This vocational

⁴⁸ Interestingly Lumko did mention that his father was Anglican (a denomination of Christianity). For Lumko and other black African RL's it seemed that being saved and Christian was equated with being part of a Pentecostal Church. Those in their families who belonged to Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches were not seen as saved and were spoken about as those who still participate in "traditional" practices and who drank alcohol or smoked cigarettes.

Challenging the norms within their larger community:

Five of the seven RL's spoke about their motivation to challenging the norms within their society within talking about their role as RLs in combating GBV. Two of the women spoke about their own experiences of traditional gender norms imparted by their church which they experienced as oppressive and without merit. For example Nancy explains,

Nancy: I wanted to know what's going on in the Bible. You know our church has so many rules. The pants, the head (referring to a head covering), the earrings, our church has so many rules so I wanted to go to Bible school so they can explain what is actually going on.

Nancy's involvement with SAFFI was another way in which she could work towards understanding and deconstructing these norms.

Three of the male RLs spoke about not ascribing to gender roles in their family lives. They spoke about this in response to the researcher's broad question, "tell me a bit about your family?". They referenced their childhood experiences and how they recall being treated in the same ways as their siblings regardless of gender.

Lumko: My mother said, I've got no boy in my house, I've got no girl in my house. I've got children in my house. I was doing everything with my sisters, there was not the work of boy and girl. That's how we treat our children, the same.

One RL spoke about wanting to replicate their parents' marriage but doing it better by not being restricted to gender norms. Dorman said that he replicated his parents' marriage, in the sense that he felt they loved and respected each other. However, he also said that he did it "better" because he helps his wife with what is conventionally considered feminine tasks such as cooking and cleaning. This was unlike his father who never entered the kitchen or the children's rooms. Thus the work of cooking and disciplining and caring for the children was his mother territory.

1.2. Types of Implementation and Leadership

All seven RLs employed different methods of implementing the 10-week support series. Ross and Charmaine worked together in delivering the messages of the sermons. They would prepare each of the themes together and would take turns in preaching different topics. They chose this method partly out of convenience, so that someone could take over if one was too sick or busy. And partly they felt that they needed to do it as a couple in a leadership in order for the messages to have credibility. In many cases those who wanted follow-up individual sessions would request to meet with the couple together.

Dorman is in the process of handing over his local church responsibilities to Nancy. Nancy carried over many of the sermons however she only began her training with SAFFI while she was implementing the series. The research team was not able to reliably measure the extent to which this affected how sermons and messages were communicated. However, the research

team agreed that the understandings of DV and GBV communicated by this congregation and by the RL was not as clear as others. However, a number of causal factors could be attributed to this.

Amanda chose to partner with a few of her church leaders. One church leader was especially involved as she had also attended SAFFI trainings and Amanda felt she was well equipped to do the sermons. However, if Amanda felt that a particular leader would be quite knowledgeable about a particular theme or topic, she would then ask a different leader to do that theme.

Lumko chose to deliver all the sermons by himself. This was because his church already had themes around which their messages were to be structured. Lumko therefore had to fit the support series themes into the themes of his church. He also felt as though because he had the training of SAFFI he could carry the message over more effectively and responsibly than if he had to give it to any of his leaders.

Mbalo also went the route of delivering all the sermons himself. He felt that if another leader or Pastor was carrying over messages about DV, which was very personal in nature. This close knit community means that everyone knows the details of everyone else's personal lives. Therefore if another member of the leadership or congregation had to carry over this controversial message, there would be doubt about why this person was carrying the message across. This person was judging the others or was thinking they were better than others. This was echoed by the congregants of the church who said

Oudtshoorn female (youth group): "when a leader is standing there, we are all ears because it is our leader. But if a leader picks a young one (to preach)...we will say oh, you see, we will say ah she does that and that and that, you see, because we saw her in that place and she was abused now she's better than us. You see its better if a leader, someone we know and someone who we trust".

Researcher: So it would be difficult for someone in the congregation...

Oudtshoorn female (youth group): Ya, because we are going to judge that person because we are staying here and we know what that person is doing and then it's easy for us to just not listen...

1.3. Importance of Fieldworkers and Staff who Could Provide Continuous Support

RL's reported that the process of implementing the 10-week series was made easier not only by the weekly debriefings which SAFFI arranged but also by the presence of fieldworkers and staff working within certain communities. Charmaine said that it was easy to clear up any theme they struggled with because of the good relationship she had with the fieldworker. RL's also reported that the staff in Oudtshoorn proved to be a valuable source of input, clarification, and for bouncing off ideas.

1.4. Difficult and taboo topics

RLs spoke about the difficulty in talking about themes which dealt with divorce and incest, this was often in relation to the themes which dealt with the Biblical story of Tamar and Amnon. Themes on marriage and divorce brought about a deep awareness regarding the significance of marriage and why people get married. This was discussed extensively in debriefings. The topic of divorce seemed to be an important topic for pastors personally. In the debrief they seemed to speak about their own experiences with their children and within their church.

These topics also began a discussion amongst SAFFI staff and RLs regarding of the importance of pre-marital counselling. This eventually led to SAFFI developing and training RLs in pre-marital counselling.

One RL spoke about how difficult it is to spread the message to other churches which form part of his denomination. He struggled to deliver the message to other RLs who view topics of gender, GBV, and sex as taboo and as topics exclusively aimed at women.

Khayelitsha female (lay leader group): ...you see in our branches there is still a lack (of talking about DV)...so I think in more rural areas they [know about] physical violence so when we have to preach about sexual violence you find out that, uhm, they are church leaders, I don't know how they do it, but you find that they are so ashamed, so embarrassed like it's something dirty that is not supposed to be done in church.

Although topics surrounding GBV and DV are still considered taboo in many contexts, especially rural contexts, RL's also noted that the support series allowed them to talk about topics which they would not ordinarily feel they could speak about.

Mbalo: SAFFI actually [pressured] me to talk about things which I was shy about. When I got the SAFFI material I felt that it's easy for me...at church I would start with SAFFI's stuff and then I would ask if they understand it and if they have questions before I started my own program because I got scared, I must be honest, the church has its own way of doing things. And I [asked myself] must I do this because later on the people will feel...and they can make that I finish (referring to not being Pastor of the church anymore), because I'm not the owner of the church...So it helped me a lot because I mentioned things that I wouldn't of normally because when you stand up there you can't just say anything, even if it's true, you must know the manner in which you must carry it over. Even if it says so in the Bible, you must know the way...

Interestingly, the RLs experienced that once they had spoken about these difficult themes and topics which are often avoided in the church, a space was created for congregants to begin to ask more difficult questions and engage differently with scripture. Excerpts from the researcher's conversations with Dorman and Lumko evidence this.

Researcher: Was there any themes which you noticed your congregation was uncomfortable with?

Dorman: I think the one, the story about Tamar. That one was a bit painful...so I heard they were commenting about this thing of Tamar. If you normally talk about the Bible it wouldn't be the case that people ask you things but now you heard...they would ask you more about that sort of thing. That's to say people began to understand what this thing is about. For example in the story, there was someone that knew what was happening and they kept it a secret, that bothered the people and they asked why, something they would never have asked before. But their understandings widened, their eyes were opened.

The lay leaders went on to explain to me that in English the Bible contains the word prostitute in the scripture related to Amnon. In the isiXhosa Bible the word is seen as a swear word which they described as “very rude” and equivalent to the word bitch. The lay leaders explained that this shocked the congregation, opened up discussions and persuaded some so interrogate what the Bible says. Lumko explained how this opened up a discussion with his own daughters, who asked him to “sit down with them and explain”.

It seems then that in the experiences of the RL's SAFFI's support series encouraged them to talk about topics they would ordinarily avoid talking about. But at the same time these difficult topics opened up new conversations in their congregations.

1.5. Binary notions of gender remain in tact

In terms of beliefs and attitudes related to gender norms, the interviews and encounters with RLs echo the findings of the M&E. The research team found that traditional notions of gender remained intact in the speech and behaviours the research team encountered. When speaking about their experiences of their mothers, wives and husbands many of the RLs used gender normative language to explain why certain things happened the way they did. For example, Charmaine, a Pastor's wife, explained to the researcher how she could intervene with women seeking counselling in their marriages.

Charmaine: Sometimes the women are just as guilty and then you must also ask, what did you do? Like with children you can ask, you are coming to cry now but what did you do? And this is what we can ask the women as well. Remember God expects you to also act in a certain way. How do you answer them (the husband or partner)? Lots of women think if the husband did something then they say, “I'm not going to make him food”, “I'm not going to wash his clothes”, then we can tell them no must still do your part as a wife.

By resorting to traditional gendered roles to explain the role of the wife and husband in a relationship, Charmaine treads on the grounds of victim-blaming which could be a potentially damaging way of dealing with victims of abuse. Similarly a Pastors wife in Oudtshoorn echoed these sentiments,

Mrs Dorman: The women, especially the young ones like to abuse their men. When the man gets home, the food isn't made, there's not water ready for him to wash with, his clothes aren't ready for him, now what must the man do, he is going to look for a wife that can do these things for him. When your husband comes home his clothes must be

there, his water to wash himself must be there, his Bible must be there, everything must be there.

Researcher: So Mrs Dorman was saying a lot of women abuse their husbands, would you (to the group) agree with that?

Nancy: Ya there is women that abuse their husbands. The younger ones don't understand yet...because the young ones sometimes they learn things...

Mrs Dorman: From the wrong people then they do it in their homes with their husbands.

Nancy: It isn't a necessity that husbands must wash clothes (agreement from the group), it isn't a necessity that husbands must wash dishes (agreement from the group)...now the other women are looking for fifty-fifty, and fifty-fifty doesn't always work.

Dorman, when describing his wife, also resorted to gender stereotypical language to explain why he chose her to be his wife.

Dorman: She's a person that is obedient and humble and neat. She isn't a person that's negligent. If something needs to be done today, she won't leave it till tomorrow. She is strong with the children and with the house.

Researcher: And that fits with you as a pastor?(referring back to this phrase he had used earlier in the interview)

Dorman: It's suits me as a husband. And for the work of the Lord.

Interestingly, earlier in the interview he distanced himself from “traditional” gender norms by explaining that he does work in the house which is seen as women’s work, for example cooking and cleaning. However, the gender binary still seemed to be used in the language he used to describe an obedient, humble and neat women (reminding the researcher of the biblical reference to a submissive wife).

It is important to state here that SAFFI is not arguing that to ascribe to traditional gender norms is in itself harmful. However, in preliminary analysis the findings do indicate that there may be a link between ascribing to these gender binaries and the impact it has on how men are drawn into conversations about GBV/DV/IPA. In general the research found that men and boys did not see the topics and themes as applicable to their lives.

It is also important to note here that “traditional” gender norms were not fixed in the language and experiences of all RLs or congregants. The place of women in the church leadership was also continuously pointed out as a significant part of the RL’s wives and women in general in the congregations. The notions of women with strength and leadership sometimes parallel more traditional notions of women as humble, meek and obedient. For example, Dorman also referred to his wife as someone who was firm and strict with the church leadership and as

someone who was able to lead a Bible study, the choir or any activity in the life of the church. He also praised her for being an ordained Pastor and therefore a leader in her own right.

Notions of gender are complex and require in-depth understanding. In the discussion a more critical look at what traditional gender binaries might mean for doing work around GBV and DV with RLs is debated.

II. Experiences of Congregants Engaging in the 10-Week Support Series

2.1. Methodologies and Approaches in Sermons and Other Ministries

All the RLs in some way or another put their own spin on the themes given to them. Four of the seven RLs said that they included their own scriptures into those that were given so as to make for a fuller message. Lay leaders who needed to carry the message over also said that they would often use their own stories or stories which they knew to get the point across, to form trust between the leader and the group⁴⁹.

Similarly to the sensitizer and training, all focus groups reported the strong impact that visual tools had on the sermons. Different participants in all focus groups would continuously refer positively to “the cups” when asked the question, “how was the 10-week series for you”. The quote from the Khayelitsha group illustrates,

Khayelitsha female (lay leader group): The breaking of cups, shu, it was touching, it was touching, I'm telling you. You know sometimes in the church you see people are [walking] up and down and others are bored, playing with their phone. But that one was touching, people were just sitting and silently listening to the sermon and everyone, if you look in their eyes you can see the sorrow, you can see the sadness...It was sad, but it contained a lot of teaching within it. I remember it very clearly, it was silent in church when he was doing that (referring to the cups demonstration) and everyone was just listening.

Some RLs also tried to make the sermons a more interactive experience not only through using visual illustrations but through asking questions and creating a more participatory environment in the sermon itself. However, for some of the Atlantis lay leaders, this interactive environment was not appropriate for a sermon, which they understood to take more of lecture or teaching dynamic where one person speaks and teaches and the others listen.

2.2. Approaches to Working with Youth

In three of the five congregations, the youth group specifically gathered separately to the congregation around the various support series themes. In one congregation in Atlantis the youth leader simply read out the themes as was given by SAFFI. In her experience the young people got quite bored and she wanted further instructions on how to make the lesson youth friendly.

Atlantis female (lay leader group): The youth found it very exciting in the beginning, they were very excited...but later on, they began to ask, must we do this every week? And for

⁴⁹ 2017, Atlantis Lay Leaders Focus Group.

them it became boring for them, or not boring, but they didn't find it interesting anymore because young people like action, they like fun.

In another congregation in Atlantis, the youth leader took it upon himself to adapt the themes to be more youth friendly. He explains,

Atlantis male (lay leader group): With the SAFFI thing I tried to think out of the box. I tried to make them more part of the whole thing, then I don't do much of the work. So I bunch them up into groups and see what they come up with ideas, how do they feel. Because, like Sister said, they aren't much interested, they start to get bored in a way, so I try my best to keep them as interested as possible because I don't want to lose them at the end of the day.

This youth leader went on to describe how he asked the youth to come up with their own solutions to some of the DV issues discussed. He also shared that he would often use his own personal experiences to make some of the lessons clearer. Another lay leader responded to this by saying that she had also had success in using her personal story to illustrate certain points,

Atlantis female (lay leader group): And when we look back at the SAFFI program we would always say yes, this is what I experienced and this is how I can help now. So I can actual give first-hand experience or feedback.

For these lay leaders, this proved to be a strategy which allowed young people to open up more about their own personal experiences and which lay leaders felt built stronger, more personal relationships between themselves and their youth groups. The only other congregation that had a dedicated youth group to go through the themes was one in Oudtshoorn. Youth leaders as well as the Pastor did these lessons. They described the sessions as interactive and the Pastor said that it made the Bible in general more accessible to the young people.

Based on the experiences of leaders it was clear that interactive and participatory approaches worked better in engaging youth in the topics of conversation. Youth themselves also shared that the interactive youth sessions were more enjoyable than the sermon setting which is normally a lecture-style approach.

2.3. Who was impacted?

Congregants reported that the topics really impacted those who could personally relate to the topics of GBV and abuse.

For example one woman in Atlantis spoke about how it impacted her,

Atlantis female (lay leader group): I had a relationship with my husband where I just had to listen to what he said I must do, he is the head of the house, I would ask can I go here, then it's said to no, that's how I grew up. But after SAFFI I felt like no this isn't because you care about me this is domination. And I'm going to say it now, you (to the group) can gossip if you want, but it made me feel like I'm nothing, I'm a servant. Where's my worth? You feel like a servant and like you are just good enough to do that and nothing further.

When SAFFI came in I learnt who I am and where my value is. And now that I want to apply it.

One young girl conveyed that,

Atlantis female (youth group): ...my father, I think because of the death of my mother, started drinking and drugs and all that stuff. We were first passed to the social worker but me and my two brothers went to my grandmother but she (her older sister) was with my father...eventually he started abusing her, throwing bricks at her and all that type of stuff. That was a few years back and I never really took note of it or took it seriously but the SAFFI program made me see the bigger picture. We don't take it so seriously but if you have to put yourself in that persons shoes and just imagine what it was like for them and how you would wanted to be treated if it happened to you, it just makes you see the bigger picture.

Another woman in Oudtshoorn reported:

Oudtshoorn female (women's group): When the Pastor broke the cups and it was on the floor I felt something. Because I was in that situation, you see, when someone breaks your heart and you can't put the pieces together. You are already damaged inside and then you just need to ask God to be with you and help you all the way and get out of that.

However, there was a strong reaction especially from some of the youth that this topic didn't really apply to them

Atlantis male (youth group): I didn't really pay attention in church. In youth it was more fun to work in teams, [even though] the actual topic wasn't that interesting.

Atlantis male (youth group): Some people who could relate to it more personally took it more seriously than others.

A common reaction from men and boys was that they felt excluded from the topics because the focus was on women. This topic was largely viewed as one which only applied to women being abused, or women who could be abused. The reactions of some of the Atlantis youth males evidence this.

Atlantis male (youth group): It was like, other people do that, I'm never going to abuse my wife so this isn't for me.

Atlantis male (youth group): So we did the whole abuse thing with the man and the women so one of the boys stood up and said but women also abuse men (some of the group agrees) and so he started a debate in the whole youth. Because now the girls say, "yes but you men do this", and so I was sitting with a debate and I was in the middle of the debate...but I understood him because it's not always that the man abuses the women, sometimes women abuse their men. Sometimes you abuse someone verbally without you being aware that it's abuse...but this really impacted them and they differed on a lot of topics because

they felt but the women are being advantaged, everything is just focused on the women but they don't see us...the women are just right and all the men are just wrong all the time.

This was a common reaction from men, boys and some women in the focus groups. Many of the RLs interviewed also spoke about the difficulty they had in getting young boys and men to be involved in the support series. Two RLs also expressed that they experienced difficulty getting their own sons and male members of their families to show interest and participate in the series.

Only one male out rightly challenged this thought pattern in the focus group.

Atlantis male (youth group): if you want the church to be a sanctuary of healing, you have to be more broad on the topics you cover.

Atlantis male (youth group): I would say for me the topics were one hundred percent because if you look in the church then 90% of the church is women...to be honest a lot of women are being abused because men feel that, I am the man, you are the woman. I must on top, you must be at the bottom and a lot of men can't accept the turn...a lot of men must get that mentality right because that is what causes the conflict because the man wants to be right and the woman must just go with it...that will help us to move forward. Because 90% of the church is women, we must concentrate on them because that's what will take the church forward...

Atlantis male (youth group): What he is saying is right but he is older than all of us sitting here, so he will understand better so I will say if you can interact more with the young people...they won't understand as quickly as he does.

2.4. Created a space of hope and healing

Based on focus group discussion, there was a common theme in all groups that the series created a perception of the church as a place of hope and the RLs as people who could provide healing. RLs and congregants commonly communicated that the support series made them see the church as a place which could deal with the realities of what they were experiencing in their personal lives and communities. Two quotes from women in Atlantis illustrate this perception.

Atlantis female (lay leader group): I thought about it and I thought, yoh, this is what the church needs...Just that inner healing...this is what we need as Christians, we know the Bible, we know what we must do, we know everything that's expected of us, but did we know what value is in me...we invited people from outside to come listen...and we also must always act like everything's okay but this is what we need, something real and practical

Atlantis female (lay leader group): No other churches would talk about violence in the church on Sunday because we are so caught up in how church must be and here we spoke about violence and abuse on a Sunday and it was scratching things open.

This was evident in all focus groups but Atlantis specifically spoke about the ways in which the support series was effective in drawing in people who were not part of the church membership to its services. These were often people who were experiencing DV or some sort of abuse in their own lives. In one church lay leaders actively went out to invite others in the community who they knew were experiencing DV to attend the sermons. The other church in Atlantis had access to media platforms where they spread the news that DV and GBV were the topics of the series being run in their church and they said that this attracted one or two new visitors from other towns who came to seek help.

RLs became resources for counselling and dealing with cases of DV and IPA not only for their own congregations, but for their communities. For example, Ross explained that since beginning the support series he has become known as someone who can intervene in DV situations and has been called upon to help victims from outside his church and even from different faiths to counsel and intervene. In Khayelitsha and Oudtshoorn the RLs also found themselves intervening in cases of DV in the community.

In Khayelitsha there seemed to be a specific intention by the RL to create a wider group of “go-to” persons. The lay leaders said that Lumko had shared the resources and information which he received from SAFFI with them, so that they could also be equipped to preach and speak about issues of DV/IPA⁵⁰.

These findings show that the churches and RLs were becoming resources to prevent and combat DV not only for their faith communities but for the wider community as well. However, it was also clear that it seemed to be mostly be women who had experienced DV or IPA that saw the church and RLs as a place of hope and healing. Between the RLs only two instances could be recalled when a perpetrator came for help, and in both cases this was only once their partners had also come forward.

2.5. Different spaces for healing

One of the findings based on congregants’ experiences was that there was a need for different spaces for healing which followed on from the sermons preached. In many cases, especially young people, spoke about how the sermons and youth lessons had exposed old wounds and reminded them of painful experiences in their past.

Oudtshoorn female (lay leader group): I got flashbacks of what happened to my cousin. So ya, but ya I also felt good because I learnt why it happen. So I got had answers for the questions that I had and I knew the solutions. So for me it was a good experience.

The youth groups communicated that sometimes it would only open wounds but they lacked a space to look for help thereafter. Although the RLs often did communicate to their congregations that they were available for individual follow-up sessions, there was a limit to

⁵⁰ 2017, Khayelitsha Focus Group.

their ability to do so, specifically with young people. In Oudtshoorn, one young woman began to cry in the a focus group while speaking about her own difficult experiences as a child as well as of the children she sees in her community. In following up the counsellor on the team asked whether the woman felt that she could speak to any of her RLs in her church, but her response was that she felt she could not speak to anyone she knew. She did however agree to speak to the SAFFI team who are relative outsiders to the community. In Oudtshoorn it seemed to particularly be the case that the close-knit nature of the community meant that people were weary of talking to other community members about their personal problems. Understandings and power dynamics regarding Eldership also meant that young people would not easily open up to adults and especially those in a position of leadership such as a RL.

It also seemed that different healing spaces are necessary for men and perpetrators. All focus groups said that only women would go up for prayer or would be crying in church, a sign for them that she had experienced abuse. When asked why they thought this was, some thought it was because men do not want to admit publicly that they are abused for fear of being “accused of being a *moffie*”⁵¹.

This leads us to ask further questions, 1) how can perpetrators get help?, 2) what spaces can be safe and healing for young people?, and 3) what do safe spaces look like within close-knit communities?

An unexpected result of the research was that the focus groups in themselves became spaces of healing for some and gave some insight into what was missing in the sermons. When asked how the focus group was at the end, participants in four of the six focus groups said that it had been a healing experience in itself.

Oudtshoorn female (women’s group): And I’m glad for this group, sometimes it’s like you keep it in and you can’t talk, and I’m happy that this group is meeting so we can just talk out. Sometimes you talk to your friend but you never know if that friend is trustworthy and now that friend tells another and the other one tells the other and it’s a joke in their eyes...so I’m very happy for this, and its spiritual.

These experiences of the focus group allude to the need for congregants to have safe spaces to talk about their experiences with others who are there to listen or have been to through the same experiences. However, it is important that these groups be controlled in terms of power dynamics. We saw that within the Oudtshoorn women’s group, the younger women were not eager to open up or disagree with the older women verbally, even though in their body language we could see some of the women’s statements were experienced as judgemental (even by the research team who were also young women)⁵².

⁵¹ 2017, Atlantis Youth Group Focus Group.

⁵² 2017, Oudtshoorn Women’s Group Focus Group.

Chapter Four: Discussion

In this chapter lessons based on the findings will be discussed. This discussion has been situated within discourses of Community Based Development (CBD), participatory development which refers to projects which actively include beneficiaries in their design and management. The discussion also draw from feminist theories of identity and gender in order to draw out ways of deepening SAFFI's work in the future and in order to discover new questions which need to be considered as SAFFI carries on supporting RLs and faith communities in driving gender justice and social change.

I. Transformative Participatory Action

Research on participatory approaches to community intervention generally advocates that such approaches are empowering and leads to community-driven change. However, Cleaver⁵³ rightly argues that participatory approaches to development and community intervention have often been employed superficial measures of participation. Cleaver⁵⁴ goes on to argue that it is wrong to assume that participation in and of itself is empowering as “participation does not necessarily overcome exclusion, subordination or vulnerability”. For participation to be meaningful and transformatory it is important to consider it in relation to the societal power dynamics. This means taking into consideration existing power structures which shape who makes decisions, who participates and how people participate in a particular community. Some theorists argue that participatory approaches should go further and take conscious efforts to shift power and disrupt existing structure⁵⁵. This involves understandings participants' agency in order to guide the process of intervention.

SAFFI's experience practically illustrates the benefits of building up joint participation between the NGO and community by employing what SAFFI terms transformative participatory action. In SAFFI's experience, the Sensitizer acted as a crucial catalyst in developing trust and relationships and laid the groundwork for a meaningful partnership to be formed between the community and SAFFI. The Sensitizer served as a place to allow SAFFI to develop an understanding of the particular community context they were entering and allowed space for the methodology and content to be tailored by the RLs to their needs and contexts. It was also an important platform which made SAFFI conscious of the power dynamics present within the community. For example, often the Sensitizers were the place where participants first raised issues of language and literacy. The power dynamics around being able to read and write have a direct influence on the agency participants are able to claim – if participants feel as though their dignity is being undermined, they are less likely to be able to participate and less likely to shape the process into their own. SAFFI thus, as far as was possible, made use of facilitators who could speak the language of the participants.

⁵³ Cleaver, F 1999, Paradoxes of participation: Questioning participatory approaches to development, *Journal of International Development*, vol. 11, pp. 597-612.

⁵⁴ Cleaver, F 1999, pp. 601.

⁵⁵ Mohan, G 2006, 'Beyond participation: Strategies for deeper empowerment', in Cooke, Bill & U Kothari (eds.), *Participation: The New Tyranny?*, Zed Books, London.

Different visual and participatory learning methods in workshops were also a valuable tool in encouraging the participation of RLs at various literacy levels. Furthermore, employing visual methodologies and group work were also used to disrupt the power imbalances in the workshop space. As the findings demonstrate, SAFFI was conscious that the facilitators were not the sole possessors of knowledge and therefore, through using participatory methods of learning, SAFFI was simply adding to RLs existing knowledge.

The experiences of the youth leaders also demonstrates that using methodologies which promotes group participation and a more egalitarian learning environment was useful in encouraging youth to participate, to come up with new topics of conversation and to provide their own possible solutions to various GBV problems in their community. The youth leaders illustrate that by taking the agency of participants seriously, the content and process of the intervention become guided and shaped by the participants themselves.

SAFFI's work going forward should thus take seriously participants' agency, as well as look more deeply into the power dynamics of age, gender, race and faith and develop new and creative methods of disrupting existing dynamics which exclude certain RLs or members of faith communities from meaningful participation. SAFFI has begun to do so through the participatory approach adopted to facilitate the writing of this research report. Going forward, staff, RLs, lay counsellors/ leaders will work together in faith communities to assist RLs to translate the learnings and findings from this report into tangible outcomes in faith communities. This may take the shape of content and methodologies for children's ministry, youth, women's ministry and men's ministry, marriage preparation, confirmation, or the worship context. It may also include impact outside of the realm of the church and faith communities.

II. It is Important to Create Networks of Support in Building a Sustained, Whole Community Response

RLs communicated that they experienced burn out and fatigue as the life of the church is occupied by many different issues, tasks and work. This is exacerbated by daily struggles which are the reality of the poor economic and social conditions in which many of these RLs work and live. It is obvious then that the content and aim of SAFFI cannot be the only point of concern for RLs. Even in implementing the 10-week support series, RLs had to extend the originally agreed upon time frame for implementation as the many other activities in the church often meant that dates needed to be shifted. Timelines were also shifted and adjustments made (such as the exclusion of the second RL in Khayelitsha) to the support series because of RLs personal health and family issues. The findings show that in order for discussion and action around GBV and DV to be sustained, it is important to facilitate the creation of support networks for the participants with which SAFFI works.

The relationships formed between RLs (within and between different geographic communities), the RLs forums created in Oudtshoorn and Atlantis, as well as the relationships formed between RLs and other community actors meant that RLs felt less alone in combating and preventing GBV and DV in their communities. This also means that SAFFI's interventions was not a once-off process where RLs were trained and then left to continue the work on their

own. These types of once-off trainings and interventions set the communities up for failure and leave participants with empty promises and a low level of trust in NGOs or other intervention programmes. Working against this, SAFFI facilitated the networking of different RLs and community actors. The relationships formed between RLs (within and between different geographic communities), the RLs forums created in Oudtshoorn and Atlantis, as well as the relationships formed between RLs and other community actors meant that were provided with a support network with whom they could collaborate and form long-term relationships which could assist them in contributing to a sustained response to GBV. This also means that different members of the community with access to different resources and different networks are able to work together to form a whole community response.

How these networks operate and the effectiveness of these networks has not been explored in this report. This is perhaps an area of further research which needs to be done. However, it can be said that these networks will need to involve meaningful inclusion and participation from various sectors and actors in the community. It is important to note that any structure or network formed from interventions such as SAFFI should be aware of not replicating the systems we they seek to change. The networks formed are a microcosm of the society and local community from which they come. This means that existing power dynamics (around gender, class and race amongst others) which exclude the full participation of certain marginalized sectors of the community (for example women, the poor, and people of colour) will need to be consciously addressed in the structure and dynamics of these networks.

III. The Personal is Political: A Motivation for Change

Cleaver⁵⁶ argues that what is often missing in participatory development discourse is an adequate theorisation as to why individuals would participate in the first place. Literature often seems to sum up economic development as the main reason for peoples participation. Such perceptions, Cleaver⁵⁷ asserts, “allows little place for personal psychological motivations, for the needs of individuals for recognition, and respect or purpose, which may be independent of other material benefits”.

SAFFI’s findings demonstrate that the motivation for RLs to participate and further the work which SAFFI sparked has less to do with economic rationality and more to do with personal motivations in relation to religious understandings and responsibility. Many RLs in the M&E findings spoke about how they had experienced or witnessed abuse in their personal lives or in the lives of their communities. RLs often spoke about how SAFFI’s workshops and trainings had proven helpful for their own healing and for recognising the need to take the issue of DV more seriously. The RLs who spoke about these experiences in interviews also spoke about how abusive relationships were later improved or how they were healed at a later point in life. Often this reconciliation was attached to a healing rooted in faith, such as an incidence of the abuser coming to faith. These personal experiences were often spoken about as a source of motivation for RLs commitment to combatting DV and in their commitment to bringing some sort of healing and peace to their communities.

⁵⁶ Cleaver, F 1999.

⁵⁷ Cleaver, F 1999, pp. 606.

Many NGOs in South Africa (and internationally) limit their ability to interact with participants' faith as viewed as a sensitive topic and as something which is separate to social and economic development and transformation. Religion is also something which many social practitioners are not equipped to (or do not want to) engage with. SAFFI engages directly with participants deeply rooted belief systems and understandings, and is able to connect with a powerful personal psychological motivation and drive. In this way SAFFI is able to tap into a motivation for social change with other organisations may be unable to do. "The personal is political" was used as a rallying cry for second wave feminism in the 1960s, and is a term used to argue that people's personal experiences of oppression were as a result of structural issues which oppressed women as a collective. This term is used here to argue that it is these personal experiences that can motivate men and women to combat and prevent GBV and DV at a local level.

IV. Culture and Race Influence How We Work and What We Teach

Although the findings above demonstrate how and why some RLs are willing to participate in and drive social change initiatives, it is also important to recognise that gender, age, class and other social identifications intersect and influence why and how they are able to participate in and drive that change. Findings from the evidence show that race and culture were two attributes which seemed to influence how participants interacted with the topics of GBV and DV.

The Parow/Edgemead Sensitizer of 2012 consisted of only white participants. This group very clearly stated in their evaluation forms that they wanted more practical, implementable ways of preventing and dealing with DV. In the notes taken by the observer of the workshop, it is also evident that none of the participants spoke about their own experiences of DV or IPA, or the experiences of those close to them. Rather, they used othering⁵⁸ terms like "them" and "they" to describe those experiencing DV. In the discourse of this group of participants not only were victims and abusers distanced from the contexts in which these RLs lived and worked, but their willingness to combat and prevent GBV and DV was limited to implementing practical steps in a one-on-one or small group context. Therefore, it could be potentially difficult to get this same group to engage in conversations and action which challenges larger societal systems of power and which do not have easily implementable, practical steps.

Another finding shows that black RLs, especially in rural areas, found that topics such as sexual violence and sex still carried a lot of stigma within their contexts many of the RLs work in, it is difficult for others to speak about very personal experiences of GBV and DV.

These two examples demonstrate how information is received and how the task of intervening is taken up but also limited in different contexts. In collective analysis, this theme raised questions for RLs and staff around how to disrupt systems of oppression such as patriarchy and

⁵⁸ This sociological term refers to the defining of "us" and "them" categories within society, and the forming of oppositional identity groups. Its origins are traced to the Herbert Mead, referring to ideas of similarity and difference attributed to how people identify themselves in relation to others. For example, women may be "the Other" to men, black people may be "the Other" to white people, etc. See: Mead, H 1934. *Mind, self and society*. University of Chicago, Chicago; Said, E 1978, *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books, New York.

racism, while also celebrating and preserving traditional culture and knowledge systems, which sometimes seems to support patriarchy and racism. Multicultural perspectives of gender, as posited by African feminists and/or intersectional feminists, provide insight on how to think about culture and traditions when working for gender justice. Sokoloff and Dupont⁵⁹ argue that ideally, scholars (and SAFFI argues practitioners) would emphasize the structural underpinnings of abuse while not denying the existence of real differences in how this abuse is experienced and addressed in diverse settings. Both cross-cultural and multicultural DV studies and evidence from SAFFI make it clear that there is no one-size-fits-all experience and explanation for DV and that, consequently solutions must reflect these differences. Battered women who have different religious backgrounds, sexual orientations, race and cultures require different ways of intervening. However, this does not mean that patriarchy in all its forms should be left unchallenged. Community interventions in South Africa, especially those dealing with gender issues, should avoid working within simplistic notions of culture as static and which do not also consider structural patriarchy and systems of oppression.

V. Different Spaces are Necessary for Places of Healing

Creating safe spaces for participants to speak about their experiences, especially for those who experience DV and are disempowered is vital to any process of program working toward change. This was especially the focus area of the 10-week support program as their vision was “Making our Places of Worship Sanctuaries of Hope and Healing”. From the findings it is clear to see that what qualifies as “safe” is not homogenous. Some of the congregants who were part of the 10-week support series for example felt comfortable and safe enough to talk openly about their experiences of abuse, and were even willing to come up for prayer in Sunday church services. However, others expressed the need for smaller group sessions, of which the focus group proved to be an example, where they could simply debrief about what they had witnessed or experienced in their own lives and the lives of others.

The context of faith communities and how this intersects with identities such as age must also be considered when considering safe spaces in the church (or other faith communities). For example, the findings show that often the youth did not feel that there was somewhere or someone they could go to for healing, counselling or to debrief. Some of the participatory methodologies which take age and power structures into consideration may be useful in beginning to map out ways of co-creating safe spaces along with young people in the contexts of the RLs which have engaged with SAFFI.

Furthermore, in a context which is small and has a close-knit community such as Oudtshoorn, there is a lot of shame in other members of the faith community knowing about what is happening in one’s home. Therefore, safe spaces would need to be co-created with the communities in these contexts.

⁵⁹Sokoloff, N & Dupont, I 2008, ‘Domestic violence and the intersections of race, class and gender: Challenges and contributions to understanding violence against marginalized women in diverse communities’, *Violence Against Women*, vol. 11, no.1, pp. 38-64.

It was also clear from the findings that RLs wanted to create more spaces where interpretations of religious texts could be discussed. Evidence from the interviews and focus groups indicate that especially scriptures dealing with sensitive topics (such as rape and incest) sparked new and interesting conversations amongst different generations. The difficult topics encouraged new conversations to take place in the church. Within those conversations could be valuable ways of understanding and dealing with the issues differently and spaces should be created where these conversations can be opened up and where RLs and faith communities can create new meanings together.

VI. Binary Notions of Gender Need to be Disrupted in Order to Deal with Root Causes of DV

It was clear in the findings that most men and boys were not engaged in the 10-week support series. Narratives from the congregants demonstrate that to some extent the topics discussed “drove” some men away or kept them at a distance, as is evidenced most visually by the man walking out of the church service in Atlantis. As presented in the findings, RLs reported that for the duration of the 10-week support series, very few men (only two amongst all the congregations) came to their RLs for individual counselling or conversation and none came up for communal prayer in church services. The fact that no men arrived to participate in the men-only focus group arranged in Oudtshoorn for the research project, demonstrated that men were not participating in the conversations and interventions around GBV and DV. There was also a strong feeling as vocalised by most men in Atlantis’ focus groups that the topics discussed in church during the 10-week support series and in youth groups was aimed largely at women. The findings show that most men and some women in the faith communities and male RLs and even male staff adopted the view that by focusing on women abuse, SAFFI’s work was excluding, 1) men who are abused, 2) men who are perpetrators and 3) men in who are neither abused or abuser. In order to begin to understand why this may be, it is important to situate this reaction within theories of gender and power.

The findings in this report also demonstrate that RLs and members of the faith communities with which SAFFI worked, largely endorsed very clear ideas of men and women as unequal opposites. Women were perceived as having the responsibility of cooking, cleaning and taking care of their husbands while the men were constructed as strong, and as providers. The wives of RLs particularly asserted their view that women were supposed to look after and serve their husbands. The findings further demonstrate that understandings of men as the provider and women as the carer of the home and husband serve to police women who choose to perform their roles as women and wives differently. In Oudtshoorn, young women who do not cook and clean and tend to their husbands were described by one group of women as abusers. Religious references were used by Charmaine as a justification to police women’s behaviour by stating that women should cook and clean for their husbands because it is what “God expects”. This type of policing becomes harmful to women who choose to perform their femininity differently

and can be used to justify abuse and lead to victim-blaming⁶⁰.

Raewyn Connell along with James Messerschmidt⁶¹ in their joint and separate work coined and furthered the terms hegemonic masculinities and emphasised femininities, to describe dominant and idealised ways of “being” and acting as men and women. These ideas construct men and women as opposites in relation to key social cultural themes and practices such as sport, work, hetero-sexuality and care. In these versions of masculinity men are constructed as stronger and better than weaker and more dependent women. It is important to say here that even Connell and Messerschmidt⁶²⁶³ recognise that not all notions of hegemony are harmful. They state, “most accounts of hegemonic masculinity do include such “positive” actions as bringing home a wage, sustaining a sexual relationship, and being a father”⁶⁴. It is also fair to say that hegemony does not necessarily lead to violent behaviour. However, as Heise⁶⁵ argues, notions of hegemonic masculinity linked to dominance, toughness or male honour are more likely to lead to a sense of male entitlement/ownership over women, approval of physical chastisement of women, and a cultural ethos that condones violence as a means to settle interpersonal disputes. There is therefore some link between patriarchal attitudes, normalised by ideas of hegemonic masculinities and emphasised femininities, and the ways we deal with and understand GBV and DV.

Working in a society where binary notions of gender and normalisation of certain gender roles are prominent also explains why men often exclude themselves from the conversation around gender, GBV and DV. When GBV and DV are being understood within a system of binary notions of gender it seems that GBV and DV happens largely to women because they are female and feminine (soft, subservient, obedient). This understanding limits the responses to GBV and DV. It puts the onus on women who are being abused to speak out against violence, for women to seek healing and for women to find new ways of being in the world. However, if we work with the understanding that GBV and DV occurs as frequently as it does to women because of an unequal binary system and because of some of the conventions around being men and women, then a space opens up for men and women to interrogate the normalisation of patriarchy and male privilege as a “basis for human interaction”⁶⁶. This means that gender, understood as two unequal opposites, becomes in itself critiqued as a violent system and way of thinking.

⁶⁰ The World Health Organizations study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence (2005), in half of the 10 countries in the study, 50 to >90% of women agreed that it is acceptable for a man to beat his wife under one or more of the following circumstances: if she disobeys her husband, refuses him sex, does not complete the housework on time, asks about other women, is unfaithful, or is suspected of infidelity. (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005).

⁶¹ Connell, R 1987, *Gender and power: Society, the person and sexual politics*, Stanford University Press, Stanford; Connell, R & Messerschmidt, J 2005, ‘Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept’, *Gender & Society*, vol. 19, no. 6, pp. 829-859.

⁶² Connell, R and Messerschmidt, J 2005.

⁶³ Based on the critique of Collier, R 1998.

⁶⁴ Connell, R & Messerschmidt, J 2005, pp. 840.

⁶⁵ Heise, L 1998.

⁶⁶ Ayiera, E 2010, ‘Sexual violence in conflict: A problematic international discourse’, *Feminist Africa Rethinking Gender and Violence*, vo. 14, pp. 7-20.

The problem then is not that men are excluded from topics of GBV and DV, but rather that questioning and critically thinking through notions of gender are excluded. We need to move beyond understandings that violence happens to women because they are feminine, and towards understandings that we live out our gender daily in a system which privileges male over female and which allows violent masculinities to become normalised. It is important then that work around GBV and DV begins to encourage participants to deconstruct gender and their gendered experiences within their own contexts and to encourage this to disrupt harmful ideas about gender which privilege men over women, normalise violence against women and exclude useful ideas of masculinity and femininity.

It is important that SAFFI's work around DV and IPA begins to encourage RLs to deconstruct and dialogue around gender norms. These conversations should be embedded within the cultural and socio-historical context, and should open itself up to new ways of understanding gender and gender roles. Further, these conversations should challenge normative gender roles which can be potentially harmful (such as understandings of women as responsible for male sexual aggressiveness and women as humble and obedient) and perhaps build critically on notions of male and female which are culturally and contextually appropriate and which can be used to build more freeing understandings of gender relations.

Chapter Five: Conclusion & Recommendations

This report concludes by addressing the three general questions which provided the structure of the research. Based on these some questions are also put forward which the work of SAFFI could explore going forward.

- i. What effect has the SAFFI model had on religious leaders' understanding of their role in perpetuating and/or interrupting violence against women in intimate relationships and family life in what they teach, preach and offer during pastoral care? And, is this reflected in their actions and behaviour?*

Findings show that most RLs understand their role as serving the community and addressing a myriad of issues which affects their communities. What SAFFI was able to do, was tap into personal and religious motivations which encouraged them to take seriously the issues of DV and GBV. SAFFI was also able to, without undermining their existing knowledge and skills, come alongside RLs to enhance and contribute to their knowledge and skills but also provide spaces which they were able to challenge and learn from other RLs and network with other experts and resources in their communities. Many of the RLs who attended trainings seemed to be more cognisant of how they were addressing GBV and DV in their everyday activities. Some RLs more consciously developed programs or campaigns specifically aimed at preventing and combating DV.

It is clear that SAFFI was able to create a spark which inspired changes in action and behaviour. However, it seems that some of the deeply held beliefs and attitudes which maintain patriarchy have not yet been adequately disrupted. In order to further its work SAFFI will need open up spaces where beliefs and attitudes around gender, race and other identities can be critiqued. Disrupting gender binary systems while being conscious of cultural and contextual nuances will need to become a central aspect to SAFFI's work, and any work on gender in South Africa, if we truly want to deal with the root causes of GBV and DV.

SAFFI proposes that local knowledge, contexts and belief systems should be used along with different understandings of gender and identity to co-construct ways of dealing with DV which both works with the reality of the local context and which disrupts the oppressive power systems which shape these realities. This would allow living customary law, traditions and knowledge to be brought into useful communion with current contexts to devise new ways of thinking about and practicing humanity.

- ii. What effect has the SAFFI model had on congregations/faith communities who's RLs and /or lay leaders have participated in the SAFFI model?*

The findings demonstrate that the faith communities who were privy to the 10-week support program began to think of the RL and their faith as a source of support and healing. Spaces and topics of conversation was opened up which made the faith communities feel as though their faith was speaking to the realities of the everyday. There was also a sense of relief and healing which many in the faith community reported feeling.

It is important to note however that these faith communities were not homogenous, within them were victims, perpetrators, women, men, young and old. SAFFI's program and the RLs who were trained were largely skewed towards a focus on victims, and often on more mature women. It is critical that RLs, SAFFI and the faith communities, co-construct meanings around "safe spaces". New spaces need to be co-created which enable all young women, men and perpetrators to seek help and assistance. Further, creative pedagogic methods need to be developed (in participatory ways) and used which encourage all people to think critically and change attitudes and behaviours which hamper gender justice. In the same way attitudes and behaviours which foster positive social change and which can further gender justice at a local level should be tapped into and supported.

iii. How can the experiences of RLs, lay leaders, congregations and faith communities - who have participated in the SAFFI model - contribute to advancing a whole community response to reducing and eradicating GBV against women and girls?

The experiences of faith communities demonstrates that connecting gender justice with peoples personal experiences as well as their deep seated religious beliefs, can be a strong motivator to become change agents. This applies not only to RLs but to other members of the community working in different sectors. The experiences also show that in order to create sustainable and long-term impact it is important to include meaningful participation and networks in the local community. The meaningfulness should be shaped by including the structural and personal realities. It is also important to note that this participation includes participation by other actors, not directly in your program. This observation lends itself to a whole-community response which SAFFI advocates for.

I. Questions for further enquiry

SAFFI's work with RLs and faith communities has yielded some important questions that SAFFI (and other organizations and individuals working in the gender justice arena) could consider in efforts to deepen and further their work.

- **How can approaches and methodologies more meaningfully participatory?**
- **How can we connect with participant's personal experiences and religious beliefs in ways which adds further momentum and value to the work?**
- **How can we work respectfully with different cultural ideas and traditions whilst disrupting the patriarchal and oppressive systems inherent in different cultures and contexts?**
- **How do we begin to disrupt binary notions of gender in ways which open u ideas of masculinity, femininity and other gendered experiences but which also take into the religious understandings which can inform and disrupt these binary ideas?**

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